



# LEADING WITH RACE:

*Research Justice in Washington County*



Coalition of  
Communities of  
Color

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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We apologize for any inaccuracies that may have occurred and will resolve inaccurate or missing information in a subsequent reprinting of the book.

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# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

We are thrilled to present this report that represents the culmination of over two years of engagement and relationship building in Washington County. This report is the first in-house research publication of the Research Justice Center of the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC). We, the steering committee, share the desire to be proactive in bringing about racial justice in Washington county so that all our communities have the ability to flourish. We celebrate this coming together of community and government in equitable partnership in this research project. While this report represents the culmination of our initial inquiry, we intend for it to catalyze dialogue and action to build the community we want. We seek to unite people and various stakeholders in Washington County in collective action for the advancement of racial justice. It is time to act.

The report is presented in three parts—eight community sections reflecting the lived experiences of eight communities of color living in Washington County; data snapshots of four jurisdictions in the county that identify some key socio-economic outcomes for communities of color living in those cities; and a Call to Action that implores readers to take recommended actions based on the findings in this report.

Communities of color in Washington County deliver three key messages.

***People of color have always lived in Washington County. We are part of the economy and social fabric. It's our home and we like living here.***

There is a popular refrain in Washington County articulated by elected officials, governments, community members including people of color—“Washington county is diversifying.” This adage has become such a part of the county zeitgeist that it whitewashes the history of the county, which is a narrative that reinforces the White settler history often thought to be the official history of the United States. It fails to acknowledge that the reason why the county has been so White and has been diversifying only recently is inseparable from the genocide of Native American tribes, historical “sundown” laws and redlining against Black people, exclusionary policies that restricted immigration from countries other than

Europe until the Immigration Act of 1965, and displacement of people of color due to gentrification. Communities of color have always lived in Washington County and they strive to make it their home. This land is Native land stolen by White settlers. It was cultivated, industrialized and developed by Black enslaved labor, Latino and Japanese farm workers, Indian lumber mill workers and Chinese railroad workers. The Silicon forest cannot function without the intellect and labor of communities of color.

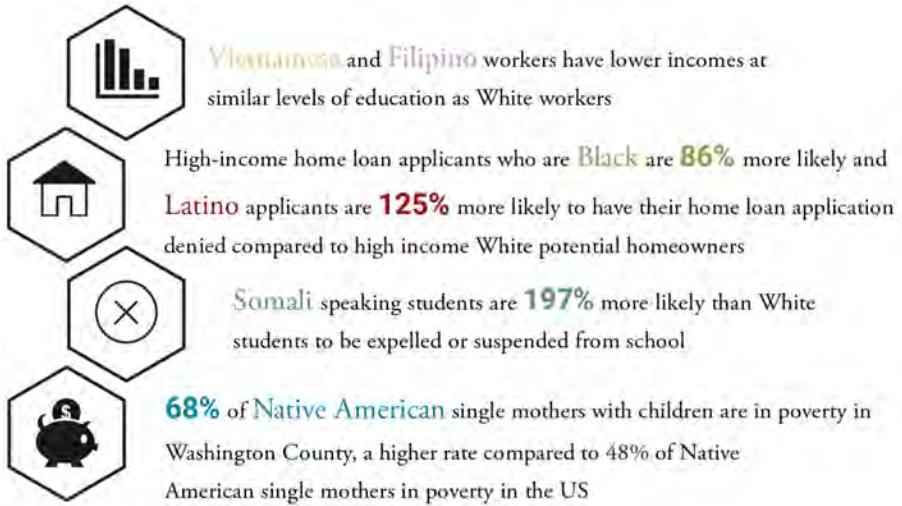
**“Just think about this area—whose land are we on? There was a bunch of little tribes that have been wiped out and we have to learn who exactly they were and teach the kids that you are right here in this area where those tribes were.”**

The Latino workforce is integral to the economy of the Silicon Forest and a driver of Oregon’s agricultural productivity—results of the value placed on education. Immigrants and refugees from African and Middle Eastern countries are skilled professionals who like living in Washington County for its diversity, plentiful space and as a good place to raise and educate their kids.

Washington County is what it is today because communities of color were born here, moved here, refused to leave despite genocide and exclusionary laws, and have put down roots here.



*Our reality consists of both experiencing oppression by racist institutions and practices and our resilience and resistance to that. We are made to feel invisible and hyper-visible.*



Communities of color in Washington County, compared to their White neighbors, experience disproportionately negative outcomes in employment, income, education, community safety and health. In Washington County, Vietnamese and Filipino workers have lower incomes at similar levels of education as White workers; high income home loan applicants who are Black are 86% more likely and Latino applicants are 125% more likely to have their home loan application denied compared to high income White potential homeowners; Somali speaking students are 197% more likely than White students to be expelled or suspended from school; 68% of Native American single mothers with children are in poverty in Washington County, a higher rate compared to 48% of Native American single mothers in poverty in the US. These are the cumulative result of racist institutions and practices like immigration and criminal justice policies, opportunity gaps of students and mortgage lending practices. Racism is real, it's historical and it is practiced and sustained today. Across different communities of color, residents talk about being made to feel both visible and invisible in



different ways. They are made invisible because of the size of their communities, immigration (both documented and undocumented) that pushes some into the shadows or disengages them from civic life, systematic attempts of genocide and exclusion, data practices that are inappropriate, non-representative and not trauma-informed, and by perceptions that some communities are not even part of racial justice. On the flipside, racism, intersecting with xenophobia, Islamophobia and patriarchy, “see” communities in very stereotypical and harmful ways. Communities battle racial stereotypes about being illegal, criminals, terrorists, lazy, living off welfare, and “model minorities.” Despite all of this, communities of color live, play, pray and work in Washington County. We build support networks, create small businesses to nourish their communities, organize around and advocate for dismantling racist barriers that will not only improve their lives, but will raise the quality of living for the entire county.



**“I was talking to a White person at this restaurant I go to, and we had this discussion about race. He says to me, “you Asian people are not like the Black people that leech off the system or these undocumented workers that come across the river and take all these jobs. I wish other minorities are just like you guys. This country would be even better.” I just sat there, and I was like okay, I will not be eating with you anymore.”**

*We are experts in our lived experiences, and Washington County will be better by working together. This report shows us how to do that.*

Communities of color are experts on their reality and experiences. They are leaders. They must be part of removing barriers and dismantling deeply rooted racist institutions and practices.

“No decisions about policies about our lives and outcomes can be just and equitable if it does not involve those most impacted.”

Institutions, and schools particularly, need to value and promote the multitude of languages, cultures, and histories of Washington county residents. Communities possess experiential, historical and cultural knowledge which must be centered in any data research initiative. Accurate data—using community verified, equitable practices—gives businesses, local governments, police, courts and schools effective information and tools for their decision-making, and their effective engagement with families, students and Washington county residents.

**“People think all Africans are the same; that we have the same problems, same culture, that we come from the same place. But that’s not true.”**



# NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

AT LEAST

10,437

IN WASHINGTON  
COUNTY

Focus group participants and community reviewers were affiliated to the following identities: Pawnee, Alaskan Native and Tlingit, Northern Arapaho and Assiniboine and Sioux, Otoe-Missouria, Isle of Man and Creole, Choctaw from Mississippi, Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma, La Courte Oreilles Chippewa, Fond du Lac of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Chippewa, Cherokee, Yakama, Black Butte of Warm Springs, Cree, Metis (Canada), Modoc, Paiute, Karuk, Native Hawaiian and Klamath tribes

1 out of 3 under age 18



1 out of 3 Native families



have children attending school



6,562

Native Americans in  
Washington County are eligible to vote  
and run for political office



10,178

students identified as Native  
Americans in 2015



60%

of the community in Washington County is composed of biracial and multiracial people, due to a large extent to the cumulative impact of historical genocide of Native tribes

The Native American community narrate their history as resisting colonialism that at its worst sought to wipe them out and take their lands and resources, and at the very least sought to render them invisible by displacing them, criminalizing them, taking and assimilating their children, and robbing them of their traditions and heritage. The community is small in Washington County because of White settler genocide and forced sterilization of Native women.





Even now, institutions carry forward that legacy of invisibility and assimilation in school curriculum, in the child welfare system, in data practices that label the community as too small to be “statistically significant.” For Native American communities, it is crucial that the colonization of Native Americans be taught in schools and to elected leaders and government officials. However, the legacy of oppression is not just a matter for the history books. The community continues to be targeted by a wide-ranging spectrum of institutional racism. Their reality is equally of resisting colonialism and racism, and rebuilding, nourishing and protecting the community. They have made a home in Washington County, many work with Beaverton and Hillsboro school districts to organize Native programming to strengthen multigenerational community building, and in 2012, there were approximately 500 Native owned businesses in Washington County that disbursed 11 million dollars in payroll and contributed 47 million dollars to the local economy.

# AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

AT LEAST

12,357

IN WASHINGTON  
COUNTY

African-American people have lived in the county for decades, some are newer residents; some left and moved back, some migrated from Portland, and some moved here from other parts of the country.



44% of African-Americans in Washington  
County are 18 years or younger.



African-American community identifies as youth, parents, family, LGBTQ, people of faith, connected to other communities living in Washington County

There is little documented history of the community in Washington County but community conversations suggest that some African-Americans have lived in the county for decades, some are newer residents; some left and moved back, some migrated from Portland, and some moved here from other parts of the country. Good schools, affordable cost of living compared to Portland and safe neighborhoods attracted African-Americans to settle down in Washington County. They have also experienced the old Jim Crow becoming the “new Jim Crow” in Oregon as Exclusionary Laws of the 1800s became redlining and divestment in the twentieth century and gentrification and displacement in the twenty-first. Black people of all income levels continue to experience discrimination in home loan

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lending practices. They also deeply feel the criminalization of Black bodies as the most likely community to be incarcerated in the county. Black kids are most targeted by harsh disciplinary practices in schools. Despite every attempt to drive African-Americans out of Oregon they are still here and advocating for themselves and their families, friends and community members. This is their biggest victory against racism. Community members want infrastructure to organize the African-American population in Washington County. The community also identifies building political power and redressing the lack of diversity in decision-making as a high priority for social change in Washington County. They are skeptical about hollow attempts at diversity and representation that does not change outcomes either for their community or for people of color on the whole.



# AFRICAN COMMUNITIES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

AT LEAST

4,524

IN WASHINGTON  
COUNTY

*Many community members find the label "African" problematic because it masks the diversity of experiences in the community and is connected to the frustrating mainstream racialized stereotypes of Africa as a monolithic identity.*

Community has grown by approximately 47% between 2006 and 2011



2 out of 3

members of the Sub-Saharan African community living in Washington County are US citizens by birth and approximately half of them are Oregon-born



83%

of Sub-Saharan African immigrants in Washington County came from Eastern and Western Africa

Community advocates urge local governments to partner with them to conduct a trauma-informed community count in Washington County

The African community in Washington County are varied and diverse—they are rich in cultural and linguistic diversity, in life experience as citizens, immigrants and refugees; as youth and elders, as working professionals and as students. Being subsumed under the label “African” is problematic for many community members because it masks the diversity of experiences in the community and is connected to frustrating mainstream racialized stereotypes of Africa as a country rather a continent of different countries. They like living in Washington county

## COALITION OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

for its diversity, plentiful space and as a good place to raise and educate their kids. They also miss the community they left behind and want opportunities and spaces to build community here. African communities have high levels of education and expertise and they call attention to institutionalized racism in schools, employment and workplace culture and criminal justice, which constrains them from contributing their full potential to Oregon. They also prioritize boosting



culturally specific infrastructure as well as small business creation that supports community well-being. They urge readers and policymakers to take the experiences they share as a starting point and and take action and resource the community that is already advocating for themselves to become partners in bringing about transformational change in Washington County.



# ASIAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

AT LEAST

**73,701**

IN WASHINGTON  
COUNTY

**1 out of 5** Asians in Washington County identify as bi/multiracial,  
and it is crucial that their experiences count



of Asian communities in  
Washington County are immigrants



**13,252** students that identified as  
Asian or Pacific Islander in 2015

Asian communities in Washington County mostly originate from **Cambodia,**  
**China, India, Japan, the Korean peninsula,**  
**Philippines, and Vietnam**

The stories of Asians and Asian-Americans in Washington County are stories of migration. The presence and size of Asian groups that live in Washington County are a direct outcome of the Immigration & Nationality Act of 1965 and US Cold War politics in Southeast Asia. There is little recognition of that reality as well as the history of Asian communities who were used for their cheap labor in the nineteenth century, were subsequently villainized and excluded from the country before being allowed back in based on the US economy's needs. Racism in the US has lumped together communities of different histories and heritage into one catch-all Asian identity. Consequently, data practices assume that all Asians have similar socio-economic outcomes that are at par if not better than



White people. This has resulted in systemic practices that pit communities of color against each other. Asians, overall, are propped up as “model minority”—people of color who are seen as well educated and high income, law abiding and assimilating into American society, against African-Americans and Latinos who are vilified as not being able to “pull themselves up by the bootstraps,” being “riven” with crime, and “refusing” to assimilate into the mainstream. Asian and Asian-Americans consider these to be extremely harmful because it both prevents them from articulating the manner in which institutional racism impacts them and marginalizes them from participating in bringing about transformational racial justice change in their region. Community members prioritize data disaggregation as a means of deconstructing the Oriental notion of “Asian.” They also militate against racist tropes of being considered foreigners and therefore not a part of civic life even though 43% of Asian and Asian-American communities in Washington county in 2016 were born in the US and that population has grown at a rate similar to immigrants in the community. Throughout their historical economic segregation and their current reality, Asian and Asian-American communities have shown up for each other by welcoming new immigrants, hosting cultural gatherings to combat isolation, opening and patronizing community-owned businesses.

# LATINO COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

AT LEAST

96,034

IN WASHINGTON  
COUNTY

17% of Washington County population



Comprise  $\frac{1}{3}$  of population growth in the county between 2007-2016



1 in 5 people in the Latino community are of Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Central and South American origins.

8,885 students in 2015, identified as Latino and Native American



Population of people of Central American (excluding Mexican) origin in Washington County is larger than in Multnomah County.

Over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of children and youth in the 5-17 age range are bilingual

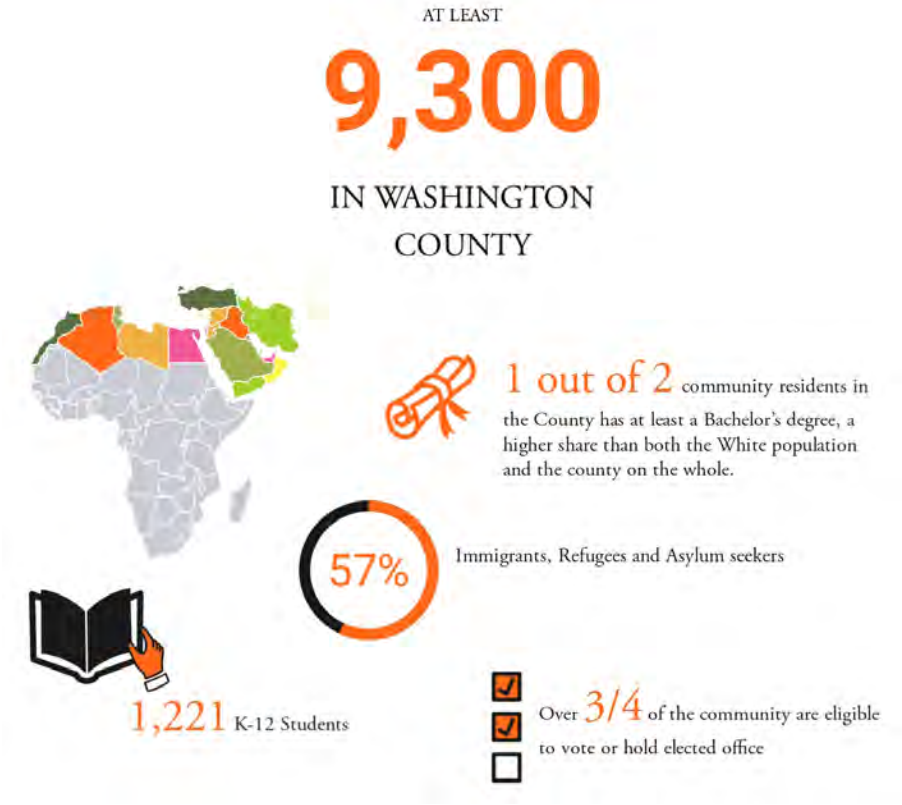


Latinos have a long and rich history as residents of Washington County. They are a critical political, social and economic driving force here. The Latino workforce is integral to the economy of the Silicon Forest and a driver of Oregon’s agricultural productivity. From the time that they first came to Washington County as



seasonal farmworkers, the community has built community and infrastructures of support to counter the isolation, exclusion and marginalization effects of continuing immigration policies. While immigrants have served to support the economic growth of the US and been drivers for economic productivity, some of them have not been granted the regard and legitimization of becoming documented. The community is diverse and more than one story, as much as racism tries to put them in a box of stereotypes. Community members emphasise both the persisting intergenerational impact of exclusionary immigration policies and economic marginalization, as well as the creative and resourceful ways in which they have endured and pushed back against structural racism. As the community has grown in the region, representation in leadership and decision-making tables have not kept up. Latinos in Washington County are increasingly coming out of the shadows that they were forced into by fear of anti-immigration policies and economic injustices, and prioritizing civic engagement and building political power. They are increasingly running for office, getting elected and re-defining leadership.

# MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY



Middle Eastern and North African community members in Washington County are part of immigration waves to the US that started in the early twentieth century. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act that removed restrictions on immigration from regions other than Europe ushered in a wide variety of Middle Eastern and North African immigrants including those seeking education, employment and family unification as well as refugees fleeing conflict. They strive to put down roots in Washington County. They have been building and strengthening culturally specific organizations here that serve their community and build



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relationships with mainstream society. Despite their rich intellectual and cultural potential, they are hyper-visible and invisible in harmful ways. A long history of US involvement in the Middle East including the wars in Iraq, post 9/11 Islamophobia, the Syrian refugee crisis and Trump administration's ban targeting Muslims from that part of the world, makes Middle Eastern communities appear and be treated as an omnipresent threat to US society. At the same time, they are invisible in policymaking and data practices. Community members seek recognition of their tremendous potential and vitality, and dismantling of barriers constraining them especially refugee communities.



# NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

AT LEAST

5,538

IN WASHINGTON  
COUNTY

Identity encompasses at least 20 distinct communities, including  
Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijians, Marshallese,  
Native Hawaiians, Samoans, and Tongans.

Fastest growing community (for whom data is  
available) both in the US and in Washington  
County -- they have grown by approximately  
60% between 2010 and 2015.

Polynesian communities such as Samoans  
and Tongans are the largest sub-group numbering  
around 3,719 people in Washington County.

51% Biracial and Multiracial People



71% English only Households



Approximately 2,761 Native Hawaiian  
residents and fewer than 1,000 people of  
Micronesian descent

1 out of 10 are immigrants



90% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander  
communities are US citizens by birth



The Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander identity encompasses at least twenty distinct communities, including Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijians, Marshallese, Native Hawaiians, Samoans and Tongans. They have experienced a legacy of colonization and political control by the US including being the base of nuclear weapons testing starting in 1946 that adversely impacted their social structures,

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health outcomes and way of life. They are the fastest growing community (for whom data is available) both in the US and in Washington County. They have a strong sense of cultural identity but racist policies and institutions make them invisible by putting them together with Asian communities, which assumes they



have similar histories and socio-economic experiences. As Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities strive and advocate for issues that impact their lives and greater visibility and representation in public policymaking, they emphasise the need for more refined ways to tell their own stories. They prioritize the expansion of diversity and equity to include their lived experiences distinct from the “Asian Pacific Islander” label and for visibility in data practices that are the basis of policymaking.

# SLAVIC COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON COUNTY



The Slavic and Russian-speaking community has been the largest refugee-based community in Oregon. Slavic and Russian-speaking immigrants were historically attracted to Oregon because of its farmland. Washington County has provided jobs (many work at Intel) and looked enough like their home countries, that the immigrant groups were able to establish their own communities. They live and work in the county, but few locals realize they are here. The reasons for the invisibility of the Slavic community are their appearance as White Caucasians and their preference to live in tight-knit communities. On the one hand, they are differentially treated as White by institutions such as law enforcement and schools, and on the other hand, their issues and concerns especially related to





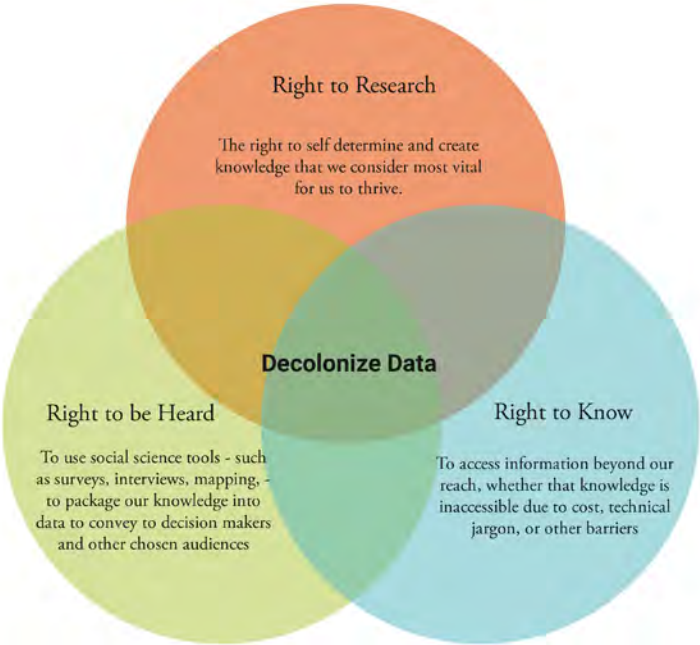
language barriers, recent immigrant families, and foreign credential recognition are overlooked. They ask for visibility in data and policymaking so their experiences in the school system, child welfare, criminal and juvenile justice, health and social services are counted.



# RESEARCH JUSTICE

Community based participatory research methodology of this project is informed by our research justice vision and creates space for communities to be leaders and partners at all decision points of the research process. Our vision of research justice centers the issues of power and equity in research processes and argues that mainstream research practices and data have perpetuated systemic inequities. The CCC starts with the premise that the research process needs to be just and equitable, and to shift communities of color from research subjects into researchers, knowledge producers and communicators. Research practices should be anti-racist to achieve the racial equity we seek to achieve in the region.

There are stories and priorities that communities of color and likeminded elected officials, public and private stakeholders want to tell about about the impact of institutional racism on lived experiences and there are stories that we are limited to telling because of data constraints. Communities of color are resilient; they have persisted, survived, mobilized and advocated. They are still here in Or-



## COALITION OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

egon despite repeated systemic attempts of genocide, “sundown” laws, restrictive immigration policies that also extract their labor, Islamophobia and xenophobia. They continue to counter and push back on persisting racial inequities. However, mainstream data practices have either wilfully or unintentionally rarely captured this resilience. Most attempts at data collection and analyses have rendered communities even more invisible or inflicted more trauma. Let the stories that are missing be a call to action for research justice—to empower communities of color as experts of their experience.



# CALL TO ACTION

We believe that Washington County is strongest when our communities thrive, where we are valued and respected, and the assets, strengths and resilience of our communities recognized. The following calls to action have emerged from this project. These are framed in a way that encourages various stakeholders such as local government, elected officials, public agencies, law enforcement, school districts, boards and commissions, private sector such as businesses, corporations and schools, to build power among communities of color to partner in racial justice change in Washington County. They are written in broad themes to give space for community-led, creative and cross-cultural solutions.

## 1. CROSS-SECTORAL CHANGE:

Communities of color experience institutional racism across systems of immigration, education, economic development, housing, health, incarceration and racial profiling and so on. Their experience in one system directly ties to their intersecting identities including documentation status and their experiences with other systems.

- a. Transformational change is cross-sectoral change and strategies should take into account the compounding effects of racism especially on undocumented immigrants and low-income people of color.
- b. Public and private institutions should prioritize and use their power to call out and dismantle racism across sectors.

## 2. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT:

Communities of color are re-defining equity, inclusion, diversity and leadership and leading strategies to bring about transformational change.

- a. Governments and public agencies should continue to emphasize the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion by including all communities of color in decision-making.
- b. Governments and public agencies should redress lack of representation

and integrate communities of color into every fiber of public governance such as budgeting and procurement, and hiring and retention of employees of color.

- c. Governments should build partnerships and relationships with communities of color and not be transactional, by valuing the time, expertise and experience of our communities of color and addressing barriers to participation.
- d. Governments and public agencies should collaborate with one another to create and implement racial equity plans.
- e. Democratic government should form boards and commissions in partnership with communities of color that have decision-making power and to which they are accountable.

### 3. CULTURAL SPECIFICITY:

Communities of color have varied histories and lived experiences in Washington County.

- a. There should be increased allocation of public and private resources for culturally specific and trauma informed services and programs.
- b. There should be increased provision of culturally specific and trauma informed services and programming especially in education, social services and healthcare.

### 4. EDUCATION:

Communities of color see education an important pathway for economic empowerment, an important basis of community building and cultural identity development among youth.

- a. Educational institutions should value, nourish and promote the various histories, heritage and languages of the student body.
- b. Educational institutions should reform practices to be empathetic of the lived experiences of students of color especially from low income, immigrants and refugee families in order to foster access to high quality education.

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- c. Educational institutions should address and dismantle barriers rooted in institutional racism to eliminate disparities in outcomes and experiences of all students of color.
- d. Educational institutions should be safe places for all students of color.

### 5. EQUITABLE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:

Communities of color contribute to the local and regional economy and seek to make Washington County their home.

- a. Public and private employers should ensure pay equity, opportunities for career advancement, workforce development and a safe and welcoming environment for employees of color especially for refugee communities.
- b. Both public and private institutions should dismantle discriminatory practices such as in financial lending practices, promote entrepreneurship among communities of color, recognize the aspirations, drive and talents of immigrants, and ensure affordable and fair housing.

### 6. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

Communities of color not only have a large voting eligible population, they are also organizers, thought leaders, candidates for office, elected officials and members of boards and commissions.

- a. Elected and appointed officials in all government and public agencies should reflect the communities of color they serve.
- b. Those in positions of power should make space for communities of color to run, vote, be elected, and be appointed to decision-making positions at all levels of power.
- c. Those in positions of power should create structures of support for people of color in elected and/or decision-making positions at all levels of power.
- d. Civic engagement should be inclusive of all people whether they have the right to vote or not.



## **7. COMMUNITY BUILDING:**

Communities of color live, play, pray/worship and work in Washington County despite centuries of racism and oppression.

- a. Their efforts to build community and connections to counteract isolation should be resourced and supported.
- b. There should be a culture of compassion and everyone should be respected and made to feel welcome.
- c. Washington County should celebrate its multiracial and multiethnic population.

## **8. RESEARCH JUSTICE:**

Communities of color are experts in their own lives, possessing experiential, historical, and cultural knowledge. Mainstream research and data do not capture the full lived experiences of communities of color.

- a. Communities of color should be partners in research design, data collection, data ownership, and data analysis as experts in their experiences.
- b. Governments and public agencies should recognize community experiences, expertise, and knowledge as evidence in policy making.
- c. Public agencies including schools and law enforcement should track data about communities of color that is hidden in mainstream data practices in a culturally appropriate manner in order to accurately assess racial disparities and differential treatment.
- d. Both public and private institutions should be transparent and accountable to communities of color by including them in evaluation of impact of policymaking on racial justice transformation in Washington County.

# COALITION OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR WASHINGTON COUNTY RESEARCH STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS



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<http://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/ccc-members/>



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