

## **RACIAL EQUITY COMMISSION REPORT**

**To:** Ms. Rozalyn Akins and Dr. Gerald Smith

**From:** Racial Equity Subcommittee Members

**Date:** October 2, 2020

**Subject:** Racial Equity Subcommittee Report

### **I. History of subcommittee meetings:**

The subcommittee held its first meeting on July 16, 2020 and continued to meet weekly thereafter until our final meeting on August 31, 2020. In addition to these meetings, subcommittee members engaged in independent discussions with the Co-Chairs of the other subcommittees. The goal of these discussions was to align our objectives and recommendations given the subcommittees specific focus on what we perceive as historical systematic barriers to racial equity and areas in which racial inequity continue to persist: housing, education, economics, police and law. Finally, Co-Chairs Mayo and Peeples interviewed Dr. Melynda Price and Dr. George Wright both of whom are recognized authors and speakers on racial equity issues.

Each subcommittee member was virtually present for the majority of all weekly meetings. Subcommittee members came prepared and engaged-actively participating and sharing insights and recommendations. Subcommittee members independently gathered research on particular racial inequities in our city and reviewed resources and reports provided by the LFUCG Task Force, and other local agencies addressing racial inequity and shared ideas bolstered by their own experiences, knowledge and skill sets to the group to develop recommendations to achieve racial equity within our community that are sustainable and accountable.

### **II. Documents Reviewed**

In addition to the meetings described above, subcommittee members reviewed the weekly meeting minutes of the other subcommittees and resources shared with these subcommittees as in our opinion racial equity must exist in education, health, economic, housing and within our police and legal institutions to truly accomplish and sustain racial equity throughout our community.

Most importantly, subcommittee members reviewed and analyzed the State of Black Lexington Report of 2010. Although this report is ten years old, it continues to have relevance to the situations which exist today. This invaluable resource outlines the socio-economic conditions of blacks in Lexington based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed by experts, which was synthesized with realistic and contemporary Lexington issues and conditions. This publication relies upon this data to provide guidance to help develop governmental strategies to address socio-economic conditions that contribute to racial inequity in Lexington in an effort to achieve racial equity. The information provided in this publication was also helpful to develop

strategies to influence governmental funding and legislation to improve racial equity within our community.

Finally, subcommittee members also reviewed and relied upon the resources noted in the attached appendix to share with those in our community seeking to gain a better understanding of Black culture/reality; how to disrupt unconscious biases using “every day” language to explain both the concept and mechanisms you need to do so or otherwise engage in race-conscious discussions.

### **III. List All Recommendations**

One of the first task tackled by our subcommittee was to define “racial equity.” While all members have faced inequities in some form in varying aspects of our lives over times, racial equity can take on a very different meaning depending upon one’s own life experiences and opportunities. Relying on these collective experiences and opportunities and the resources identified above, the subcommittee believes that Racial Equity exists when:

- The distribution of resources and opportunities is neither determined nor predicted by race, racial bias or racial ideology.
- The structures, systems, practices and cultural narratives in society provide true situational fairness and equal opportunity.
- There is a democratic commitment to dismantle the false narrative of white supremacy and address the legal, political, social, economic, cultural and historical contributors to inequity.
- Families and individuals are able to thrive and flourish in the intersections of all aspects of their identity, including race, religion, gender, orientation, ability, and socioeconomic background.
- The most vulnerable communities in society have access to mechanisms to achieve social mobility and voice in naming their reality, describing how these systems of oppression play out, and developing solutions which draw upon their assets.
- All people, cultures and identities are equally valued and recognized under the belief that strength comes through the diversity and expression of our shared humanity.

Developing, implementing and sustaining racial equity requires time, a strategic plan, and ongoing objectives that can be sustained with data points for future accountability metrics. The sub-committee focused on formulating the following objectives to achieve racial balance and promote equity in Lexington-Fayette County:

- Creating awareness of our community's problem of racism and its impact on all, especially our children.
- Communicating the long-term impacts of racial disproportionality and disparate outcomes on the Fayette County community.
- Expanding the coalition of anti-racist advocates and practitioners.
- Funding and implementing anti-racist training and education.

- Monitoring measurable outcomes of children in all related systems in Fayette County.
- Implementing evidence based best practices.
- Effecting public policy at the local and state level.

With this definitive terms and objectives in mind, we recommend the following:

#### **A. Racial Equity Impact Assessments**

Racial inequities in income, health, education, housing and other indicators of social and economic well-being have been created and perpetuated over multiple generations through systemic bias, public policy, and institutional practices. Eliminating these inequities requires ongoing review and thorough analysis of existing practices and future proposed policies to root out inequities and promote equity, opportunity, and inclusion.

Racial equity impact assessments are a formal process in which the city, school and other quasi-governmental agencies periodically review and analyze how a budgetary, policy of legislative decisions may impact differential racial and ethnic groups. These assessments will help local leaders to understand the racial equity implications of an existing or proposed policy, program, or institutional practice, and to determine if it will ameliorate or exacerbate existing racial inequities. By setting clear equity goals and establishing standards of measurement at the outset, leaders can maximize and accurately track the racial equity impacts of policy and budgetary decisions informed by the assessment process.

An equity impact assessment is a structured analysis that can be applied to any standard policy- or decision-making process by identifying the populations likely to be affected and taking steps to close existing racial gaps and/or mitigate unintended disparate impacts or consequences. This framework can easily be adapted and implemented throughout all city operations. Some racial equity assessment processes concentrate on budgets and expenditures, while others are designed to analyze all policy and program decisions. Addressing ongoing racial inequities is an economic as well as moral imperative: according to the National Equity Atlas, racial gaps in income cost the United States about \$2.4 trillion in 2014, and a 2015 report found that racial health inequities cost the economy an estimated \$245 billion in excess health care expenditures, illness-related lost productivity, and premature deaths.

Implementing this impact assessment requires government and agency leaders who are willing and able to support the planning, design, and execution of the assessment process — and to ensure that their findings inform policy decisions. Elected and appointed city officials can design tailored racial equity assessments and integrate them into policy development and implementation processes. Community-based organizations, residents, and advocates can promote the use of racial equity tools and hold officials accountable for their implementation.

#### **B. Multi-Media Racial Equity Communications**

To sustain and support public knowledge and engagement in racial equity issues, we also recommend the following:

1. Dedicate resources to creating and implementing a multi-media communications strategy designed to educate, inform and engage the community – with particular focus on engaging target populations – in the city’s ongoing work for racial justice.
  - a. Identify target audiences
  - b. Develop strategies and methods to communicate to those audiences
  - c. Create a “safe space” for ongoing community dialog and engagement
  - d. Determine whether publication guidelines have been adapted to allow for social media and other non-traditional platforms
  - e. Utilize relevant non-traditional and social media platforms to get the word out
  - f. Identify partners with strong platforms to funnel information through. (radio stations, community partners with large audiences, etc.)

The communication strategy should focus on the following priorities:

1. Distribution of information on the work of the Racial Equity task forces
2. Engagement opportunities to sustain ongoing work
3. Promotional mechanism for organizations, events, etc. to further engage identified communities
4. Events that promote racial justice – an example might be a “Get Out the Vote Campaign,” changes in laws or procedures that benefit marginalized groups, etc.

Resource requirements:

Dedicated resources including staff or contracted agencies who can:

Engage traditional and non-traditional media platforms to meet the communication strategy priorities.

Distill information so that it is engaging and accessible to a variety of audiences

Think creatively about how to get information into neighborhoods, community groups, social platforms, etc.

### **C. Job Training and Community Center**

**SUMMER YOUTH JOBS:** Providing young people with summer jobs allows them to gain valuable workforce experience in a safe, productive way during the summer months when they are out of school. But youth summer employment rates — like youth employment more generally — have fallen dramatically over the past few decades. Research has shown that summer employment is higher among teens from wealthy families than teens from poor families, and that White youth are significantly more likely to find summer jobs than young people of color: summer employment among 16- to 19-year-olds Whites was about 34 percent in 2015, compared with 19 percent for their Black peers.

Summer employment programs are not proven to positively impact future employment, earnings, or academic achievement, but they can give young people opportunities to develop work experience, soft skills, and professional relationships that can help them transition into longer-term

employment — which may be especially important for low-income youth and young people of color who do not have access to the same networks and social capital as their affluent White counterparts.

Summer youth employment programs can also help young people build financial stability at the critical moment of earning their first paychecks. Research shows that a low-income child with a savings account in their own name is four times more likely to complete college. In addition to workforce skills, summer youth employment programs can offer financial education and a safe infrastructure for young people to learn how to save and avoid high-cost, predatory financial services such as payday lenders and check-cashing services.

Elected and appointed city officials can establish a citywide or neighborhood-based summer youth employment program as part of the Job Training and Community Center. Business leaders can support summer youth employment by agreeing to hire a certain number of youth every summer, or offering donations to help fund job placements at nonprofits and government agencies. Community-based organizations and other advocates can hire youth as part of the employer base for summer youth employment programs and can also work with city leaders to ensure that programs effectively serve youth with the greatest need.

See the Brookings Institution and Federal Reserve Bank of Boston for more resources on summer youth employment.

**Apprenticeships:** In addition to delivering tailored training to meet the workforce needs of employers and expanding access to stable, family-supporting careers for workers without a college degree, apprenticeships can be an effective tool for advancing racial economic inclusion. Historically, many apprenticeships were administered through labor unions, effectively serving as legacy programs for friends and family of union members and largely excluding people of color, women, and other disconnected job seekers. But advocates, educators, workers, and program designers can implement key strategies to embed equity throughout the apprenticeship process, from recruitment to job placement and beyond. By working with employers to identify apprenticeable opportunities, establishing pre-apprenticeship training in partnership with community-based organizations, aligning apprenticeships with existing job training and other services targeting disadvantaged workers, and adopting specific equity metrics for program delivery — apprenticeship programs can increase access to high-quality training and good jobs for people of color and low-income workers while also meeting industry needs.

Elected and appointed city officials can support the use of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs offered by a Job Training and Community Center in public sector jobs and support the use of public workforce dollars, including state and federal funding streams, for apprentice programs in the private sector. For non-traditional apprenticeable occupations, the public sector can provide start-up investment and anchor apprenticeship programs in collaboration with private sector employers. Business leaders can participate in apprenticeship programs by working with government officials to offer paid apprentice employment and partnering with public agencies, unions, and community-based organizations to establish and secure resources for apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship programs will have successful equity outcomes where there are entry points that intentionally include outreach to people of color, women, and low-income job seekers. Employers — including frontline workers who can serve as trainers and mentors — and industry groups should be continuously engaged in program design and improvements. Local leaders seeking to implement or support the use of apprenticeships must consider a range of key issues to advance successful and equitable programs.

Finally, the Summer Youth & Apprenticeship Program experience helps youth connect the dots between school and work by helping them understand WHY reading, math and language are important. This effort ultimately helps close the achievement gap for poor and minority youth.

See COWS, Jobs for the Future Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning, and New America for more resources related to apprenticeships.

## APPENDIX

### Books:

- How to Be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi
- Just Mercy\* by Bryan Stevenson
- Slavery by Another Name by Douglas M. Blockmon
- The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander
- Waking up White by Debbie Irving
- White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo

### Movies:

- 13th\* (available on NetFlix)
- American Son (available on NetFlix)
- If Beale Street Could Talk (available on Amazon Prime)
- Just Mercy\* (based on book listed above)(available on Amazon Prime)
- Selma (available on Amazon Prime)

### Articles:

- 75 Things White People Can do to Fight Racial Injustice, by Corrine Shutack
- Don't Just Read About Racism – Read About Black People Living by Nic Stone
- Glorifying White Authors Like DiAngelo Erases Decades of Black Writing on Whiteness by Anastasia Karklina

### Other:

- 1619 New York Times Podcast
- Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- White Fragility DiAngelo on YouTube discussing her book (listed above)
- Slavery by Another Name, PBS Documentary (based on book listed above)