

# STRUCTURAL RACISM IN MIAMI

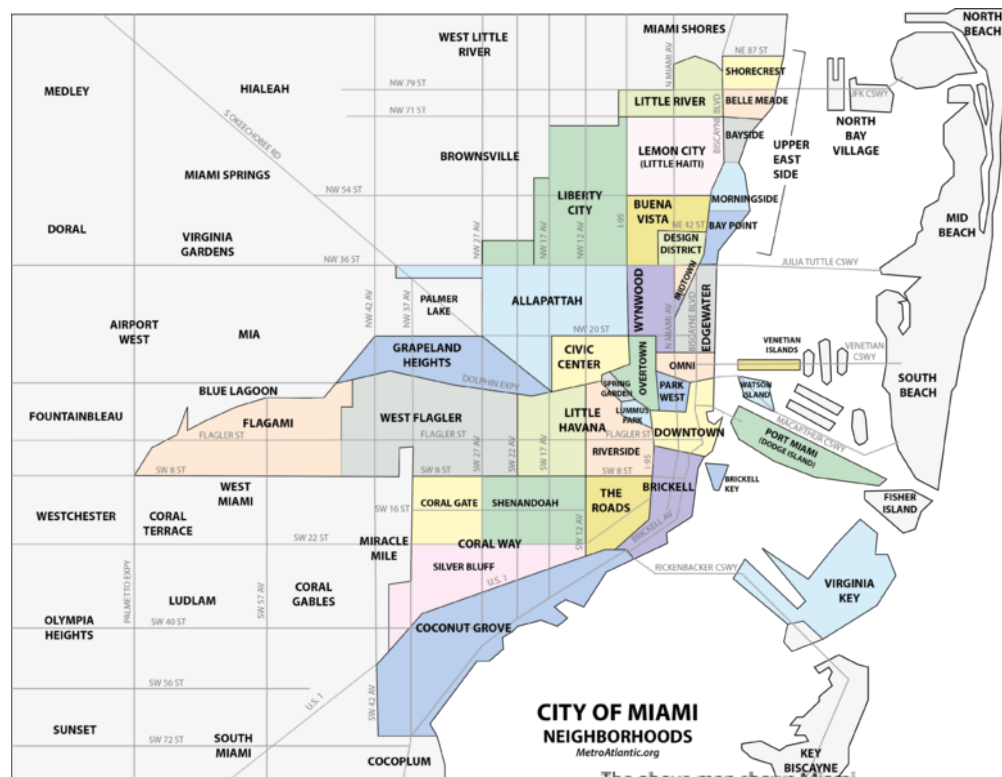
## FACTS, FIGURES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

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### Introduction

Black Miamians are experiencing racial inequities including climate gentrification, income inequality, and disproportionate impacts of COVID-19. Significant gaps in wealth also define the state of racial equity in Miami. Black Miamians have a median wealth of just \$3,700 per household compared to \$107,000 for white households.<sup>2</sup> These inequities reflect the consistent, patterned effects of structural racism and growing income and wealth inequalities in urban areas.

Beyond pointing out the history and impacts of structural racism in Miami, this city profile highlights the efforts of community activists, grassroots organizations and city government to disrupt the legacy of unjust policies and decision-making. In this brief we also offer working principles for Black-centered urban racial equity. Though not intended to be a comprehensive source of information, this brief highlights key facts, figures and opportunities to advance racial equity in Miami.



The above map shows Miami organized by neighborhood. Neighborhoods are referenced later throughout the brief.<sup>1</sup>

CURE developed this brief as part of a series of city profiles on structural inequities in major cities. They were originally created as part of an internal process intended to ground ourselves in local history and current efforts to achieve racial justice in cities where our client partners are located. With heightened interest in these issues, CURE is releasing these briefs as resources for organizers, nonprofit organizations, city government officials and others who are coordinating efforts to reckon with the history of racism and anti-Blackness that continues to shape city planning, economic development, housing and policing strategies. Residents most impacted by these systems are already leading the change and leading the process of reimagining Miami as a place where Black Lives Matter. We hope this brief provides a useful source of information for building understanding and supporting the deep and sustained work needed to build healthy, just, and sustainable cities and communities.

## The Changing Color of Miami

Although the Black population in Miami has increased since 2000, the growth of other racial groups has shrunk the percentage of Black residents from 19% in 2000 to 15.6% in 2019. From 2010 to 2018, Miami's suburbs in Broward County saw the Black population increase by 20% percent or approximately 100,000.<sup>3</sup> Many of Miami's long-time Black residents resettled in northern suburbs such as Miami Gardens because of rising housing costs.<sup>4</sup>

In Miami, 62.7% of renters are cost-burdened—spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing—according to a 2019 Apartment List study. Analyzing data from the U.S. Census Bureau, their report found Miami to have the highest percentage of cost-burdened renters among the nation's 100 largest metro areas. The study also found that nearly 34% of Miami renters are severely cost-burdened, spending half or more of their income on housing.<sup>5</sup> This is among the highest in the United States, according to the Center for Housing Policy.<sup>6</sup> These studies reflect a larger trend of skyrocketing rents and home prices in cities across the country, and are particularly problematic in Miami.

A billion-dollar mixed-use development project called Magic City is planned for Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood. Targeting startups and entrepreneurs, the project got the go-ahead from the city in 2019, and may

**Structural racism** refers to a system in which public policies and societal and institutional practices and norms work together to consistently produce disadvantages and inequities experienced among Black people and racially oppressed groups.

**Gentrification** is a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment...Gentrification is driven by private developers, landlords, businesses, and corporations, and supported by the government through policies that facilitate the process of displacement.

These policies often take the form of rezoning, subsidies, and other strategies that make development of expensive housing easier. This new housing is often designed to court new, wealthier and mostly white people moving into neighborhoods. Displacing a group of people in favor of newcomers dilutes the political power of working-class communities and communities of color by breaking up families, communities, and voting blocs. (Adapted from Development Without Displacement by Causa Justa: Just Cause)

have the impact of further exacerbating income and racial inequities in local real estate.<sup>7</sup>

Climate gentrification, the trend of rising property values in higher-elevation neighborhoods such as Little Haiti, Liberty City, and Allapattah, which have large Black and Latinx populations, adds another layer to Miami's racial housing inequity. These neighborhoods have become doubly burdened as Black and Latinx residents—displaced by white newcomers who can afford rising rents—are forced into low-lying areas that are more prone to flooding.<sup>8</sup> The price of housing stock in Miami is increasing more slowly at sea level than at higher elevations. Researchers have predicted the trend will accelerate as more people flee coastal hazards such as nuisance flooding and rising insurance premiums.<sup>9</sup>

## Poverty and Economic Inequality

The median white household income in Miami is more than \$70,000, more than three times the median income of the typical Black or Latinx household in the city. Latinx residents, in general, earn more than Black Miamians. The median household income for the former ranged from roughly \$25,000 among Cuban households to around \$46,000 for Mexican households. The median income for Black households is just over \$21,000.<sup>10</sup> A 2016 report by Florida International University found that poverty disproportionately affects women of color in Miami. The poverty rate for white men was 10.6% compared to 31.1% for Black women.<sup>11</sup> In 2018, the graduation rate for all Black students in Miami public high schools was just 80.9% and represented a decrease from 2017.<sup>12</sup> Completion of high school is an important anti-poverty measure. Improving graduation rates in Miami should occur alongside better access to employment opportunities and livable wage jobs that offer paid sick leave.

## Declining Housing Affordability, Rising Evictions

A number of organizations have banded together to launch housing affordability campaigns especially in Miami-Dade County's economically distressed neighborhoods. They include Miami Homes For All (MHFA), Struggle for Miami's Affordable and Sustainable Housing (SMASH), People Acting for Community Together (PACT), and Fanm Ayisyen nan Miyami (FANM). Organizations such as PACT have been successful in working with the county to implement a number of pro-affordability reforms. These include establishing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to create low-income housing.<sup>13</sup> The city of Miami recently put in place a \$400 million Forever Bond program with \$100 million of those funds earmarked for affordable housing,<sup>14</sup> with the goal of 12,000 affordable units either being built or preserved by 2024.<sup>15</sup>

### *Rental Housing Conditions*

In 2009, residents of several Miami neighborhoods were surveyed about their living conditions. Nearly a thousand residents of Liberty City, Little Haiti, Wynwood, Allapattah, Overtown,

Coconut Grove, and Little Havana neighborhoods responded to the questionnaire. The two organizations that conducted the survey —the Power U Center for Social Change and the Community Justice Project (CJP) of Florida Legal Services—found that 25% of respondents indicated that they live in overcrowded homes. Seventy six percent (76%) experience some type of housing problem. More than half (59%) had cockroaches, which are known to be a factor in health conditions, such as asthma.<sup>16</sup> And more than a quarter (26%) reported seeing rats or mice in their rental units. Two-thirds of respondents had a tenuous month-to-month lease. Almost half (48%) had moved once or twice within the previous five years, and more than 20% had moved three or more times.<sup>17</sup> Having to move numerous times can negatively impact health outcomes and reduce children’s academic performance.<sup>18</sup>

### *Evictions*

CJP also analyzed more than 24,000 residential eviction cases between January 2008 and April 2009. A disproportionate number had occurred in the city’s poorest neighborhoods. The analysis found that the county’s five poorest zip codes contained 11% of renter households, but approximately 15% of the eviction filings.<sup>19</sup>

Following similar COVID-19 measures by government officials across the country, in April 2020, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis issued a 45-day suspension on all evictions and foreclosures in the state. The moratorium was extended through July 1, 2020.<sup>20</sup> Advocates, including those with Legal Services of Greater Miami, have warned that if moratoriums are lifted there will be a massive number of evictions,<sup>21</sup> especially in Black communities.<sup>22</sup>

### *Homeownership*

A 2017 Zillow study analyzed potential homeownership eligibility in Miami and Fort Lauderdale and found that the average white homebuyer could afford 59.7% of homes, as opposed to just 35.9% of homes for the average Black homebuyer.<sup>23</sup> Miami has one of the lowest overall homeownership rates in the country. A 2019 report showed that only about 30% of homes in Miami are owner-occupied, the third lowest of any major American city.<sup>24</sup>

## Historical Snapshot

The Tequesta were indigenous to the Miami-Dade County area. The mouth of the Miami River served as a central site for Tequesta villages and tribal life. By the 1800s, only a few Tequesta survived death and disease brought upon by European colonizers.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1870's, craftsmen from the Bahamas, seeking better opportunities, settled in what is now known as Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhood.<sup>29</sup> Many Bahamians helped to build a complex system of railroads and hotels, beginning in 1896 and continuing into the early part of the next century, along Florida's east coast. Henry Flagler, who co-founded Standard Oil with John D. Rockefeller, financed many of Miami's first hotels and railroad projects.<sup>30</sup>

The Spanish-American War in 1898, brought an influx of white settlers to Miami from Key West and other areas.<sup>31</sup> After the war, white residents lobbied politicians to enact Jim Crow laws.<sup>32</sup> Still, Black people were crucial to the incorporation of Miami in 1896. Of the 368 men who voted to incorporate the city, 162 were Black.<sup>33</sup>

A separate "suburb" called Colored Town arose in the wake of Jim Crow restrictive covenants, which kept Black people from getting land deeds within city limits. Colored Town and Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhoods remained the only places Black people could live until the late 1930s. Colored Town became a hub for Black culture with its Avenue G, also known as Little Broadway, attracting Black entertainers of national stature, who performed in local nightclubs and dance halls. After the area was incorporated into Miami, it became known as Overtown.



A postcard from Overtown, 1907<sup>25</sup>

In the late 1930's, the city planning board sought to expand the city's central business district, and a commission made up entirely of white men successfully lobbied for a housing project to be built on the outskirts of Miami to house Black residents. In 1937, Liberty Square was constructed in what is now known as Liberty City with over 200 units. It was the first public housing project for Black Americans in the South. Many Black Miamians moved to Liberty City after the housing project was built.<sup>34</sup>



In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Railroad Shop Colored Addition, a predominantly Black neighborhood was established in what is now the Allapattah neighborhood. The neighborhood was started by Black rail workers and eventually became a thriving Black neighborhood. However, white residents successfully pressured the city of Miami to remove Black families to make room for white-only communities. Between 1947 and 1949, the city of Miami used eminent domain to evict more than 80 Black households to construct a “whites-only” school, park, and fire station. The city often used armed police officers to force Black families to leave.<sup>35</sup>



Liberty City housing <sup>27</sup>

Many American cities in the 20th Century concentrated Black residents in the lower-lying sections of the city.<sup>36,37</sup> White residents who could often afford it chose to live in less-flood prone areas of town. In Miami the opposite occurred. Redlining in the 1930s and 1940s put Black communities on higher-elevation land, which was further from the desirable waterfront areas and beaches. Higher-elevation areas such as present day Little Haiti, Little Havana, and Liberty City were given the lowest grade, D.<sup>38</sup> Grade D meant that these neighborhoods were considered “hazardous” by government surveyors. Grade D areas were given fewer mortgages so homeownership rates and housing quality were lower.<sup>39</sup>

Many public amenities such as parks had been restricted for Black people in Miami since the 1890s. The building boom of the 1920s increasingly privatized public spaces and left Black Miamians with little or no access to sites for public recreation. In 1938, the Dade County Planning Board called for “Colored” beaches for Black residents. With frustration growing around Black soldiers fighting in World War II but Black people receiving little freedom in public spaces at home, Black residents of Miami decided to do something. In May 1945, two Black women and four Black men conducted a “wade in” at the white only Haulover Beach.<sup>40</sup> Virginia Key Beach was designated an exclusively Black beach later that year. In the 1960s, Black activism led to legal use of other beaches in the Miami-Dade area. In 1982, the city of Miami closed access to Virginia Key Beach and was considering developing the land. Local Black activists demanded that the site not be developed and instead be preserved due to its historical significance. In 2002, Virginia Key Beach Park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and in 2010 it reopened to the public.<sup>41</sup>

In 1955, Interstate 95 was extended through the middle of Overtown.<sup>42</sup> The city claimed eminent domain and evicted thousands of Black families, offering them little to no relocation

assistance.<sup>43</sup> The highway negatively impacted Overtown's population growth and economic vitality.<sup>44</sup>

In the 1960s, the federal government persuaded Miami to fund more home loans and award more public service jobs to Cuban immigrants than to Black residents. The government also awarded 50 times the amount of business loans and grants to Cuban immigrants as it did to Black Miami business owners. This racial dynamic, intensified by Jim Crow, further relegated Black Miamians to "second-class status."<sup>45</sup>

Local leadership favoring Cubans over Blacks has its roots in 1959, after Fidel Castro ascended to power in Cuba. Many business owners fled the island, worried their businesses would be seized by the new regime. Meanwhile, the U.S. feared Castro's communist-friendly regime and its ties to the then-USSR, and incentivized Cuban business owners to resettle in the U.S.

In the 1960s, many Haitian refugees began arriving in the Miami area seeking political asylum. Advocates argued that the refugees were fleeing legitimate political persecution. The federal government repeatedly denied Haitian refugees a chance to plead their case, and many were forced into detention centers for months before being deported back to Haiti. This policy continued into the later part of the century with one report by *Haiti Insight* in 1991 estimating that the United States Coast Guard spent an average of \$45,000 per day intercepting and returning Haitians to their homeland.<sup>46</sup> Haitian refugees and immigrants that were allowed to stay often faced severe negative stereotypes and many struggled to find stable employment throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Those that were able to secure employment often encountered significant barriers to acquiring higher paying jobs and advancing in the workplace. Although many Haitian immigrants were granted temporary protected status following a 2010 hurricane in the country, just days before Hurricane Matthew hit the country in 2016, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it would crack down on Haitian immigration to the United States.<sup>47</sup> In 2017, the Trump administration announced that it would cancel temporary protected status for immigrants from a number of countries including Haiti, putting the legal status of more than 50,000 Haitians living in the U.S. in jeopardy.<sup>48,49</sup>

In 1967, Miami police chief Walter Headley became infamous for his horrific policies in Black and Latinx communities. He had officers patrol these neighborhoods with dogs, and used the phrase "when the looting starts, the shooting starts" to announce his department's crackdown on "hoodlums." President Trump, known for using racist dog whistles, quoted Headley in May 2020 to signal his support for violent police tactics against Minneapolis protestors protesting the police killings of Black people including George Floyd.<sup>50</sup>

Instances of police brutality still linger in the minds of Black and Latinx communities. After Arthur McDuffie, a 33-year-old insurance agent ran a red light on his motorcycle in 1979, the former Marine was beaten into a coma by upwards of a dozen white Miami-Dade County police officers. They tried to cover it up by staging the crime as if it were an accident.<sup>51</sup> Some officers who took part in the beating were immunized for their testimony. One officer, who was never

charged, admitted to kicking McDuffie in the head "to get a shot in." In the following months, Black residents led an uprising in response to this and other racial injustices in the city.<sup>52</sup> The city promised investment in Black neighborhoods following the uprising. The city failed to follow through on the investment.<sup>53</sup>

Many of the county's "Decade of Progress" bonds issued in the 1970s excluded communities of color. Urban renewal policies displaced Black Miamians and left them unable to find affordable housing and gainful employment, according to a 1980 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Much of the rebuilding at the end of the century and beginning of the 2000's, including new skyscrapers, retail facilities, and educational complexes, have not benefited Black residents.<sup>54</sup> The Urban League of Greater Miami has also noted a lack of investment in many of the schools in Liberty City.<sup>55</sup>

In 2015, the mayor announced plans to tear down and rebuild the city's Liberty Square housing project. The \$74 million revitalization project<sup>56</sup> is an attempt to improve living conditions in Liberty Square and create jobs in the Liberty City neighborhood. The Liberty Square Rising initiative is the largest public housing redevelopment project in the county's history.<sup>57</sup>

While Miami's diverse population of Latinx and Caribbean immigrants is one of its strengths, anti-Black sentiment among some Latinx populations has been part of the reality of Black life in the region for decades.<sup>58</sup> In the wake of Black Lives Matter Protests in 2020, these sentiments surfaced in public view as the Miami-Dade County school board debated whether to adopt a proposal to implement an anti-racism curriculum and create a student task force focused on racial justice. The initiative passed with support from school board members across-racial and ethnic backgrounds represented on the body. Protests in support of the movement for Black Lives have been organized by Latinx residents and offer a glimpse into an emerging, cross-racial and ethnic progressive movement for racial justice in Miami.<sup>59</sup>



A group of protesters hold signs and scream in favor of reuniting families separated at the border.<sup>26</sup>



## Homelessness

Racial inequities are reflected in the make-up of Miami's homeless population. While Black residents represent 18% of Miami-Dade County's general population, they comprise 56% of the homeless population. Differing outcomes by race in Miami-Dade County's Continuum of Care programs (emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing) aimed at supporting those vulnerable to homelessness, suggest differential treatment of and experiences among Black homeless program participants, according to a 2018 Homeless Trust assessment. According to the assessment, white participants have a longer stay in permanent supportive housing and are less likely to exit to homelessness compared to Black participants.<sup>60</sup> Further study and analysis is needed to understand how Black residents experiencing homelessness are interacting with these services. The authors of the report also recommend that continuum of care service providers take action to ensure that their leadership and direct service staff reflect the communities served and receive anti-racism training.

## Hunger and Food Insecurity

Food insecurity, defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active and healthy life is particularly acute in traditionally Black Miami neighborhoods such as Liberty City.<sup>61,62</sup> Overtown, Allapattah, Little Havana, and many other Black and Latinx neighborhoods struggle with a lack of access to supermarkets, according to the USDA and U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>63</sup> There have been numerous reports of residents from neighborhoods such as Little Haiti and Little Havana experiencing food insecurity after natural disasters such as Hurricane Irma.

Hurricanes in Miami often leave many people without the ability to get to work. For lower-income communities especially, this compounds poverty that already exists. Before hurricanes wealthier residents are able to evacuate. People who can not afford to leave are often told by government agencies to stock up on supplies including food as it may be unclear what access to food may be like after the storm. Many lower-income communities in Miami can not afford to do this. Power outages caused by hurricanes may also leave vulnerable families food insecure as refrigerator access at home and at stores may be reduced.<sup>64</sup>

While communities of color have benefited from the time and food volunteers at social justice organizations, including New Florida Majority, have donated,<sup>65</sup> when residents of predominantly Black neighborhoods such as Overtown have tried to access better food options in other neighborhoods, they often risked arrest. Research from FIU<sup>66</sup> and an investigation by WLRN and Miami Herald have drawn attention to the hundreds of arrests, many of them of Black residents of Overtown, which have occurred. Although in 90% of the cases the charges were either dismissed or the prosecution chose not to pursue the case, the arrests remain on residents' records.<sup>67</sup>

## Criminal Justice and Police Violence

An ACLU report that analyzed data on all adult criminal defendants between 2010 and 2015 found racial and ethnic inequities across multiple decision points within Miami-Dade County's criminal justice system. For example, the percentage of Black people in the arrested population was double their percentage in the overall population. Black Latinx defendants served jail or prison sentences at a rate of more than six times their percentage in the county. Additionally, Black defendants were more likely to be detained pretrial; to have their trial end in a conviction; and to receive probation or credit for time served less often than white defendants.<sup>68</sup>

There are numerous instances of Miami police targeting Black and Latinx people. One example is Dr. Armen Henderson, a Black internal medicine physician with the University of Miami Health System. He has been working to test Miami's homeless population for COVID-19 since March of 2020. In April, he was loading supplies into a van that he intended to give to homeless residents in downtown Miami. A police officer confronted Dr. Henderson about excessive trash in his yard although only small items can be seen in footage of the incident. The officer asked Dr. Henderson for his ID. When Dr. Henderson did not immediately have the ID on him, he was handcuffed and yelled at. The officer put Dr. Henderson's health at risk by violating social distancing rules.<sup>69</sup> An investigative panel would later determine that because the officer believed that Dr. Henderson was dumping trash in the neighborhood, he was justified in detaining him.<sup>70</sup>

In June 2020, the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners approved an ordinance to revive an independent review panel to oversee the Miami-Dade Police Department. The panel would allow people to file complaints against Miami-Dade police officers and have county staff investigate the claims.<sup>71</sup> However many Miami residents feel this is not enough and have demanded that local commissioners and council members take further action including defunding law enforcement focused departments. Demonstrators have protested at events at the Miami-Dade County courthouse, in the Brickell neighborhood, and along I-95, and other actions.<sup>72</sup> In Miami, 32% of the city's 800 million dollar budget goes to the police department while 0.7% of general fund dollars are spent on the department of human services. At a June City Council meeting, more than 75 activists and residents spoke against additional security cameras and license plate readers noting that they would lead to further over-policing.<sup>73</sup> Many local groups including the NAACP and Black Lives Matter have called for defunding the police department in Miami. Many activists and residents of Miami's suburbs with significant Black populations, including Fort Lauderdale are also demanding their local politicians defund police departments. At a June 2020 meeting, activists pressured commissioners to discuss defunding the Fort Lauderdale Police Department by as much as \$10 million.<sup>74</sup> The initiative is backed by Black Lives Matter and other South Florida organizing groups.<sup>75</sup>

## Health Status and Health Care Access

Good health depends on the resources and opportunities that are available where we live, learn, work and play. Social, political and economic barriers have produced stark differences in health status and health care access by race, neighborhood, and income in the city. The *2019 Community Health Assessment*, prepared by the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County reported racial health inequities across a number of key health outcomes. For example, the proportion of babies born with a low-birth weight is two times higher among babies born to Black teen mothers than to white teen mothers in Miami-Dade County. The Black population in Miami-Dade county also has higher rates of cancer than the white population. The diabetes death rates in Miami-Dade is significantly higher for Black residents (45.4 of 100,000 from 2015-2017) than the white residents (18.1 of 100,000 from 2015-2017).<sup>76</sup>

Racial health inequities in access to health care and dental services in the city have also been documented. According to 2016 data from the Florida Department of Health, only 59.8% of Latinx adults and 67.8% of Black adults went to the dentist compared to 71.5% of the adult white population. Many compounding inequitable health outcomes are linked to health care and dental care access.<sup>77</sup>

As noted in Figure 1 below, Miami's neighborhoods with the highest levels of uninsured residents corresponded to neighborhoods that are predominantly Black and Latinx.<sup>78</sup>

Figure 1: Percent Uninsured by Neighborhood, 2012-2016

Cluster	Percent Uninsured
Brownsville/Coral Gables/Coconut Grove	31.72%
North Miami/North Miami Beach	30.51%
Downtown/East Little Havana/Liberty City/Little Haiti/Overtown	29.10%
Hialeah/Miami Lakes	26.43%
Opa-Locka/Miami Gardens/Westview	26.43%
South Dade/Homestead	25.12%
Doral/Miami Springs/Sunset	23.57%
Miami Shores/Morningside	22.63%
Kendall	19.12%
Aventura/Miami Beach	18.25%
Westchester/West Dade	18.16%
Coral Gables/Coconut Grove/Key Biscayne	14.01%
Coral Gables/Kendall	11.30%
<b>Miami-Dade County</b>	<b>23.10%</b>

(Florida Department of Health, 2019)

## COVID-19 Pandemic

Initial reports from Florida suggested that the state did not have the same racial inequities in COVID-19 deaths as other states. The Florida Department of Health reported that 17 percent of Florida residents who have died are Black, in line with the 17% of Floridians who are Black.<sup>79</sup> However in Miami-Dade County, Black residents have tested positive at a rate of 4.6% compared to 3.1% for white residents. While the county's population is around 18% Black, Black residents represent about 24% of the hospitalizations for COVID-19 and around 26% of the deaths in the county from the virus.<sup>80</sup> Florida Governor DeSantis has received criticism for firing a top data scientist from the Florida Department of Health. The scientist has alleged that she was fired for refusing to manipulate data related to COVID-19 and the states reopening.<sup>81</sup> Accurate and timely data on racial health inequities including COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths, is critical to mitigating the already devastating health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic on Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities.

Miami topped the list of highest percentages of workers in jobs with significant public interaction, in cities with at least 1 million people, according to a recent study of metro areas by the University of Maine. The data came from the Bureau of Labor Statistics O\*NET survey.<sup>82</sup> Many of these jobs are held by people of color. For example, in Miami-Dade County more than 50% of transportation workers are Black. In May 2020, the Transport Workers Union Local 29, which represents bus drivers, train operators, and other transit employees, filed a charge to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The charge alleged that, despite requests for more protective equipment, the county failed to distribute enough masks, gloves and cleaning products to safeguard employees. The grievance further states that the county's actions have had a disparate impact on Black transportation workers, in violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.<sup>83</sup> Failure to provide adequate PPE has placed Black transit workers at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus.

Areas with higher densities mean residents live closer to one another, which can make it difficult to maintain social distancing and lead to increased risk of contracting COVID-19. Many of Miami's predominantly Black neighborhoods, where some of these workers live, are zoned for higher density housing, which places people who live there at greater risk for contracting COVID-19. Nearly 94% of multigenerational households in Miami are Black or Latinx and are at higher risk of becoming infected or dying.<sup>84</sup>

## The Path Forward: Promising Strategies and Policies

In Miami, as in many cities across the country, there's a powerful movement afoot to dismantle structural racism and resist the forces of inequitable urban development. This movement seeks housing and tenants' rights, community-led urban development, jobs that pay a livable wage, and reallocation of funds from police to services and programs that support health, safety and sustainability in Black, Latinx, and low-income communities of color. Some of these efforts are highlighted below.

### *Voting Rights*

In 2018, Florida voters approved an amendment that restored the right to vote to more than 1.4 million people with felony convictions in the state. Amendment 4, restored the right to all felons who completed "all terms of sentence." In January 2019, the Republican-led Florida legislature passed a bill that defined all terms of sentence to include paying all legal financial obligations including fines, fees and restitution.<sup>85</sup> Many Black activists and civil rights groups critiqued the bill calling it a 'modern day poll-tax'. In 2019, Miami-Dade County created a plan allowing judges to waive many of the financial penalties, helping an estimated 150,000 people in Miami-Dade with felony convictions in their eligibility to vote.<sup>86</sup> In May 2020, a U.S. District Court Judge ruled that the law requiring payment of legal fees was unconstitutional.<sup>87</sup>

### *Housing Justice*

Although proposals to mandate 'workforce housing' in all new residential projects has proven unsuccessful, Miami area commissioners have approved measures that would grant builders density bonuses for setting aside a number of units as workforce and affordable housing.<sup>87</sup> In 2018, Miami passed its first-ever mandatory affordable-housing ordinance. The ordinance forced developers building near the Adrienne Arsht Center and along the Downtown border with Overtown to create affordable housing for residents making between 60 to 140 percent of the city's median income among other affordable housing requirements.<sup>88</sup> In February 2020, the Miami Planning Zoning & Appeals Board backed lowering the income requirements to qualify for 'workforce housing' by as much as 40%.<sup>89</sup>

The Liberty Square Rising redevelopment project is not only an affordable housing project in a predominantly Black neighborhood, it is also focused on sliding scale pricing, numerous locally owned businesses, community centers, job training programs, financial literacy courses, educational institutions and legal support.<sup>90</sup> SMASH has recently secured a site on which to provide affordable housing and services to the residents of the Liberty City neighborhood through a Community Land Trust. Programming associated with the Community Land Trust will include expedited housing for families currently living in squalid or overcrowded conditions; long-term transitional housing for LGBTQ homeless youth; and hubs for disaster preparedness and response. SMASH will host town halls to ensure residents from Liberty City are a part of the planning process.<sup>9192</sup>



### *Health and Climate Equity*

Researchers for University of Miami's Housing Resiliency project recommend more housing developments that are close to public transportation, have better home-cooling features, and are elevated to avoid flooding.<sup>93</sup> The researchers also urge that community-benefit agreements be put in place, which would ensure neighborhood residents are consulted about their housing needs before new communities are erected.<sup>94</sup>

Recognizing the need to ease the effects of climate gentrification, In 2018, the city adopted a resolution that would support research on the effects of climate change on inland areas and methods for stabilizing property tax rates in these areas.<sup>95</sup> However Miami still has a long way to go if it intends to truly center Black communities.

Community organizations including Catalyst Miami and SMASH have also been successful in pushing for solutions to address climate gentrification including the resolution focused on research on the effects of climate change and methods for stabilizing property tax rates.<sup>96</sup> Catalyst Miami launched a 12-week leadership training program to teach residents about the impact of climate resilience through an equity lens, bringing low-income communities and people of color to the forefront of the conversation.<sup>97</sup>

Miami based activists including those associated with the Family Action Network Movement (FANM), have called upon the federal government to give Haitians who moved to Miami when they were children, better access to affordable health insurance during the COVID-19 pandemic. FANM has joined more than 280 other groups across the country to encourage the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to expand access to the Affordable Care Act to 200,000 DACA recipients.<sup>98</sup>

### *Anti-Racism Educational Curriculum*

A proposal brought forth by Black school board member Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall would direct the school superintendent to enhance curriculum to address racism. It would also establish a student task force that would "discuss institutional systemic racism in our society" and report back to the school board quarterly.<sup>99</sup> In June 2020, the Miami-Dade County school board voted to approve the proposal.<sup>100</sup>

## ***Working Principles for Black-Centered Urban Racial Equity***

There is still much work to be done to dismantle the legacy of structural racism in Miami. This includes confronting the legacy of anti-Black racism and the role it has played in shaping the city. It also requires sustained and targeted investment in Black residents, communities, organizations, businesses and institutions. Critical to fostering the condition for racial equity in the city is ending the over-policing and treatment of Black residents as criminals, while reimagining what's needed to achieve public safety and community wellness.

- **Confront anti-Black racism** and continually interrogate the role it plays in shaping every aspect of urban life including city and regional planning, neighborhood boundaries, exposure to environmental hazards and access to health care, jobs, transportation, healthy food options, parks and recreational facilities.
- **Prevent gentrification and displacement** by rejecting hypergrowth market-oriented “creative class” city planning strategies. Embrace resident-led community development practices, racial equity impact assessments and equitable development strategies that create and preserve affordable housing and promote community wealth-building and ownership.
- **Defund policing** by reimagining what is needed for public safety and ending the over policing and criminalizing of Black people. Participatory budgeting can be used to reallocate funds to support housing, health care, workforce development, jobs and social services that foster safety, economic security and community wellness.
- **Listen to and invest in local Black-led organizations, businesses and institutions** already engaged in efforts to foster racially equitable policies, systems, neighborhoods and communities. Shift power by practicing equitable partnerships and grantmaking that center on trust, mutual accountability, transparency and respect for the wisdom, experience, and skills present in Black communities.
- **Think and plan intersectionally** by developing an analysis of how race intersects with class, gender, sexuality, immigration status and ability. Understanding the ways that various forms of exclusion work together to increase vulnerability contributes to a fuller analysis of racial inequities and better targeted strategies to address them.
- **Commit to sustained and targeted investment in community economic development** strategies that support well-paying jobs, quality, affordable housing and educational and entrepreneurship opportunities for Black residents.

Community organizers, city governments, philanthropic organizations and businesses can leverage this moment to amplify calls for policies, programs, and systemic changes that aim to dismantle structural racism and create the conditions for racial equity. Local governments must fully honor these demands by listening to and working in partnership with residents to develop, fund and implement policies and strategies that build and support a vision for a racially equitable city.

## Resources and Community-Based Organizations

- [Catalyst Miami](#) works to identify and collectively solve issues adversely affecting low-wealth communities throughout Miami-Dade County.
- [Dream Defenders](#) organizes Black and Brown youth to build power in communities and advance a new vision for the state.
- [Family Action Network Movement \(FANM\)](#) works to empower Haitian women and their families socially, economically, politically and to facilitate their adjustment to South Florida.
- [Florida Immigrant Coalition](#) is a statewide alliance of more than 62 member organizations, including farmworkers, students, service providers, grassroots organizations and legal advocates, who come together for the fair treatment of all people, including immigrants.
- [New Florida Majority](#) works to increase the voting and political power of marginalized and excluded constituencies toward an inclusive, equitable, and just Florida.
- [Miami Workers Center](#) is a strategy and action center whose purpose is to build the power and self-determination of south Florida's most oppressed communities, and help to build a progressive voice and platform that can nurture the growth of movements for social change in Florida and in the United States.
- [South Florida People of Color](#) works to disrupt racism and bigotry by providing creative programs for open dialogue and personal interaction across the racial, ethnic and cultural divides.
- [Struggle for Miami's Affordable and Sustainable Housing \(SMASH\)](#) works to create a Community Land Trust that will adequately address the needs of inner-city Miami residents affected by the symptoms of gentrification (slumlords, rising rents, lack of community control), and that is shaped, developed and implemented by those same residents.
- [People Acting for Community Together \(PACT\)](#) works to use the power of large organized people to hold public officials accountable to create systemic change in Miami-Dade County.

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