

STRUCTURAL RACISM IN PHILADELPHIA FACTS, FIGURES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

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Introduction

Philadelphia, like many other cities, has been shaped by a history of structural violence and racial injustice. But out of this history, a rich tradition of Black radical organizing emerged and continues to shape a vision for racial justice in Philly.

Police violence, gentrification, income inequality, and disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black residents in Philadelphia reflect the consistent, patterned effects of structural racism. Beyond pointing out the history and impacts of structural racism in Philly, 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 Philadelphia.

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



Philadelphia Map by Neighborhood

these systems are already leading the change and leading the process of reimagining Philly 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 Philly

In Philadelphia, displacement is particularly intense for the city's Black residents. According to the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, between 2000 and 2013, 57 census tracts had gentrified and 16 had shown a significant decline in Black population. This decline is the third most of any city in the nation with almost 750 black residents leaving Philadelphia on average.² Additionally, the Graduate Hospital area, once a largely Black neighborhood, saw an influx of middle- and upper-middle-class renters and home buyers gentrify the neighborhood between 2006 and 2017, according to federal census figures. During that period, average incomes rose from \$60,424 to \$91,445, making the area the highest-ranked in the city in terms of income.³

Since 1990, the city's racial and ethnic makeup has changed dramatically. The white population has declined by a third between 1990 and 2010. The Asian population in Philadelphia has more than doubled in the same time period, and a rapidly growing Latinx population has also expanded to different parts of the city.⁴ The Black population has remained relatively stable in terms of population size, but has declined steadily in the city's core (e.g., North-Central Philly) as Black residents have been pushed to neighborhoods closer to the suburbs.³

The city has lost roughly 20,000 low-cost rental units (rent and utilities under \$750) since 2000, a 2016 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia found. The Black population has also decreased, especially in West Philly where it decreased 29% between 2000 and 2012.⁵ A new analysis of American ZIP codes shows that two of the nation's top 20 neighborhoods impacted by gentrification — Northern Liberties (19123) and Point Breeze (19146) are in Philadelphia. Compiled by the RentCafe blog, the report examined data for 11,000 U.S. ZIP codes between 2000 and 2016 to determine rankings.⁶

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)

The city's 10-year tax abatement policy may be in part to blame for the changing demographics in the city. Older homes surrounded by new construction have seen their property taxes rise due to improvements, while many new building owners receive a 10-year tax subsidy.⁷

Poverty and Economic Inequality

Approximately 380,000 residents or nearly 25% of the population live below the poverty level, according to a 2020 study by the Pew Charitable Trusts.⁸ The median income in Philadelphia is \$46,116 in 2020.⁹ Concentrated poverty in Philadelphia is growing, especially in North Philadelphia, one of the city's historically Black and chronic high poverty areas.¹⁰ Communities of color have struggled to recover from the Great Recession (2007-2009).¹¹ Nearly 31% of Black residents lived below the poverty line in 2018, compared to 15% of white residents.¹²

The hourly minimum wage is \$7.25. While a nonbinding ballot measure in 2019 passed in the city to increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour, the city doesn't have the power to increase the rate except for city employees and contractors. The minimum wage has particular impacts by race and gender. Workers earning the minimum wage are disproportionately likely to be Black, Latinx and women workers. For example, 45% percent of minimum wage earners are Black and 57% are women.¹³

In 2020, the City Council approved a bill to refund the local wage tax to the lowest-income workers. The local wage tax was the highest in the country. In March 2020, the City Council's Special Committee on Poverty Reduction and Prevention issued a 14-page document with recommendations on how to alleviate poverty in Philadelphia.¹⁴ Proposals included providing rent subsidies, guaranteed income, increasing the availability of adult education in every neighborhood, and streamlining the application process for federal benefits. The plan is awaiting mayoral¹⁵ and state approval.¹⁶

Other inequities in employment that hinder economic mobility must also be addressed. Black women face, for example, face significant barriers in attaining jobs in management, business, science and arts occupations in Philadelphia. This has resulted in differing percentages of women working in those fields including 49% of white women and 31% of Black women. Black women have seen very little improvements in employment in these fields since 2005.¹⁷ In 2018, the high school graduation rate for Black students was just 60.6% compared to 67.5% for white students.¹⁸ On time graduation from high school is a good anti-poverty measure. In Philadelphia raising the graduation rate among Black students must be done in conjunction with fair access to employment opportunities and livable wage jobs that offer paid sick leave.

Declining Housing Affordability, Rising Evictions

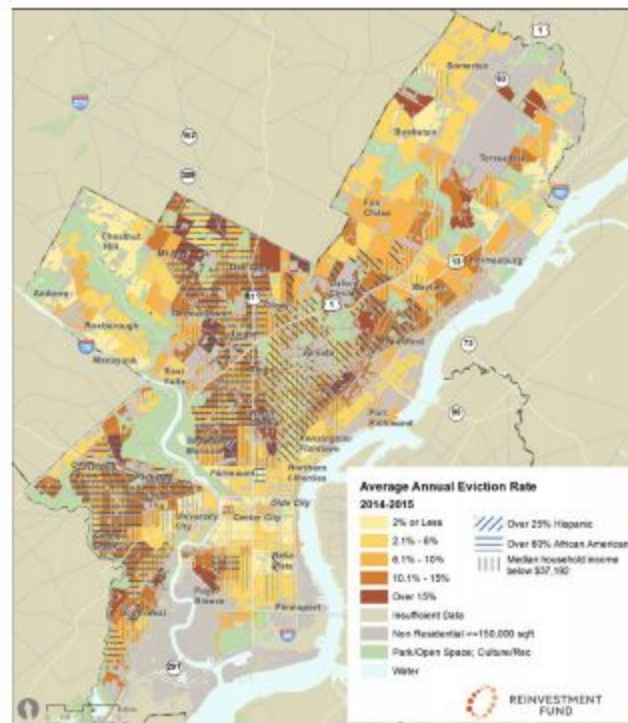
Studies have found that Philadelphia needs to add at least 38,000 new apartments by 2030 to keep up with growing demand. However based on current construction rates, Philadelphia may fall more than 5,000 units short of what is needed.¹⁹ Additionally, of the apartment construction that is being done, nearly 70% of it is for high end apartments, suggesting that Philadelphia may also fall short of its need for affordable housing.²⁰

The percentage of rent-burdened renters in the Philadelphia region who are paying over 30% of their income on housing was 51.4% in 2015, which is comparable to other U.S. cities. However the percentage of the severely rent-burdened population or the percentage of renters who are paying over 50% of their income on housing in Philadelphia was 30.5% in 2015, significantly higher than the nationwide average.²¹ Black and Latinx households were more likely to be severely rent-burdened than whites, according to the 2016 *Assessment of Fair Housing* produced by the City of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Twenty four percent (24%) of Black and 31% of Latinx households were severely rent-burdened, compared to 17% of white households.²²

Women of color made up 70% of the tenants facing eviction in Philadelphia in 2016 and Black and Latinx single mothers and children continue to be disproportionately impacted by evictions in the city. In particular, Black Philadelphians face eviction rates more than three times higher than the city's white population, even when controlling for factors such as income. A 2019 report on evictions in Philadelphia noted that "Black women with children are placed in a vicious cycle of low quality, unaffordable housing and frequent moves that can have detrimental effects on their own job security and outcomes for their children."²³

Eviction rates have not been evenly distributed across city neighborhoods, according to the Philadelphia-based Reinvestment Fund. Their analysis found relatively low eviction rates in the Center City neighborhoods, including parts of West Philadelphia near the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University, and considerably higher eviction rates in the Grays Ferry, Point Breeze, Oak Lane, Olney, Germantown, Elmwood and Kingsessing neighborhoods. Additionally they highlighted that from 2010 to 2015, eviction rates in census tracts that were at least 80% Black, were more than three times higher than that of predominantly white tracts. The geographic distribution of evictions in 2014 and 2015 is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Average Annual Eviction Rate in Philadelphia, 2014-2015



(Reinvestment Fund, 2017)²⁴

Although the 2017 Philadelphia area homeownership rate for people of color (49.5%) was slightly above the national rate of 46%,²⁵ the gap in homeownership especially among Black residents remains wide. The Urban Institute found that between 2005 and 2016, the homeownership rate for white residents was 75% compared to only 49% for Black residents.²⁶ Additionally, the rate of Black homeownership in Philadelphia has been on the decline since 1980.²⁷ A 2018 report by the Center for Investigative Reporting found that borrowers of color were 2.7 times more likely to be turned down for a loan than white residents of Philadelphia.²⁸

Historical Snapshot

The original people of the Philadelphia region were the Lenape people. In the 1630s, European settlers colonized the area, beginning a process that would strip the Lenape people of their land and lead to the death and migration of the remaining Lenape from the area.³² During this time period, thousands of enslaved people were brought to the region. By the mid-1700's, approximately 1 in 15 people in Philadelphia were enslaved people of African descent.³³

In 1780, Pennsylvania lawmakers adopted a gradual emancipation law that set a timeline for the future emancipation of enslaved people.³³ The law stipulated that enslaved persons born after 1780 would be free only after turning 28 years old and that Pennsylvanians could no longer legally import African people for slave labor. The emancipation law was one of the most conservative emancipation laws passed in northern states between 1780 and 1804. Well after the the importation of enslaved people was made illegal, many white Pennsylvanians continued to sale and purchase of enslaved people in neighboring states such as Delaware and Maryland through 1788.³⁴

In 1786, the pastor of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church invited Richard Allen, a formerly enslaved minister, to preach at the church. Although the number of Black worshipers at St. George's increased, so too did anti-Black sentiment among many of the white church members. Overt acts of stopping Black attendees from praying and limitations placed on Allen and his fellow Black parishioners caused Allen to organize a mass exit of Black church goers. Allen would go on to found the Free African Society in 1787 and his own Methodist church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in 1794.³⁵ His congregation was the first organized Black denomination in the United States.³⁶ The church served as a stop on the Underground Railroad, and following the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, helped former slaves who relocated to Philadelphia.³⁷ The church currently stands on the oldest parcel of land continuously owned by Black people in the country.³⁸

Following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, racism continued to impact all facets of life for Black people living in the city. In 1896, the University of Pennsylvania hired W.E.B. Du Bois as an assistant instructor. Du Bois completed his doctorate at Harvard in 1895, making him the first Black American to earn a PhD. While at UPenn, he received little support from the university, was not given an office on campus, had virtually no contact with students, and almost no interaction with other faculty members. Nevertheless Du Bois completed the *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899. One of the largest and



W.E.B. Du Bois published the *Philadelphia Negro* in 1899³⁹

earliest studies of its kind, the *Philadelphia Negro* examined how racial exclusion and exploitation led to poverty, crime, housing and unhealthy neighborhood conditions for Black Philadelphians.³⁹ Du Bois would go on to be a founder and general secretary of the Niagara Movement, a group of Black activists, scholars and professionals. In 1909, he helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and would serve as the director of publicity and research from 1910 to 1934 and director of special research from 1944 to 1948. Du Bois would also found and edit the NAACP'S *The Crisis* and helped to lead their national anti-lynching work.⁴⁰

In May of 1916, the Pennsylvania Railroad began to offer free transportation north to Black southerners willing to work for the railroad. Owing in part to these jobs, tens of thousands of Black people migrated to Philadelphia. Between 1900 and 1920, Philadelphia's Black population more than doubled.⁴¹ As the population grew, Black residents purchased homes in historically Irish American neighborhoods. But in July 1918 a white mob gathered outside the home of a Black woman, Adella Bond, who'd recently purchased a home in the Grays Ferry neighborhood. This confrontation sparked citywide clashes, involving more than 5,000 residents. Sixty Black men would go to jail, compared to only three arrests of white men during the fighting.⁴² Following the 1918 race riot, many Black residents moved into West Philadelphia and North Philadelphia, especially the Nicetown and Germantown neighborhoods.⁴³

The federal Home Owners Loan Corporation in 1937 classified large areas of Philadelphia as "hazardous" and colored in red on maps or "definitely declining" and colored in yellow. The redlined areas were often home to "undesirable populations" including Black Philadelphians. Blue and green zones were considered favorable for investment and often had a white and affluent population. Historically redlined areas of Philadelphia continue to experience disproportionate levels of poverty, poor health outcomes, limited educational attainment, and unemployment compared to other neighborhoods in the city.⁴⁴

Over the years, as Black Philadelphians sought to get ahead, they often encountered resistance from white residents and political leaders. In 1944, hundreds of Philadelphia Transit Company employees went on strike to protest that eight Black employees had been promoted to trolley car driver.⁴⁵ In the 1950's the city used eminent domain to seize land in West Philadelphia. Coupled with the 1963 construction of the University City Science Center, this had the impact of fracturing the West Philadelphia community.⁴⁶ In 1964, tensions erupted over police abuse of



Many white transit workers went on strike in 1944 against the promotion of Black employees³⁹

Black residents. The uprising that followed was characterized by local media as instigated by “hoodlums.”⁴⁷

The 1960s also saw significant Civil Rights protests in the city including the Columbia Avenue uprising in August 1964 that was precipitated by tension between Philadelphia police and the residents of North Philadelphia’s predominantly Black, poor and working-class neighborhoods.⁴⁸ There were more than 14 years of protest events, led by national civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King Jr. and local leaders such as Cecil B. Moore, to eventually desegregate the city’s Girard College.⁴⁹

While the Whitman Park public housing project would be built in October 1982, the more than 25 year journey to it being built was full of racial inequities and violence against Black people. In the 1950s, housing activists sought to implement a plan to build 21 new public housing projects to accommodate long wait lists for those that needed housing. In 1957, estimates were that 90% of people on wait lists for public housing were Black. Many white residents in the Whitman area of South Philadelphia, resented the idea of a housing project in their neighborhood.⁵⁰

Former police officer Frank Rizzo, during his campaign for mayor, promised to end the Whitman public housing project and put a stop to public housing in many white neighborhoods that didn’t want it. After being elected mayor, Rizzo argued that because the residents of public housing were almost all Black, white residents shouldn’t be forced to accept public housing developments against their will and he would halt the Whitman project. Community Legal Services, a civil legal aid organization, would sue the city over the disparate impact the cancellation of the Whitman project would have on Black residents. In 1976, a circuit court judge found that the city had acted with discriminatory intent and that the Whitman housing project must be built. Following the judge’s decision many Black residents were attacked including having bricks and bottles thrown at them. Demographic changes since the 1980s have also seen other groups reaping the benefits of a struggle that Black people fought for. As of 2016, the Black population in the census tract encompassing the Whitman housing project is just 7.2% compared to 78.6% white and 11.9% Asian.⁵¹

Rizzo’s opposition to the Whitman project was just one of the many offenses against Black Philadelphians that occurred during his time in office. In 1970, Rizzo ordered heavily armed police officers to raid the Black Panther offices. Many of the Black Panther members were made to strip at gunpoint.⁵² Although a Black mayor was elected in 1983, the administration of Wilson Goode was marred by racist violence. In 1985, a



A home is torn down in the Sharswood area of North Philadelphia³¹

mob of more than 400 white people protested violently outside an interracial couples' home.⁵³ And in 1985, the city's police department bombed the neighborhood where MOVE members lived.

In the early 1970s, John Africa founded and led a group of Black liberation and environmental activists that would eventually be organized as the MOVE organization. By the late 1970s, MOVE had an estimated 57 active members but at any given time, there were reportedly 100 undercover police officers in the area of the group's headquarters.⁵⁴ In 1976, when MOVE members were returning home, a confrontation with police led to the stomping on of a new mother and the death of her child at the hands of police.⁵⁵ In 1978, MOVE engaged in a 15-month standoff with the city after mayor Rizzo denied access to city water, the ability to regather any supplies and ordered the group to be evicted from their home.⁵⁶⁵⁷ During the standoff that ensued when officers attempted to forcibly remove MOVE members from their home, five firefighters, seven police officers, three MOVE members, and three bystanders were injured and a police officer died. MOVE denied responsibility for the officer's death.⁵⁸ In 1985, Philadelphia police officers dropped two bombs on the MOVE home, killing 11 people including 5 children.⁵⁹ No one associated with the Philadelphia Police Department was ever criminally charged for the attack.⁶⁰ In 2000, the city bought out 36 families living in the neighborhood of the MOVE bombing. It took nearly 16 years for a RFP to be released to build homes in the area where the families had been removed. In 2018, construction on units was complete. Many of the units were selling for more than \$250,000.⁶¹

Much of the current economic inequity in Philadelphia can be traced to changes in the local economy in the 1960s, including loss of manufacturing jobs, that are still being felt today. For example, between 1990 and 2003, the manufacturing jobs in Philadelphia decreased by 24.5% while professional and business services increased by 31.2% and education and health services increased by 32.7%. The changes in the local economy, combined with demographic change, and racial discrimination have contributed to long-standing racial inequities experienced among Black residents.⁶²

Health Status and Health Care Access

Black Philadelphians face significant racial inequities in health. While the rate of uninsured adults in Philadelphia has decreased substantially due to the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion in Pennsylvania, in 2017, Black adults and children were more likely to be uninsured than were white adults and children in Philadelphia.⁶³ Expansion of health insurance coverage, however, has occurred in the context of already deep health injustices. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Philadelphians had the highest death rate of any group in 2018 and a difference in life expectancy of 68.8 years for Black men and 77.8 years for Black women. That compares to 74.1 years for white men and 79.9 years for white women.⁶⁴ Black and Latinx

children had asthma-related hospitalizations at 5 to 6 times that of their white peers, according to Philadelphia’s Department of Public Health.⁶⁵

Structural racism has produced unfair housing, neighborhood conditions and distribution of health care services that negatively impact the health of Black, Latinx residents and communities of color. Across 363 Philly census tracts, the ratio of adults per primary care provider varied widely by tract, ranging from 105:1 to 10,321:1. Six predominantly Black “low-access areas” were identified; those are defined as five or more contiguous census tracts with a low supply of providers.⁶⁶

In Drexel University’s 2019 report, *Close to Home: The Health of Philadelphia’s Neighborhoods*, researchers examined alcohol use, obesity rates, walkability, percentage of vacant buildings and other factors related to health in Philly neighborhoods.⁶⁷ Many of the city’s neighborhoods with the best health outcomes, including the highest ranked, Center City West, are predominantly white.⁶⁸ Conversely, many of the neighborhoods with the worst health rankings include much larger populations of Black, Latinx residents, for example Juniata Park (ranked 44 out of 46).⁶⁹

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Families that are food insecure lack the financial means to comfortably feed their household. Food insecurity affects more than 20% of people in Philadelphia and the problem is most acute in West Philly, Southwest Philly, and North Philly where the food insecurity rate is more than 30%.⁷⁰ A recent report on food access in Philadelphia found that more than 980,000 people live in neighborhoods that lack access to healthy food. Black residents are the largest racial group in these areas, making up 45% of residents, compared to only 27% of whites living there. Black Philadelphians also had the worst health outcomes for nutrition-related conditions of all racial groups, including the highest rates of obesity and diabetes.⁷¹ Many organizations, including the Food Trust, are working on food insecurity in lower-income communities in Philadelphia. The Food Trust partners with neighborhood groups, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers to improve affordability and access to healthy food for lower-income communities. The organization operates more than 30 farmers markets and helps to finance 83 supermarket projects.⁷²

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The city of Philadelphia has struggled to track racial data for the COVID-19 pandemic. As of April 2020, the city only had racial and ethnic data on 66% of confirmed positive cases. Of the cases where this data was available, stark racial inequities emerged. Forty percent (40%) of confirmed cases were among Black people compared to 14% among whites.⁷³ The 19141 ZIP code, where 84% of residents are Black and which covers most of the Logan neighborhood, is among the city’s highest ranking ZIP codes for positive tests.⁷⁴

According to research conducted by Drexel University, as of April 8 2020, higher-income Philadelphians are being tested at exponentially higher rates than lower-income residents. Those living in Center City zip codes had the highest testing rate, while North Philly's 19120 had the lowest testing rate.⁷⁵ Additionally Black workers disproportionately make up Philadelphia's essential workforce, while Black residents in Philadelphia comprise only 36.4% of the city's total salaried workforce, they represent almost 63% of health care support workers, 54% of community and social service occupations, and 52% of health technologists and technicians.⁷⁶

Blacks Philadelphians are overrepresented among nursing assistants, orderlies, medical assistants, medical equipment preparers, lab techs, home health aides, community and public health workers, and social workers.⁷⁷ And they often come home to the city's dense public housing units, which are primarily located in Black neighborhoods. There is also dense housing of Multifamily Assisted sites in West Philadelphia, which is also largely Black.⁷⁸ More dense housing stock means people are living closer together, making it harder to follow social distancing rules, and thereby elevating the risk of contracting COVID-19.

Homelessness

Historically the homeless population in Philadelphia has mostly been Black men. However, the city's Office of Homeless Services has noted a recent increase in the number of homeless women, especially among senior-aged women.⁷⁹ Black Philadelphians continue to be overrepresented among the city's homeless population. The Office of Homeless Services reported that in 2019 Black residents in Philadelphia represented 79% of people in housing crisis and assistance programs, but made up only 44% of the city's overall population.⁸⁰

Criminal Justice and Police Violence

The percentage of Black residents in jail rose from 67.5% to 69.8% between 2015 and 2019, according to a 2019 *Philadelphia Jail Population Report*.⁸¹ And nearly 10 years after the Philadelphia Police Department entered into a federal consent decree aimed at reform, Black people are still disproportionately stopped and frisked. Black residents are over 50% more likely to be stopped without reasonable suspicion than white Philadelphians, and 40% more likely to be frisked than white residents.⁸²

A 2015 report by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) found that police violence disproportionately affects Philadelphia's Black residents. The report was the result of an investigation which analyzed almost 400 deadly force incidents between 2007 and 2013. The report found that while Black people made up approximately 45% of the general population,

nearly 81% of “suspects” involved in incidents where police shot someone were Black.⁸³ This pattern continued even after the DOJ investigation and report.

Most incidents of police violence and abuse often go uncovered in the news. A few that have received prominent news coverage include the December 2014 police killing of Brandon Tate-Brown. Video would later show that while police said he was stopped for driving with his lights off and that Tate-Brown was lunging for a gun inside the vehicle when he was shot, his headlights were on and he was running behind the trunk of his vehicle. In April 2018, a video of Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson, two Black men, waiting for a potential business partner at a Philadelphia Starbucks, and their subsequent arrest, went viral. The incident fueled nationwide outrage over the continued mistreatment of Black people by police.⁸⁴

In 2020 in the midst of protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd and in response to demands for reforms from local and national activists, the mayor of Philadelphia proposed the creation of a permanent civilian police oversight commission and a more transparent Internal Affairs investigations process.⁸⁵ The mayor, however, in early May 2020, had proposed a \$19 million increase to police department funding.⁸⁶ Many Philadelphia residents, activists and groups including the local chapter of Black Lives Matter have called on the city of Philadelphia to go beyond the proposed reforms and consider defunding the police department, which has seen its budget increase by \$120 million since 2016.⁸⁷ In June 2020, the Philadelphia City Council approved a preliminary budget that included cancelling the \$19 million budget increase for the police department and diverting \$14 million to the mayor’s cabinet for other programs and services.⁸⁸

The Path Forward: Promising Policies and Strategies

Racial equity and justice advocates are building upon Philly’s long history of Black radical organizing and grassroots activism. 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 communities and lower income communities of color. Some recent efforts to advance racial equity in Philadelphia are highlighted below.

COVID-19 Relief and Recovery

In June 2020, activists and residents pressured local elected officials to pass a series of reforms aimed at providing relief for renters affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The bills extended the city’s eviction moratorium, helped to create repayment plans for renters with financial difficulties, required mediation between landlords and renters before eviction, waived late fees on rent, and allowed renters to recover damages when they are illegally locked out.⁸⁹

Also in June, Council President Darrell Clarke called for transferring \$25 million from the city's reserve fund into the council's budget to pay for programs that attempt to address social issues in Philadelphia experienced disproportionately by people of color, including poverty, lack of access to affordable healthcare, fresh food and affordable housing.⁹⁰ Activists are also calling on city council members to consider a first of its kind, "Black stimulus package." The package includes \$500 million for capital investments for affordable housing and commercial corridors and millions more for job training, rent subsidies and basic income support.⁹¹

Health Equity

In July 2020, it was announced that the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia will lead a research project funded by \$75 million from the National Institutes of Health. The project will focus on identifying and addressing health risk factors in communities of color with attention to Black communities in the city.⁹² Additionally in July, 13 hospitals in the Philadelphia area partnered to implement anti-racism initiatives. The partnership has issued a written statement declaring racism a public health crisis and has developed goals including building community partnerships, addressing chronic conditions that impact people of color, and hiring and promoting leaders of color in the hospital systems.⁹³

Housing Justice

Community activists have been integral in hosting conversations and pushing for solutions to gentrification and housing inequities.⁹⁴ In fall 2019, activists and residents pressured the Philadelphia City Council to unanimously pass Right to Counsel legislation which guarantees lower income residents an attorney in eviction cases.⁹⁵ And in 2018 the Philadelphia City Council ended an almost two-year-long battle between activists and developers over the future of affordable housing. The emerging legislation represents a compromise, allowing developers to build denser and taller residential buildings in exchange for either including affordable units onsite, or making financial contributions into the city's Housing Trust Fund. A type of municipal bank, the fund is intended to provide subsidies towards affordable housing. The legislation not only expanded this voluntary inclusionary zoning program, but also put \$3 million into the fund. The bill did not, however, include mandatory inclusionary provisions and a construction tax that many advocates sought.⁹⁶

Activist groups such as the Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities and One PA continue to demand that City Council members pass legislation so that:

- \$35 million from expiring tax abatements are invested annually into the Housing Trust Fund
- publicly held and tax delinquent properties go into a Land Bank⁹⁷
- all increases for rental housing are regulated
- unjust evictions are prohibited and renters better protected
- tenants facing eviction are afforded right to counsel
- low-income homeowners' payment costs and length of payments are reduced⁹⁸

Other promising efforts include the Shallow Rent pilot plan recently launched by the city. It will invest \$2 million towards assisting cost-burdened tenants. Landlords will be compensated for further reducing the cost of rent for lower-income tenants.⁹⁹ Philadelphia also has the Longtime Owner Occupants Program (LOOP), a tax-relief program for homeowners whose property assessments increased by 50% or more over a year. Participants must also fall within income limits and meet length of ownership requirements.¹⁰⁰

Community Improvement Projects

The city has also established the Rebuild and Rebuild Ready programs. Rebuild has invested \$500 million in projects across the city focused on improving neighborhood parks, recreation centers and libraries. Rebuild is on track to exceed or meet its contract goals for businesses owned by women and people of color.¹⁰¹ Rebuild also engages in an extensive community engagement process including working with residents to gather information on the types of improvements people want to see made to their neighborhood facilities.¹⁰² Rebuild Ready gives diverse Philadelphia businesses the skills to better bid for and win work on Rebuild and other city of Philadelphia contracts through focused training, workshops, and coaching sessions. Rebuild Ready was started in May 2019 and has seen more than 43 local businesses gain skills in construction accounting and financial management skills, estimating and bid preparation, dealing with payroll, joint ventures, cash flow management, payment, bonding, insurance, and risk as well as construction law, contracting, and dispute resolution.¹⁰³ The Emerging Vendors Program allows businesses not yet certified as owned by people of color to count towards participation goals on Rebuild projects and attend Rebuild Ready programming while working on the often extensive certification process.¹⁰⁴

Mayor's Government-Wide Racial Equity Initiatives

In 2016, the mayor appointed the city's first Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer.¹⁰⁵ That same year, Philadelphia was selected to take part in the Racial Equity Here initiative, a collaboration between Living Cities and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). Philadelphia was given \$75,000 as a technical assistance grant to complete city operations and services with a racial equity approach. Some of the projects the city of Philadelphia engaged in with the money included training for staff to explicitly include racial equity considerations in decision making and adding a racial equity lens to the city's workforce development strategy.¹⁰⁶ In 2020, the mayor expanded the city's focus on equity, diversity and inclusion by renaming the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to include "Equity", establishing formal oversight of the Office of LGBT Affairs and Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, and launching numerous racial equity initiatives.¹⁰⁷

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

Working Principles for Black-Centered Urban Racial Equity

There is still much work to be done to dismantle the legacy of structural racism in Philadelphia and other cities across the country. 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 preserve affordable housing and prioritize job creation and social supports for Black residents.
- **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 must leverage this moment to amplify calls for policies, programs, and systemic changes that support racial equity. City governments must fully honor these demands by listening to and working in partnership with residents to develop, fund and implement policies and programs that build and support a vision for a racially equitable city.

Resources and Community-Based Organizations

- [Black Lives Matter Philly](#) is an organized movement advocating for various policy and societal changes related to Black liberation, including the end of police brutality against Black people.
- [Food Trust](#) works to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions.
- [Human Rights Coalition](#) is a grassroots non-profit group of predominantly prisoners' families, prisoners, ex-offenders and supporters. It was formed to aid and support prisoners' families in coping with the stress and hardships created by having a loved one incarcerated, as well as to challenge the punitive, retributive nature of the penal system and to work to transform that to a model of rehabilitation and successful reintegration to society.
- [MOVE Organization](#) is a family of strong, serious, deeply committed revolutionaries founded by a wise, perceptive, strategically-minded Black man named JOHN AFRICA.
- [One PA](#) is a multiracial, intergenerational and multi-issue membership organization that includes workers, students, parents, seniors, people with disabilities, and retirees excited to learn, collaborate, and build power together.
- [Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools](#) is a coalition of students, parents and teachers committed to improving Philadelphia's school system.
- [Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities](#) advocates for the passage of a package of bills that will create new resources to expand and protect affordability in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification.
- [Philadelphia Coalition for Racial Economic and Legal Justice \(REAL\)](#) is an inclusive grassroots organization that is community focused and globally engaged with a mission to transform the city of Philadelphia to one that is free and accessible to all.
- [Philadelphia Collaborative for Health Equity](#) is a broad-based community collaboration and action network that addresses health inequity challenges in Philadelphia.
- [Philly Power Research](#) is a group of volunteer researchers that includes teachers, librarians, journalists, advocates and activists. They investigate the powerful organizations and individuals shaping Philadelphia.

- [Racial Empowerment Collaborative](#) is a research, program development, and training center that brings together community leaders, researchers, authority figures, families, and youth to study and promote racial literacy and health in schools and neighborhoods.

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