

DC Map by Ward, DC Office of Planning<sup>1</sup>

# STRUCTURAL RACISM IN WASHINGTON, DC FACTS, FIGURES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

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## Introduction

Gentrification, displacement of long-time residents, income inequality, rising housing costs and disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black residents in Washington, D.C. reflect the consistent, patterned effects of structural racism in urban areas. The Nation's capital, once known as Chocolate City, has seen its Black population fall precipitously from about 70% in 1980 to approximately 45% in 2019.<sup>2</sup> This shift is happening against a backdrop of rising costs of living and the threat of erasure of Black culture in the District.

Beyond pointing out the history and impacts of structural racism in the District, 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 DC.

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 the District 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 DC

More than 700,000 people currently live in the District of Columbia, up more than 100,000 since 2010.<sup>3</sup> Many newcomers are white millennials whose arrival has dramatically changed the demographics of DC neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> Three national studies conducted by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition,<sup>5</sup> the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia,<sup>6</sup> and the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity,<sup>7</sup> found that DC leads the country in this trend of neighborhood change and displacement of Black residents and communities of color.

The city's Navy Yard neighborhood has experienced this trend most dramatically. It lost 531 Black residents while adding 2,828 new white residents between 2000 and 2016.<sup>8</sup>

Rising housing costs have forced many long-term Black residents to move to the suburbs, primarily Maryland's Prince George's County. In December 2019, rents rose across the District by 1.6%, which is above the 1.4% national average. As of January 2020, median rents in the District were \$1,361 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$1,572 for a two-bedroom apartment. This makes DC the sixth most expensive city in the country for median rent for a two-bedroom apartment.<sup>9</sup>

Some advocates for affordable housing have argued that the city's policies and rising rents are intentionally designed to attract new, white, higher-earning residents. Aristotle Theresa, a civil rights lawyer in the city, is suing the District on behalf of three DC residents and is seeking \$1 billion in damages for his clients. Theresa has also in recent years represented community groups opposing massive redevelopment projects in 14 cases. He has twice been successful in getting the D.C. Court of Appeals to overturn city approvals of projects.<sup>10</sup> In this

**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)

case, he argues that by changing zoning laws, DC is intentionally wooing whites to the area as they typically have higher incomes and can afford the increased cost of living.<sup>11</sup> The upcoming opening of Amazon HQ2 in adjacent Crystal City, Virginia, may further widen the divide.<sup>12</sup>

The changing demographics and racial dynamic in the District has led to numerous neighborhood disputes, including one where white residents have attempted to silence go-go music outside of an electronics store in the historically Black Shaw neighborhood, and a second where tensions have risen between Howard University students and white residents in that neighborhood.<sup>13</sup>

## Poverty and Economic Inequality

Compared to all 50 states, the District has the highest level of income inequality in the country. Currently the median Black household income across the city is one-third that of white households, and the average net worth of Black families is 81 times lower than the average net worth of white families.<sup>14,15</sup> DC residents have among the lowest economic mobility in the U.S, according to a 2015 study.<sup>16</sup> At 18.6%, DC has one of the highest poverty rates in the country and is well above the national average of 12.7%.<sup>17</sup>

Poverty is especially intense among Black residents in the city. Black residents were the only racial group to experience an increase in poverty rates *before* the 2008 recession. While the poverty rates for whites is 7.9%, for Black residents it is 27.9%—almost four times higher. At 17.8%, the poverty rate for Latinx residents is more than twice that of white residents.<sup>18</sup>

In 2017-2018, the percentage of Black students completing high school in the District was just 67% compared to 89% for white students in DC. Four year completion of high school is a good anti-poverty measure. Raising the high school graduation rate for Black students must be done and be accompanied by fair access to employment opportunities and livable wage jobs that offer paid sick leave.<sup>19</sup>

## Declining Housing Affordability, Rising Evictions

As of the end of 2019, DC had approximately 52,000 affordable units, primarily located in the city's predominantly Black and lower-income 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Wards.<sup>20</sup> The Urban Institute estimates that the DC area needs to create 374,000 new housing units by 2030 to accommodate its projected population growth. Additionally, the Urban Institute has identified a need for a different mix of housing to address the affordability gap. For example, the Urban Institute recommends that 38% of new units be priced between \$0-\$1,299 per month, 40% priced between \$1,300-\$2,499 per month, and 22% in between \$2,500-\$3,500 per month.<sup>21</sup> The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) has called for 320,000 new housing

units in the area by 2030, with 75% or 240,000 priced to be affordable (under \$2,499 per month) for low and middle income households.<sup>22 23</sup> As of 2019, DC’s response has been much more conservative, with the mayor signing an order directing the city to *study* how to create 36,000 new housing units by 2025, with at least 12,000 of those slated to be affordable.<sup>24</sup>

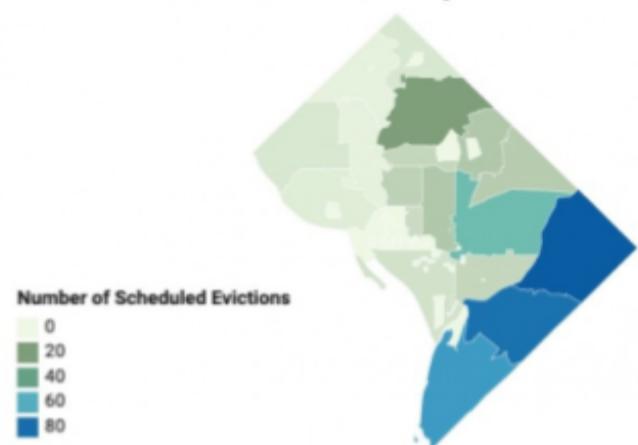
Although the percentage of those spending more than 30% of their income on housing has decreased slightly in recent years following a nationwide trend, concern about rent-burdened households has grown over the last two decades. Among the nation’s 100 largest cities, DC ranked as having the 33rd lowest share of rent-burdened households, according to a 2017 study by Apartment List. The number of these households increased by more than 78,000 over the decade between 2006 and 2016.<sup>25</sup>

More than 4,000 evictions occurred in the city in 2016, which is roughly 11 per day, according to Eviction Lab. Historically, evictions are highest in neighborhoods where lower income and Black and Latinx residents live. The map (Figure 1) on the left shows the geographic distribution of evictions for July 2019.<sup>26</sup> As noted by the blue areas on the map, the number of scheduled evictions was much higher in Wards 7 and 8. The DC Court Annual Reports does not break out eviction data by race or gender identity,<sup>27</sup> however, nationally, lower income Black women are more likely to be affected by evictions than any other group.<sup>28</sup>

The Reclaim Rent Control campaign launched in October 2019 with the support of more than 30 different local activist organizations, including Empower DC, DC Jobs With Justice, One DC, Bread for the City, and HIPS. The initiative seeks to improve housing affordability by extending rent control to more than 25,000 units, capping lease increases, and ending landlord incentives to move tenants in and out—also known as “rapid tenant turnover”—which causes rental rates to escalate.<sup>29</sup>

DC is one of the most expensive cities in the country, in part, because more than a hundred years ago Congress imposed the *Height of Buildings Act of 1910*, restricting buildings in residential areas to 90 feet, with some mixed-use buildings standing at upwards of 130 feet.<sup>30</sup> This was in keeping with President Washington and then-future President Jefferson’s vision for “a city with sweeping vistas that emphasize civic structures and an orderly system of boulevards with reverential private buildings.”<sup>31</sup>

**Scheduled Evictions in DC in July 2019**



(Office of the Tenant Advocate, Meena Morar, 2019)

While this contributed to DC's aesthetic appeal, researchers with the Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis at George Washington University note that the impact of these restrictions has been to reduce the amount of housing, which drove up land prices, and negatively impacted affordability.<sup>32</sup> This has reached a crisis level. In 2015, the DC Council passed local restrictions that further limited the height of some residential buildings, including single-family homes:

Dwellings could not have more than three floors, including a mezzanine level, which would now be counted as a separate floor and limited to 35 feet unless an exemption is approved to build up to 40 feet. These restrictions affected row houses, where nearly 1 in 5 DC residents live, and are especially prominent in the Capitol Hill, Shaw and Columbia Heights neighborhoods.<sup>33</sup> These height restrictions may have further increased housing costs and displacement in these neighborhoods.

In 2019, the Mayor Bowser directed the city's Office of Planning to explore changes to the Height Act in an effort to create a better distribution of affordable housing throughout the District.<sup>34</sup> Bowser called for zoning changes that would allow developers to erect higher, more densely concentrated buildings. There are no other cities or states in the country that have federal government laws limiting building height, and certainly none with a plurality of Black residents over which Congress has direct control.<sup>35</sup> But the Height Act is federal law and would require Congress to make further amendments to it, as has happened only a few times over the years and only for nonresidential properties, such as the National Press Club or Georgetown University Hospital.

To address the remnants of redlining and racial covenants, advocates both locally and nationally, have called for zoning policies that promote development aligned with inclusionary housing goals and that increase housing affordability.<sup>36</sup>



Although DC's 15.1% average gap in homeownership, the percentage difference among average homeownership across racial groups, is among the smallest in the country, and decreased by 6.5% from 2000 to 2015, racial inequities in homeownership in the city still loom large. An analysis from Apartment List looked at census data from 1980 to 2015 and found that the homeownership rate in DC is 63.7% for White households, compared to just 43.5% for Black households, and 43.4% for Latinx households.<sup>37</sup> <sup>38</sup> DC households east of the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8 have a 29% homeownership rate compared to 56% among residents in the upper Northwest parts of the city, according to the DC Fiscal Policy Center.<sup>39</sup>



## Historical Snapshot

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The Piscataway, Pamunkey, Nentego, Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Monacan, and Powhatan Indigenous groups once called DC home. However within 40 years of European arrival, only about a quarter of the number of Indigenous people remained. Many Indigenous people were killed by settlers and new diseases.<sup>42</sup>

In April 1862, Congress passed the District of Columbia Emancipation Act, making Black Washingtonians among the first freed in the nation. This was nearly nine months before President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863. More than 25,000 Black Americans moved to



Soldiers with Black Resident in Washington, DC

Washington DC during and immediately after the Civil War. Its pro-union stance and status as the nation's capitol helped to make it a popular destination for Black Americans.<sup>43</sup>

In July 1919, a Black uprising occurred in the District that lasted for six days, after it was alleged that a young Black man had assaulted a white woman. The incident left as many as 39 dead,<sup>44</sup> during what was infamously dubbed the Red Summer,<sup>45</sup> for the explosive instances of racial strife that broke out throughout dozens of cities around the country.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1920s, the city's predominantly Black U Street neighborhood thrived, but a decade later many Black neighborhoods were devastated by the Great Depression, during which New Deal relief programs were administered in a racially discriminatory manner and mainly benefited white Americans.<sup>47</sup>

From the 1920s to the 1940s, racial covenants restricted homeownership, benefiting whites, particularly in DC's Bloomingdale neighborhood.<sup>48</sup> In 1950, the city reached its peak population of more than 800,000, as the continued effects of the Great Migration contributed to making DC the first major city with a predominantly Black population by 1957.<sup>49</sup>

Like many cities across the country, DC experienced civil unrest following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and shortly afterwards, members of the District's Black middle class began to leave the city, frustrated by the slow, post-rebellion recovery, as well as to pursue new suburban housing opportunities courtesy of the Fair Housing Act.<sup>50 51</sup>

Some whites, leery of the move towards integration in public schools, also left the city between 1950 and 1970 to embrace new housing opportunities, during a period in which the District said goodbye to almost 60% of its white population.<sup>52</sup>

In 1970, Black residents numbered 538,000, but by 2010 that number had decreased to 309,000. Comparatively, growing Latinx and Asian populations began entering the city for the first time around the 1980s, adding roughly 9,700 Latinx residents and 7,900 Asian residents between 2000 and 2010. White reentry into the city had been an even larger trend, with more than 50,000 new white residents between 2000 and 2010 and a decrease in Black population, with more than 38,000 Black residents leaving the city during the same time period.<sup>53</sup>



Cavalry troops in Washington during the 1968 uprising.<sup>41</sup>

From 1995 to 2001, day-to-day management of the city's functions were taken away from DC officials and placed in the hands of a five-member financial control board panel appointed by federal legislators. Although the city was on the verge of insolvency and a deficit of nearly \$722 million,<sup>55</sup> many people raised concerns that control of the city had been taken from local officials who had strong ties to the community, and given to federal legislators that had no connections to DC. Although the financial control board was eventually phased out, the concern that it could happen again still weighs heavily on the minds of many local residents and officials.<sup>56</sup>

DC residents pay both local and federal income tax, without receiving the same federal representation that almost all other U.S. residents enjoy. In 1973, the Home Rule Act was passed stating that all legislation that the DC council passes must also be approved by Congress. Congress has continued to interfere with local officials' ability to govern their city and has imposed a ban on a locally funded needle exchange program which has proven to save lives and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS among intravenous drug users.<sup>57</sup> DC's continued political disenfranchisement is rooted in its status as a historically Black city with a plurality of Black residents.<sup>58 59</sup>

In June 2020, the United States House of Representatives voted to make DC the 51st state for the first time in history. Although the Senate blocked DC statehood from moving forward, the June House vote represents a historic moment in the path to DC statehood.

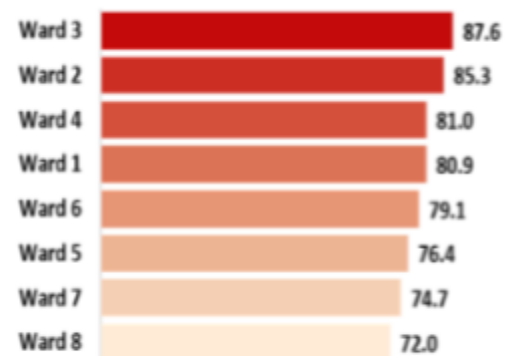
## Hunger and Food Insecurity

Fifteen percent (15%) of DC residents are food insecure or lack the financial means to comfortably feed their household. DC Hunger Solutions estimates that nearly 5% of the population is hampered by “very low food insecurity.” Grocery store locations and the presence or absence of other businesses that provide fresh and healthy food options often mirror the racial and geographic inequity patterns across the city. Of the 49 full-service grocery stores and 40 farmers markets in DC, only three grocery stores are located in Wards 7 and 8, where there are fewer farmers markets, as well. By area, the majority of food deserts in DC are located in Ward 8, and the second largest concentration of food deserts is in Ward 7. Wards 7 and 8 also have the city's highest obesity rates.<sup>60</sup> Lack of access to healthy foods is associated with obesity and other chronic health conditions such as diabetes.

## Health Status and Health Care Access

The impacts of structural racism on the health of Black residents is reflected in multiple indicators of health and wellbeing including education, employment, income, housing, transportation, food environment, medical care, outdoor environment, and safety. Across almost every one of these indicators, there are vast disparities among the city's 51 different neighborhoods, according to a report produced by the city's Office of Health Equity, an agency within the Department of Health.<sup>62</sup>

Figure 2: Life Expectancy by Ward in 2018



*Report for the District of Columbia 2018<sup>61)</sup>*

The geographic distribution of life expectancy in the city is summarized in Figure 2. There are more than 15 years difference in your life expectancy if you're a resident of wealthier Ward 3, who typically live for 87.6 years, compared with residents of poorer Ward 8, who have a life expectancy of roughly 72 years.<sup>63</sup> Ward 3 is predominantly white (81%) whereas Ward 8 is predominantly Black (92%).<sup>64 65</sup>

With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, more adults in DC have health insurance. Since 2016, roughly 93% of Black adults and 98% of Black children have become insured.<sup>66</sup> But expansion of health insurance coverage has come in the context of already deep health inequities including unjust distribution of healthy food outlets, health care and dental services



across the city that contributes to poor health outcomes. According to a 2016 report, Black residents for example, represented 73% (55,139) of the 75,533 total hospitalizations in the District. Pregnancy, mental health issues, substance abuse, chronic disease and treatment for complex comorbidities were most likely to send people to the hospital. Additionally Black residents were least likely to have had their teeth cleaned regularly, which can create a build up of bacteria that can get into the bloodstream and elevate risks of heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and pregnancies that lead to preterm, low-birth weight babies.<sup>67</sup>

Equitable access to health care for Black residents of Southeast DC's Wards 7 and 8 has been an ongoing struggle.<sup>68</sup> For many years, only one hospital served all residents in Wards 7 and 8 east of the Anacostia River, while six hospitals served the Northwest's Wards 2 and 4, even though Wards 2 and 3 have a comparable number of residents to Wards 7 and 8.<sup>69</sup> There are also significant geographic inequities in access to pharmacies. In 2016 there were only six pharmacies in Wards 7 and 8,<sup>70</sup> compared with as many as 36 in Ward 2 alone.<sup>71</sup>

Although DC recently approved plans for a new hospital at St. Elizabeths East that would primarily serve wards 7 and 8, the path to get there was paved with inequities.<sup>72</sup> Howard University originally submitted a proposal to open the new hospital. The project was instead awarded to George Washington University (GWU) Hospital. GWU Hospital then sought to have the city's certification of need requirement waived on their Foggy Bottom hospital which would have allowed them to build hundreds of new hospital beds in an affluent part of the city without having to establish need for the beds. Howard University Hospital administrators and students raised concerns that denying Howard the project and allowing GWU to expand their Foggy Bottom location could threaten Howard University Hospital's existence.<sup>73</sup>

Howard alumni, faculty, staff and students started the hashtag #HowardMedicineMatters<sup>74</sup>, sought a clear plan for Howard students and staff to train in the St. Elizabeths East hospital, and raised concerns that the current agreement could lead to a significant reduction in the number of Black doctors the University could produce each year and number of patients Howard Hospital could serve annually.<sup>75</sup> While Howard will not be formally involved in the St. Elizabeths East hospital, the University was awarded tax abatements and infrastructure support to build a 225-bed level 1 trauma and teaching hospital by 2026.<sup>76</sup>

## The COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 has further highlighted racial inequities in health outcomes with Black residents in the District contracting the virus twice as often as white residents,<sup>77</sup> and representing more than 80% of the deaths at the time of this writing.

By the end of April 2020, Ward 4 had the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the city, while Ward 8 had the most COVID-19 deaths, according to data from the DC Health Department.<sup>7879</sup>

The DC area has the highest number of essential workers of any region in the U.S., according to a report from the United Way of the National Capital Area. The report analyzed the number of workers in each industry and calculated the percentage of the labor force that is working in essential industries in each state, according to the US Bureau of Labor.<sup>80</sup> In DC, Black residents make up the vast majority of workers in many essential industries, including 74% of healthcare support workers and 84% of transportation workers.<sup>81</sup>

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.

Wards 4 and 5 are zoned for low-density single-family dwellings on lots that must be at least 7,500 square feet. Whereas areas zoned for semi-detached homes and much more dense housing are especially prominent in Wards 7, 8, 5, and parts of Ward 3, according to the DC Policy Center.<sup>82</sup> As of August 18, 2020 Wards 5, 7, and 8, had the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th highest number of confirmed cases by ward in the District.<sup>83</sup>

## Criminal Justice and Police Violence

The ACLU examined DC Police Department arrest data from 2013 to 2017 and found significant racial disparities in arrests for minor offenses, including noise complaints, driving without a license and marijuana consumption. Black residents were 47% of the city's population but 86% of all arrests, according to the ACLU report.<sup>84</sup>

There are numerous cases of police violence towards Black and Latinx residents of the District. One example is that of Terrence Sterling. On September 11, 2016, two officers pulled in front of his motorcycle during a traffic stop. When his bike struck the police car door, as witnesses said he appeared to try to steer around it, one of the officers fired their gun and killed Sterling. The officer, who is white, later said in an internal report that he felt his life was in danger.

The killing sparked protests around the city.<sup>86</sup> DC ultimately reached a \$3.5 million settlement with the man's family.<sup>87</sup> The officer who killed Sterling was fired while the other received a



Demonstrators protest the death of George Floyd in Washington.<sup>85</sup>

20-day suspension.<sup>88</sup> The suspended officer would later be under investigation for “improper conduct” during a separate incident.<sup>89</sup>

In response to local, national and even international protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, the DC City Council passed a series of reforms in June 2020.<sup>90</sup> They include banning neck restraints and prohibiting officers from firing rubber bullets and chemical irritants at peaceful demonstrators. However many DC activists and residents are concerned that the reforms don’t go far enough. More than 90 residents testified to this at a June City Council meeting, with most calling on council members to reject the mayor’s 3.3% proposed budget increase for the police department, in an effort to redirect resources to other services. Some called for the police department to be abolished.<sup>91</sup> Local Black Lives Matter activists have pushed for a ban on stop and frisk, a moratorium on new jails, and for the police department to be defunded, among other changes.<sup>92</sup>

## Homelessness

The combination of inequities in housing, employment, and criminal justice have contributed to a large homeless population in DC.<sup>93</sup> As previously outlined, rising rents along with higher poverty rates for residents of color have made DC unaffordable for many.

Nearly 60% of residents experiencing homelessness were previously incarcerated, and 55% said incarceration led them to lose their homes, according to a 2019 assessment.<sup>94</sup> The District has among the highest number of homeless people anywhere in the country. Men living without shelter number 104.6 per 10,000, which is double that of California, which has the second highest homelessness rate for men. Among women, 34.4 per 10,000 people are homeless, which is higher than in Hawaii, which ranks second in the nation for the homelessness among women.<sup>95</sup> While the homeless population in DC is largely male, the vast majority of adults in families without homes are women (79%), and women of color are the largest group (90%) of women who experience homelessness in DC.<sup>96</sup>

## The Path Forward: Promising Policies and Strategies

In the District, as in many cities across the country, there's a powerful movement underway 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 and low-income communities of color.

Racial justice advocates are building upon the District's deep history of Black organizing and grassroots activism. Community-based organizations, for example, have successfully organized residents to encourage DC Councilmember Trayon White to introduce the *East of the River High-Risk Displacement Prevention Services and Fund Establishment Act*. If passed, the bill would provide grant funding from the city to support services that curb evictions, improve housing conditions, protect rental subsidies, support tenant associations and advisory neighborhood commissions, and expand foreclosure-prevention assistance.<sup>97</sup>



Mural in Shaw Neighborhood<sup>98</sup>

Empower DC, a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of lower- to moderate-income DC residents, held a meeting in the southeast part of the city in July 2019. The gathering was attended by roughly 60 advisory neighborhood commissioners, the DC Council Chair, Phil Mendelson, and many residents from lower-income communities, including Wards 7 and 8. The latter sought to apply pressure to the city to promote racial equity and combat effects of gentrification in updates to the District's Comprehensive Plan.<sup>99</sup> Empower DC also held a series of meetings to help residents understand the importance of the Comprehensive Plan. The group's community engagement and education work has played a critical role both in centering racial equity in development conversations and in putting

pressure on the City Council. That paid off in fall 2019 when the Council made changes to the Comprehensive Plan that better reflected racial equity.<sup>100</sup>

The DC City Council is also currently considering the Racial Equity Achieves Results Amendment Act (REAR Act), introduced by Kenyan McDuffie. It would implement a tool to eliminate disparities based on race, add racial equity performance measures to agency performance assessments, and require District employees to receive racial equity training.<sup>101</sup> The legislation is similar to bills passed in Montgomery County, Maryland and Fairfax, Virginia.<sup>102</sup>

The city's Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Act (NEAR Act) seeks to use public health approaches to prevent violence and reduce incarceration. The NEAR Act covers a wide range of public health initiatives designed to reduce violent crime, reform criminal justice provisions, and improve community-police relations. Provisions include training professionals at hospitals to engage community members after a traumatic event, job training programs and collection of race and ethnicity data.<sup>103</sup> Continuing to take a racial equity approach to public safety will mean increasing funds for NEAR Act implementation, as well as taking steps to increase police accountability and transparency.<sup>104</sup>

Elevating Equity is a Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) DC initiative which has invested more than \$53 million in affordable housing, community facilities and nonprofits. The initiative operates through an equitable and inclusive development framework and is focused on addressing displacement pressures that may come with initiatives such as the 11th Street Bridge project. Elevating Equity also invests in projects that create opportunities for lower-income residents—especially those from Wards 7 and 8.<sup>105</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 DC. 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 and just city.

## Resources and Community-Based Organizations

- [Black Lives Matter DC](#) is a member based abolitionist organization centering Black people most at risk for state violence in DC, creating the conditions for Black Liberation through the abolition of systems and institutions of white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism.
- [Bread for the City](#) helps Washington DC residents who are low income become empowered to determine the future of their communities.
- [DC Jobs with Justice](#) is committed to the creation of living-wage jobs, support of economic and social justice in DC and abroad, maintaining pressure to demand corporate accountability in communities, and creating a fair and just future for

- [Empower DC](#) advances racial, economic and environmental justice by investing in the leadership and organized political power of DC's lowest income residents and communities.
- [No Justice No Pride \(NJNP\)](#) is a collective of organizers and activists from across the District of Columbia (DC) that exists to fight for Trans Justice and end the LGBT "equality" movement's complicity with systems of oppression that further marginalize Trans and Queer individuals and communities.
- [One DC](#) envisions the nation's capital as a place where low income, poor, and immigrant communities are organized, educated, and trained to take action to create and preserve social and economic equity. Through grassroots organizing, One DC works to exercise political strength to create and preserve racial and economic equity in Shaw and the District.
- [Stop Police Terror Project-DC](#) is an organization in the Washington DC area committed to changing the system of racist, militarized policing in the nation's capital.

## Endnotes

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