



An initiative of the  
Center for Social Innovation



# Addressing Racial Inequity in 10 Cities

## Racial inequality persists in the United States despite significant attention to this issue over past decades.

Recent assessments of the contemporary racial dynamic suggest that racism has not declined but has instead become less overt<sup>1</sup>. One manifestation of the nation's current racial realities is that people of color are disproportionately represented in the homeless population. People who are Black or African American, in particular, are more likely to become homeless than people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Although Black Americans comprise 13% of the US population and 26% of those living in poverty, they account for more than 40% of the overall homeless population.<sup>2,3</sup> This suggests that poverty rates alone do not explain the over-representation of Black Americans in the homeless population. Furthermore, Black men remain homeless longer than White or Hispanic men.<sup>4,5</sup>

## Changing the Conversation and Sparking Action

Addressing racism and racial inequity in homelessness means fundamentally changing the conversation we're having in the United States around the root causes of housing instability, risk for homelessness, and barriers to exiting homelessness for people of color. **SPARC (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities)** is dedicated to helping that change.

As we initiate such dialogue nationally, we understand that it is critical to engage policy makers, service providers, and people experiencing homelessness to understand how racism impacts homelessness at all levels. In order to change the conversation we propose a parallel process of research and action.

### RESEARCH

- Conduct 30 focus groups in 10 communities across the United States and analyze for systemic patterns around racial equity.
- Collect 200 audio recordings of life histories of people experiencing homelessness and look for patterns in how people of color enter homelessness and what barriers prevent rapid and permanent exit.
- Analyze HMIS, PIT, and census data in each community to provide community level reports of racial disproportionality

### ACTION

- Create a national learning collaborative of cities who are all attempting to implement anti-racist strategies to transform their homelessness systems.
- Provide a library of tools and strategies for cities to pull resources from in order to implement anti-racist interventions.
- Provide two in-person trainings on racism and homelessness for each community.
- Provide ongoing technical assistance around the implementation of anti-racist interventions and assist in monitoring for changes in outputs that affect communities of color.

# Our Team for the SPARC: 10 City Initiative



## **Jeff Olivet, Chief Executive Officer**

Jeff is a national leader on homelessness, poverty, affordable housing, behavioral health, public health, and HIV. He has been a street outreach worker, case manager, housing director, coalition builder, writer, teacher, and activist. His work with hundreds of organizations across the United States and internationally has helped to improve strategic planning, organizational management, and implementation of evidence-based practices. Jeff is a recognized expert in bringing innovative technologies and solutions to complex social problems.



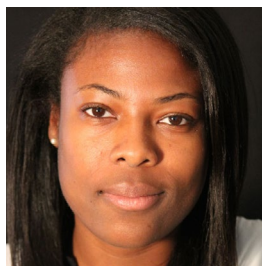
## **Marc Dones, Associate, Equity Initiatives & Diversity**

Marc is a graduate of New York University's Gallatin School, with a concentration in Psychiatric Anthropology. Marc provides training on HIV, viral Hepatitis, Harm Reduction, and opioid overdose prevention. Prior to coming to C4, Marc was a policy analyst and program manager in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, where they focused on youth violence prevention and systemic responses to youth homelessness. At the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, they were the Director of Project Management for Child and Adolescent Services and served on the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth.



## **Molly Richard, Research Analyst**

Molly is Research Manager for the SPARC Study. Before joining C4, she was a residential counselor at a program for youth affected by complex trauma. Her research has focused on trauma-informed care, families experiencing homelessness, and training evaluation. She began anti-racism work in college and is committed to fostering honest dialogue about White privilege, layered identities, and the role of this work in achieving health equity.



## **Lunise Joseph, Advisor**

Lunise has worked on projects at C4 that address complex public health issues, promote best practices, and improve the lives of vulnerable populations. She is currently working with SPARC's research team to investigate the linkages between race and homelessness.

For more information please email: [sparc@center4si.com](mailto:sparc@center4si.com).



1 Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

2 U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *Current Population Survey*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. U.S. Census Bureau.

3 Carter III, G.R. (2011). From exclusion to destitution: Race, affordable housing, and homelessness. *Cityscape*, 33-70.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Molina-Jackson, E. (2007). Negotiating homelessness through the saliency of family ties: The personal networking practices of Latino and African American men. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 16(4), 268-320.