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Addressing Racial Inequity in 10 Cities

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

Racism has not declined, but has instead become less overt¹. People of color are disproportionately represented in the homeless population. Blacks or African Americans are more likely to become homeless than people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Although Blacks comprise 13% of the US population and 26% of those living in poverty, they account for more than 40% of the sheltered population.^{2,3} This suggests that poverty rates alone do not explain the over-representation of Blacks in the homeless population. Furthermore, Black men remain homeless longer than White or Hispanic men.^{4,5}

Changing the Conversation and Sparking Action

Addressing racial inequity in homelessness means changing the conversation 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 committed to understanding these root causes and galvanizing change.

As we initiate action nationally, it is critical to engage policy makers, service providers, and people experiencing homelessness to understand how racism intersects with homelessness. To change the conversation, we are launching a process of research and action.

RESEARCH

- **Conduct 30 focus groups in 10 American communities** to identify systemic patterns around racial inequity.
- **Collect 200 audio recordings of life histories of people experiencing homelessness** to understand pathways into and barriers to exiting homelessness for people of color.
- **Analyze Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Point In Time (PIT), and census data** in each community to provide reports of racial inequity.

ACTION

- **Create a national learning collaborative** of cities working to implement anti-racist strategies in their homelessness systems.
- **Provide a library of tools** to implement anti-racist interventions.
- **Provide in-person trainings on racism and homelessness** in each community.
- **Provide ongoing technical assistance** on anti-racist interventions.

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, technical assistance, 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 Dones is the Associate for Equity Initiatives and Diversity at the Center for Social Innovation supporting systems transformation around health and racial equity across the country. Previously, Marc worked at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, focusing on youth violence prevention and reduction as well as systemic responses to youth homelessness. Marc was also the Director of Project Management for Child and Adolescent Services at the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. They served on the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth and co-chaired the Administration Committee. Marc is a graduate of New York University's Gallatin School with a concentration in Psychiatric Anthropology.



Tarah Johnson, Senior Analyst

Tarah's work at C4 has focused on mental health and substance use recovery. She has conducted focus groups throughout the U.S., collecting input from stakeholders on recovery support tools and services. Tarah is the coordinator for SPARC's Action Lab where she works with local leaders to organize events and focus groups. She has a degree in Latin American History and Anthropology from the University of New Mexico.



Molly Richard, Analyst

Molly is Research Manager for the SPARC Study. Before joining Center for Social Innovation, she was a residential counselor at a program for youth affected by complex trauma. Her research focused on trauma-informed care, families experiencing homelessness, and training evaluation. She began anti-racism work in college and is committed to fostering authentic 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 Center for Social Innovation 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.

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.

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