2020 SUMMIT ON **RACE MATTERS** IN WEST VIRGINIA

HOSTED BY

GREATER KANAWHA VALLEY FOUNDATION

A report covering subject matter presented by 28 speakers with expertise in the field of social justice

2020 SUMMIT ON **RACE MATTERS** IN WEST VIRGINIA

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2020 Summit on Race Matters in West Virginia

BY THE NUMBERS

HOST

Michelle Foster
President and
CEO, TGKVF

1,519
Attendees

37
Sponsors

6
Sessions

28
Speakers

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Ibram X. Kendi

Nikole Hannah-Jones

Angela Davis

Camara Jones

Michael Eric Dyson

Valerie R. Wilson

6
Facilitators

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Tom Heywood
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Reverend James Patterson
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8
Subject Areas

- Grounding in Racial Inequality/Systemic Racism
- Criminal Justice
- Civic Engagement
- Health
- Education & Employment
- Housing & Wealth

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The State's Commission for National and Community Service

West Virginia American Water

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls, as well as a quantitative change in our lives."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

From August 2020 through January 2021, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (TGKVF) hosted the 2020 Summit on Race Matters in West Virginia. The Summit was designed to discuss race in a comprehensive, collaborative, and compassionate manner in order to build what Martin Luther King, Jr. termed a "beloved community" in West Virginia.

While all West Virginians are integral to moving the state forward, Black West Virginians face systemic barriers that impede their full participation in this important work. The Summit was convened to address these barriers in a meaningful, sustainable, and transformative way so that all West Virginians can participate in a West Virginia renaissance.

Throughout six separate sessions (each 2.5-hours long), 28 speakers with expertise in the field of social justice discussed eight topic areas in the following order:

1. Understanding Racism
2. Criminal Justice
3. Civic Engagement
4. Health
5. Education and Employment
6. Housing and Wealth

Desired outcomes aimed to: strengthen the skills of individuals working to build communities that serve everyone; serve as an incubator for increased collaborative leadership in building these communities; raise awareness of systemic inequalities; and develop an agenda of thoughtful and visionary policies and practices that empower Black West Virginians, and thus the state and nation.

Sessions were recorded and transcribed, and a synthesis of those transcripts form the bulk of the report. Supporting documentation came from cited research, as indicated.

The key underlying theme running throughout this report, and the most commonly expressed message from speakers, is that racism is deeply imbedded in American institutions and the psyche of the nation's citizens. This is a problem we must not look away from, but collectively tackle head-on through education, political engagement, government and institutional reforms, and difficult conversations that can affect change. In short, regardless of skin color, we all have a duty to address racial inequality and inequity when we encounter it.

Summit panelists widely agreed that the roots of racism in America began with slavery. "It's impossible to grapple with where we are as a nation if we don't understand how we got here," said Nikole Hannah-Jones, creator of The 1619 Project. "If you understand that we were a country that believed you could buy and sell human beings the same way you would sell a cow or a piece of land, then you understand that we've always been a country that did not value Black lives, and you can draw those direct lines."

Many of those lines intersect with the topics explored in this report. Our broken criminal justice system, voter suppression, and health disparities experienced by people of color are just a few of the challenges that non-White communities have faced for generations. Striking examples of inequality highlighted during the Summit and within this report include:

- Black Americans make up 40% of the prison population despite representing only 13% of the US population.[1]
- African Americans experience the worst health care, the worst health status, and the worst health outcomes of any racial or ethnic group in the US, according to the *Journal of the National Medical Association*.[2]
- Non-White school districts receive $23 billion less than White districts despite serving the same number of students, according to a 2019 report by the nonprofit EdBuild.[3]
- Black students experience the highest rates of poverty, according to Congress' *Conditions of Education 2020* report.[4]
- The typical median net worth of a White family is about ten times the median net worth of a typical Black family.[5]

And in West Virginia:

- African Americans, despite representing around 3% of the population, are in prison at 3.5 times the rate of White people.[6]
- Black children are placed in detention centers 1.8 times more often than their White counterparts.[7]
- Black households have 70% of the income of White households.[8]
- Black men and Black women have higher unemployment rates.[9]
- Black West Virginians experience disparities in education, health, and earnings outcomes and within the criminal justice system.[10]

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer served to highlight long-standing racial inequalities in the US. While these recent events and the Black Lives Matter movement have sparked a conversation around the need for racial justice, the Summit made it clear that much work is left to be done To accelerate these efforts, a host of recommendations for combating racism in the spheres of criminal justice, civic engagement, health, education, employment, housing, and wealth are compiled within this report.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

What policymakers and businesses can do:

- Implement a community-level approach to Policing, which means finding ways to keep communities safe without pouring 50% of budgets into policing. Redirect monies into services—such as mental health, homelessness, or possible suicides—so that incident calls are no longer turned over to the police, often producing horrible outcomes.
- Practice restorative justice, which focuses on rehabilitation and reconciliation.
- Fund the court system with tax dollars and expunge the criminal records and criminal court debt for every person in the US who has committed a nonviolent drug-related offense. This would help lift entire Black, Brown, and rural communities across the nation out of economic decay.
- Fund community organizations and projects that support civic engagement and not larger businesses or corporations.
- Look at issues around social inequities within your own corporation, business, school, government, or agency. Examine all policies and make sure they're not worsening racial disparities.
- If you're a physician, be engaged and talk about the broader framework of health. Physicians have a front row seat to all of the parameters that contribute to outcomes.
- Make the right thing to do the easy thing to do. Instead of a trip to the hospital, create opportunities to get health needs met at schools and elsewhere in the community. Give those entities, organizations, and social service agencies the resources they need to meet people where they are.
- Implement system-wide policies and practices that prevent exploitation and misapplication of rules. Detention becomes a feeder system into jail. "We should have zero tolerance for zero tolerance," said Michael Eric Dyson.
- When developing housing policies, even if they're good, universal policies, understand it's going to look differently to different people based on underlying structures. Focus on, target, and addresses issues of the most marginalized groups to make policies and solutions the most effective.

What ordinary citizens can do:

- Lead by example.
- Encourage children to read and learn about history, and not just White history.
- Find and attend local meetings; build relationships.
- Get children engaged in the political process; take them to the West Virginia State Capitol.
- Get involved with Show Up for Racial Justice (https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/), an organization primarily formed by White people to begin the process of eliminating racism. "In West Virginia that has to be emphasized," said Angela Davis. "It's not only a Black struggle with a few White allies. It's a struggle for democracy for everyone."

A detailed list of recommendations is provided in each section of the report.

We hope the findings and recommendations from the Summit, many of which stem from what Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have themselves asked for over many years, will serve as a call to action for citizens, policymakers, and business and institutional leaders to actively embrace anti-racism in the places they live, work, and govern.

UNDERSTANDING RACISM

History and Ideology

Why does racism exist? Where does it come from? Professor and Author **Ibram X. Kendi** explained that the root of racism in the US begins with slavery. Historical records tell us that European settlers enslaved at least 2 million Native Americans in the Americas between 1492 and 1880[11] in addition to 12.5 million African slaves. To justify this inherently unequal practice, racist attitudes and policies were adopted early in our nation's history; this included everything from Manifest Destiny to the idea that slavery was good for Black people because it brought them out of the barbarism of Africa. Politicians and policymakers (oftentimes slaveholders themselves) furthered these narratives because it was in their economic self-interest to keep slavery alive. They worked to convince Americans that the reason for slavery wasn't greed; it was because non-White people *should* be enslaved. The public internalized these ideas, and many came to see a world of White freedom and Black slavery as normal.

"Slavery was a system of economic exploitation," said writer **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, creator of The 1619 Project for *New York Times Magazine*. "That is why slavery existed—not because Europeans decided they hated Africans." Hannah-Jones maintained that while other countries engaged in chattel slavery at certain points in their long histories, America is the only country founded on slavery. "If America erased slavery from its narrative or tried to purge the institution of slavery, it would have to purge George Washington, Madison, Jefferson—and it can't exist without those. Thus, we have a reaction to racism, a need to cover it up, because, unlike other countries, America's history does not exist outside of slavery."

Dr. Camara Jones, an epidemiologist who studies the health effects of racism on the nation, maintained that for each marginalized or stigmatized or oppressed group of color, some form of historical injustice can be found. "For American Indians, the initial historical injustice was the taking of the land followed by genocide," she said. "Then survivors were moved to reservations, and once something good was found under one reservation, we picked them up and moved them somewhere else."

Author and native West Virginian **Jeff James** explained that categories of race have been made and remade throughout history, mostly by Europeans. At certain points in time, there were over 30 racial categories, while today only a small number exists, for instance, Black, White, Asian, and Pacific Islander. "Whoever decides to make the categories and then rank the categories always puts themselves on top, largely for economic reasons," said James. "It's easier to justify taking over a new world through colonization, or stealing people out of a country or region, if you think you're helping them by dominating them. European churches and scientists supported this worldview; traders, explorers, and investors seeking gold and other wealth supported the ideology that we help inferior people by dominating them. That's what we inherited and are contending with today."

Problems and Challenges Today: The Ripple Effect

More than 150 years have passed since enslaved people were emancipated, and today slavery is recognized as an unfortunate chapter in our nation's history. Dr. Jones said she is often asked the question: *All else being equal, don't you think the impacts of slavery would have washed off by now?* "The answer is in the question. All else being equal. All else has not been equal since 1865, and all else is still not equal today," she said. "In this nation we are ahistorical. We act as if the present were disconnected from the past, and its current distribution of advantage and disadvantage was just a happenstance. People do not understand that their so-called normal is built up on a whole mountain of unfair advantage."

Our nation's racist roots and ideologies continue to persist in the form of prejudiced attitudes and systemic racism. Generations of Black Americans, who weren't allowed to own land, taught to read, or able to hold positions of power, created a ripple effect leading to a wealth gap and other racist practices that persist today.

Systemic Racism

Systemic racism—racist practices embedded within our institutions, organizations, and society—is a term that is fast becoming a part of the American lexicon, particularly after the groundswell of public rage that George Floyd's death, in police custody, created in May 2020. His killing and the subsequent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement prompted a renewed discourse on racial disparities in America, evidenced by this report.

SLAVERY IN WEST VIRGINIA

Most West Virginians were taught in school that slavery was a Southern problem; we sided with the North in the Civil War, after all. Historian Nick Brumfield, in his 2019 article in expatalachian, "It's Time to Talk About West Virginia's Slaves," reveals a different history.

Slaveholders dominated the state's economy in the antebellum period, owning between 33-40% of land in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky, and they translated their wealth into disproportionate political and social power. Most insidiously, local laws required non-slaveholding Whites to pay for and participate in community slave patrols. These patrols were a highly controversial institution, mostly because they protected wealthy slave-owners' property at public expense; nevertheless, they implicated entire communities in perpetuating slavery and generated intense racial animosity between African Americans and lower-class Whites.

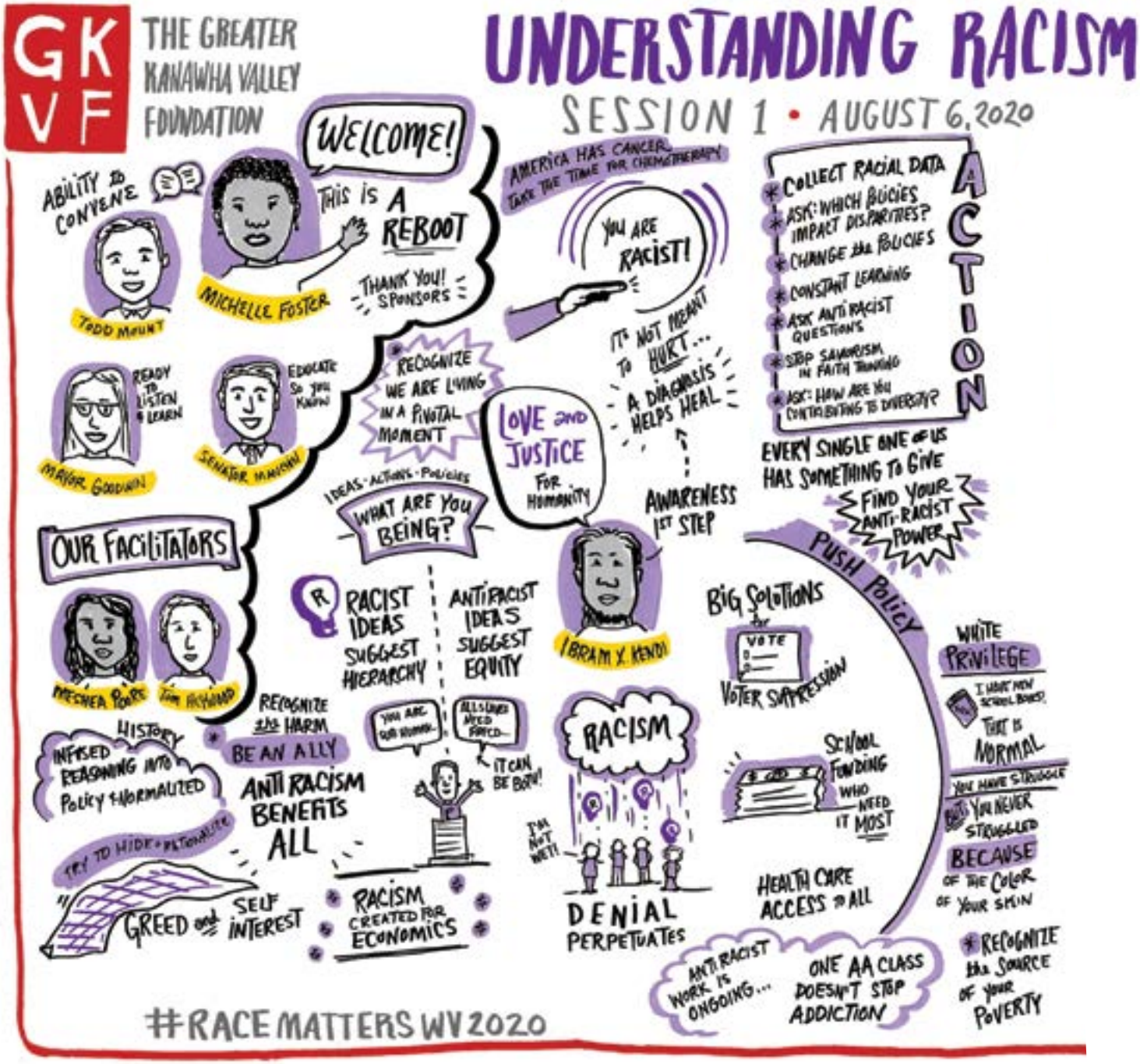
— Nick Brumfield

"I am often alarmed that we don't talk enough about how so much of the systemic racism that exists in the US was not created in 1619 or even in the 1800s or 1900s; but in my lifetime, systems of oppression that were deliberately created to harm us were not just built and maintained, they were designed to produce even more exacerbated harm to our communities."

— Damion Shade, Criminal Justice Policy Analyst, Oklahoma Policy Institute

"People actually created our most problematic systems, and they maintain those systems—of inequality, police brutality, massive incarceration. They were built by people with names. These institutions are the Frankensteins that both Democrats and Republicans built together."

— Shaun King, Civil Rights Activist and Author



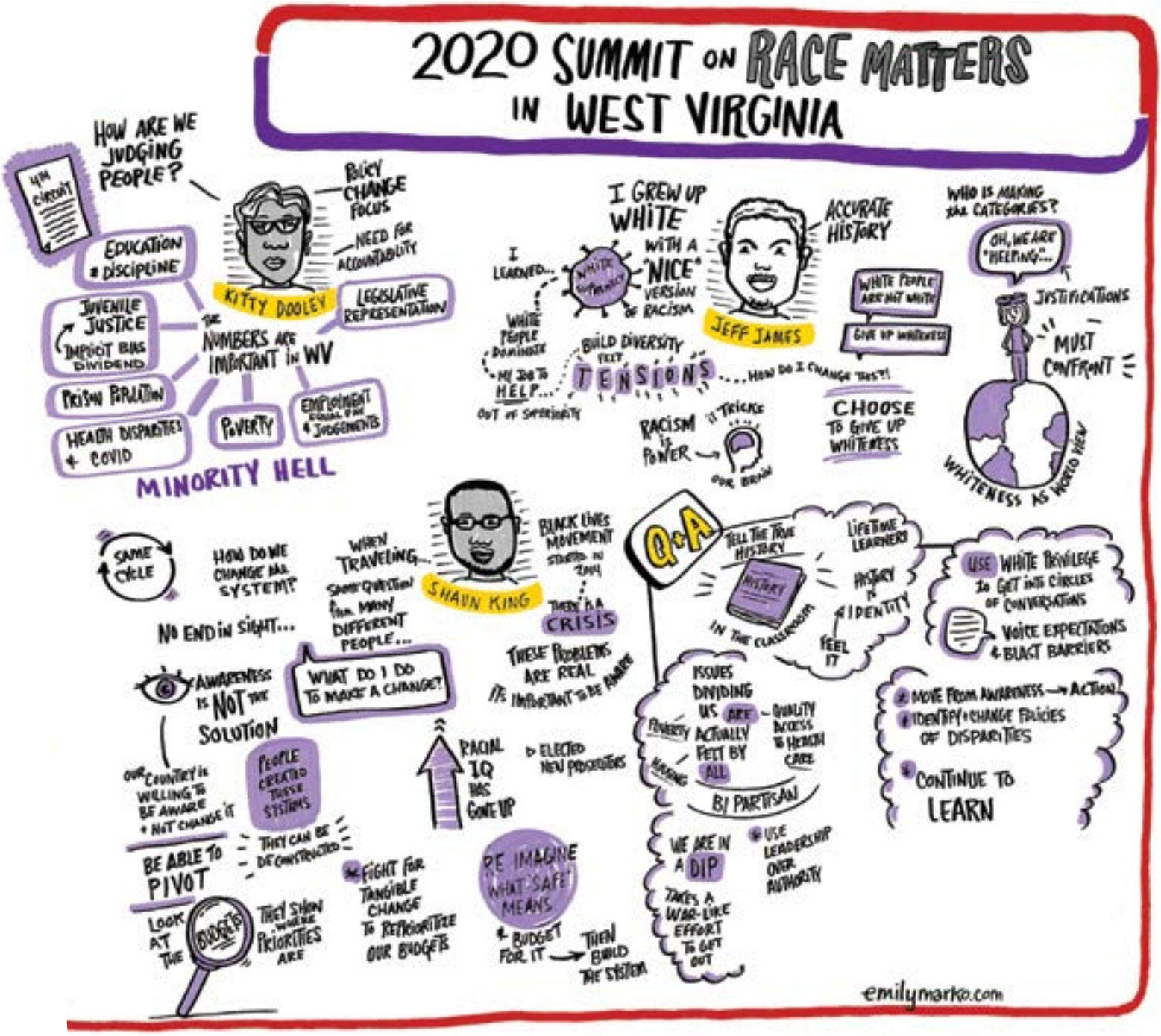
DEFINING RACISM & ANTI-RACISM

To explain racism and anti-racism in simple terms, Kendi offered the following definitions:

Racist ideas suggest a racial hierarchy—that certain racial groups are better or worse than others. And racist policies are those that lead to racial inequity (for example, voter suppression).

Conversely, anti-racist ideas suggest racial equality—that racial groups, despite any differences, are equal. And anti-racist policies are those that lead to racial equity (for example, health care for all).

A person can simultaneously hold and exhibit both racist and anti-racist ideas. For example, a policymaker can champion health care policies that lead to equity (anti-racist) while supporting criminal justice policies that maintain inequity (racist).



Extensive research has revealed numerous ways that Black Americans and people of color experience life differently than White Americans. Data show disparities in housing, wealth, education, health care, incarceration, and other aspects of modern American life, all discussed extensively throughout the Summit.

Examples of systemic racism:[12]

- Studies show that employers are less likely to hire people with names that "sound Asian or Black."
- Black Americans are underrepresented in corporate and government leadership.
- In 2018, the average Black worker earned just 62% of what the average White worker made.
- Poor White school districts receive about $150 less per student than the national average, yet they still receive nearly $1,500 more than poor non-White school districts.
- Black mortgage applicants are more likely to be denied loans than aspiring homeowners of other races.
- In 2018, Black inmates made up roughly 33% of the country's prison population—yet just 12% of the total population. White inmates made up 30% of the prison population and 60% of the country's total population.
- Certain politicians recognize that voter suppression is in their political self-interest, so they support voter suppression policies that allow them to maintain their political power. Then they justify that the reason for supporting these policies is voter fraud. And then people consume these ideas that Black and Brown votes are fraudulent. — Kendi

There is a White blindness to the problem of racism, which commenced with the nation's origins and continues today. This includes not only a lack of awareness of racist structures and policies, but also an unwillingness to recognize one's own personal biases.

"The heartbeat of racism is denial," said Kendi. "It's easy for us to forget that slaveholders claimed, in today's terms, that they were not racist. Very few people believe themselves to be racist; therefore, understanding racism is not important to them. It is a privilege to be able to ignore racism or claim it doesn't exist, because it doesn't impact you personally."

Growing up White in Glenville, West Virginia, attending an all-White Baptist church and interacting with all-White teachers, coaches, and friends, *Giving Up Whiteness* author Jeff James was not surrounded by the "vicious racism" he later saw and learned about with Jim Crow and the Civil Rights South. "I learned a kinder, gentler, more benevolent kind of racism. It combines West Virginia friendliness with some bigotry that takes shape when your life experience is the norm."

One often hears questions like, *Slavery was a long time ago. Why don't you just get over it?* Or, *Slavery isn't an issue until you bring it up. I've never owned slaves, so what's the big deal?* "Simply ignoring or wishing something away does not make it disappear," said Hannah-Jones. "Even if never spoken of again, well-documented racial inequalities would still exist."

Hannah-Jones argued there's a vested interest in America in playing down the legacy of slavery—that we need to believe it was a tragic mark in our history, but it is not central to who we are; that our founders were pure, even if they made mistakes. "We want a sense of racial innocence in this country. And not knowing, aggressively not knowing, is what allows us to sit in that racial innocence; because once you know, then you have to own up to the role that you're playing in it. It can be a really hard thing."

While writing the majestic ideals of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson owned hundreds of human beings that he forced into slave labor, had children by a slave, and bred women for profit. Hannah-Jones says we have to be able to confront that paradox, even if it makes people uncomfortable.

> **"The way we've dealt with our founding hypocrisy—the fact we were a country founded on ideals of freedom, but on the brutal and inhumane system of slavery—is to downplay what slavery was. Germans today would not call concentration camps plantations, nor hold weddings there, or reenactments of people who ran those concentration camps, but we do in America."**
>
> *— Nikole Hannah-Jones, Creator of the 1619 Project for New York Times Magazine*

White Privilege

What exactly is White privilege? The term can connote a certain defensiveness and pushback among White people, some who are unaccustomed to being defined or described by race, and others who are poor and struggling and don't feel very privileged. Speakers at the Summit were quick to point out that White privilege is not the suggestion that White people have never struggled, nor is it the supposition that their achievements are undeserved.

So, how do you explain the concept to a White person who lives in a poor, largely White community in West Virginia and doesn't feel very privileged? "It's hard for White people to accept their privilege because they have struggles in their life," said Kendi. "They imagine that when we say, *you have White privilege*, we're saying you never struggle and everything is easy for you. We're saying *you never are struggling because of the color of your skin.* You have other reasons why you're struggling, but it's not necessarily that."

It can be very difficult for some White people to recognize their privileges because their privileges are so normal to them. All you know is what you see and what you're used to. For example:

- When pulled over by the police, it's normal for White people not to fear for their safety. They don't consider that other people, because of the color of their skin, might be afraid. (A travel guide, *"Negro Motorist Green Book,"* first published in 1936, provided African Americans with safe places to travel, rest, and eat in the US during the Jim Crow era. While random acts of White-on-Black violence are less common today, concerns about traveling by car still exist.[13])
- It's normal for a poor White person to live in a mixed-income neighborhood. They don't know that Black people are more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- If someone attends a majority-White school with new books, air-conditioning, and running water, they don't know that other majority-Black schools may lack some or all of those things, as is the case in parts of rural Mississippi.

"Racism structures a dual reality," said Dr. Jones. "It's difficult for any of us to recognize a system of inequity that privileges us. That's part of your privilege, not to have to know."

Jeff James warned of an "assimilationist mindset" where Whiteness is viewed as the default, and the expectation is that people of color will assimilate their identity and conform to a White standard. This assumes that Whiteness is the gold standard by which everything is measured. "This permeates our nonprofits, country clubs, places of business, schools, all places where assimilation is expected—and not actual equality through anti-racism. Most of us are in this category. Racism is so tricky that we can be practicing it even when we think we're trying to defeat it."

Solutions

During his travels through America with the Black Lives Matter movement, civil rights activist Shaun King was repeatedly asked the same question from very different audiences—conservatives to liberals, young to old, college professors to parents: *I'm disturbed by racism and injustice in America, but I don't really know what to do about it. What do I do? How do I use my life to make a change in this country?* "I came to understand what people were asking, in a lot of ways, was: How do we change the systems and structures that continue to cause painful acts of racial injustice? How do we actually use our lives to make a difference?"

First, we have to be aware of the problems, and then we must be willing to act. Psychologist and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, wrote: "Between a stimulus and a response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

Spread Awareness

Because West Virginia's African American population is about 3% (or 60,000 people), there is a perception that the need to study issues of racism is unnecessary. However, by being anti-racist, White West Virginians can help create cities, communities, and institutions where there's equity among racial groups. "A majority of Americans are aware of the problem of racism, but awareness is only a first step," said Kendi. "The next step that allows us to use this energy and awareness to transform our country, to create equity and justice for all, is by having the willingness to support the biggest solutions to this massive problem."

Awareness alone is not a solution. We must not let awareness become a substitute for action. Whether it's police violence, income inequality, health disparities, immigration, climate change, or the environment, "we have to be willing to move and pivot from awareness to action in a very practical way," said King.

Practical suggestions included:

- Train the local trainers. People are more likely to listen and value conversations from within their community.
- Educate others on the true source of poverty; it comes from policies and policymakers, not from Latin American immigrants, for instance, who are supposedly coming to steal jobs.
- Educate yourself on the history of race and what it means to be White.
- Be dedicated to changing misconceptions, and think critically about how to do so.
- Discourage use of the word "racist," which can cause people to recoil or become defensive. Instead, when pointing out a racist action, use an illustration. For instance, when a doctor diagnoses a patient with an illness, they are not trying to harm them, but to help them. Similarly, the person pointing out a racist action shouldn't be trying to attack, but to illuminate the problem and help with the cure.
- Remember that one conversation is not enough. The key is constant learning and self-reflection.

Be Anti-Racist

> **"It is important for people who are living in this country as White to recognize they have White-skinned privilege, and they can use that. I encourage people not to be afraid."**
>
> *— Dr. Camara Jones, Family Physician and Epidemiologist*

Communities can be anti-racist by advancing equal opportunity, justice, and equity across sectors, health to wealth, by:

- Truly embracing that, as West Virginians, we should not have any racial disparities in our state.
- Collecting racial data to see where the hotspots are in housing, food insecurity, and other sectors. Policy change requires data; the numbers, large or small, matter.
- Identifying policies that are contributing to racial disparities in those hotspots.
- Reducing or eliminating harmful policies behind the disparities, while promoting those that increase equity. For example, expanding health insurance coverage, funding schools in poor neighborhoods, and making it easier to vote are all policies that increase racial equity.

Schools and universities can be anti-racist by:

- Teaching diversity.
- Incentivizing teachers to engage in diversity work. When tenure or promotion is assessed, ask *how have you contributed to diversity on campus*?
- Formulating a curriculum that recognizes America as a nation of indigenous people, formerly enslaved people, and immigrants from all parts of the world, not just Europe. This history is generally not taught in schools. Accurate history leads to accurate identity. Without this understanding, race issues won't be solved.
- Removing Confederate statues from school grounds.
- Asking anti-racist questions as researchers and scholars in higher education. A racist researcher asks *What's wrong with these people*? An anti-racist researcher asks W*hat's wrong with policies, conditions, structures, and systems*? Anti-racist research questions will lead to anti-racist research answers, which will lead to anti-racist policy change.

Businesses and organizations can be anti-racist by:

- Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it promotes good business and produces higher levels of performance and profits.[14]
- Recruiting, retaining, and advancing a diversified pool of talent.
- Creating images and processes that let customers know and believe your company is concerned about them, more than just the dollars they have to spend.
- Examine every policy and make sure they reflect anti-racist practices.

The good news: Any system that's unjust can be deconstructed and replaced with something better.

Confront Denialism

"If you have a person who is denying what's before our very collective eyes it's going to be tough to have a conversation that could be insightful," said writer and professor, **Dr. Michael Eric Dyson**. "You've got to figure out a way to try to countermand their argument with examples of plenty drawn from the real world." For instance, show videos of White versus Black police arrests. Then, in a generous fashion, ask probing questions to encourage a more serious and honest look at racism in America. For example:

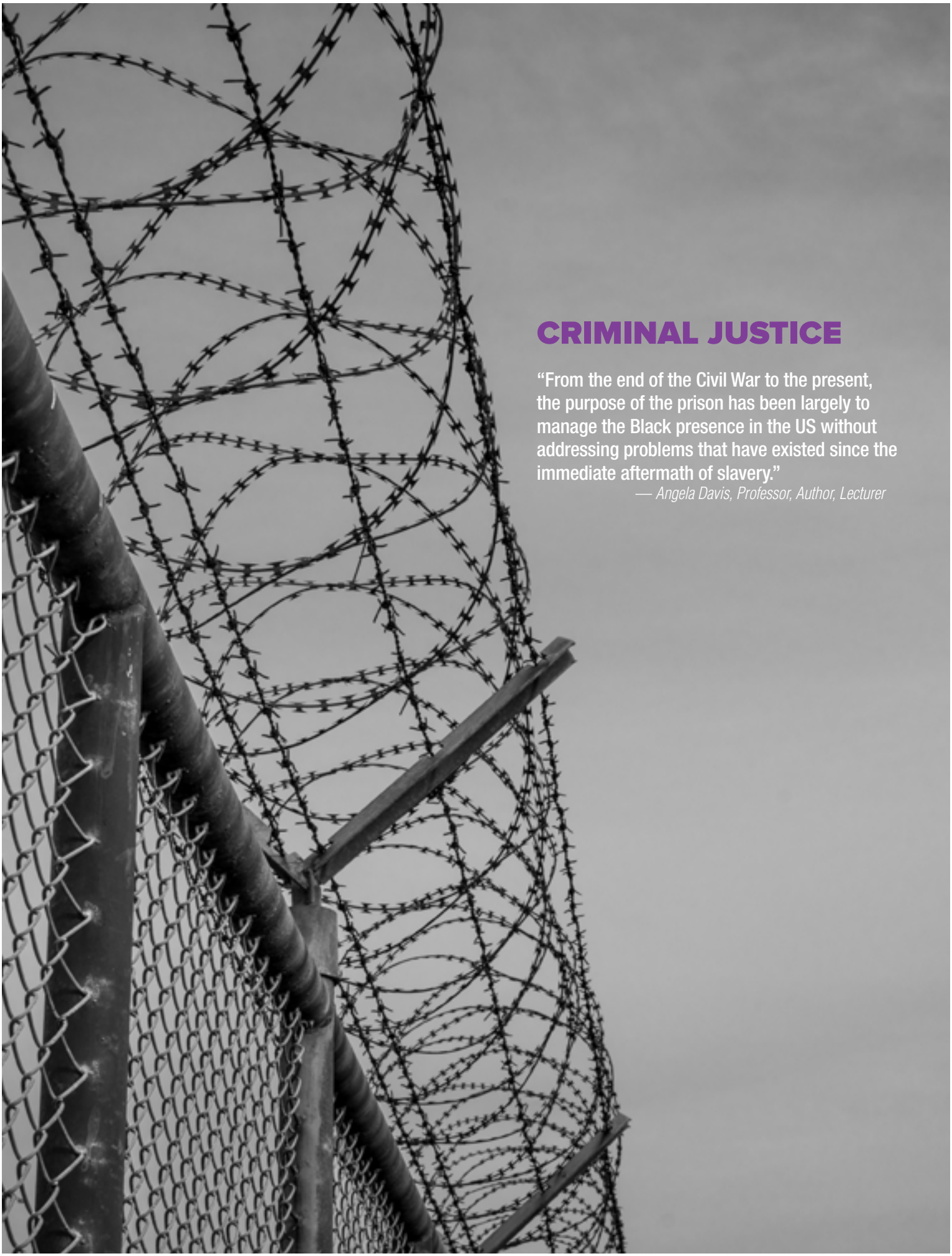
- Do these things happen in your community, and how often?
- Did you ever think there was racism, and if so when?
- If you thought there was racism and it did exist, when did it go away?
- What is enslavement? What was that about? What do you call enslavement?
    - Were all people enslaved to the same degree?
    - Were they murdered? Were their women systemically raped?
    - Were they vulnerable to policies of the Confederacy and practices like Jim Crow after Reconstruction?
- Do you think what happens in the past is over automatically?
- Were your communities systemically denied opportunities for no other reason than their skin color?
- Was there an all-Black major league baseball team? Not the Black leagues. Was Babe Ruth prevented from participating in a league because of his color? And did Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs against the best or just the best of the White ball players?
    - "Michael Jordan went to the NBA league in 1984, but the first Black ball player, Earl Lloyd,[15] died in our lifetimes at 86. So, were all the ball players who were denied opportunity before then denied because they were incompetent? Had Michael Jordan been born earlier he would've been denied too." — Dyson

Be an Ally

"Every single American has something to give to this struggle against racist policies," said Kendi. "We all have power." Find your anti-racist power from within, "because that's what we're going to need to overcome racism." Suggestions include:

- Give your time by volunteering or joining an organization.
- Donate to an anti-racist organization.

- Support those fighting racism in communities, sectors, and professions. Offer your expertise as help.
- Support activists fighting against the narrative that Latin American immigrants are invading and ruining the country. Unless you are Native American, your ancestors likely encountered the same type of racist ideas.
- Support activists fighting against police violence. Black and Brown people are disproportionately killed by police, while White Americans are killed by police at higher rates than people in almost every other Western democracy.
- Understand racism is not just a Black or Brown problem, it's an American problem that harms us all.
- Continue to be a student. Listen and learn. Question what you think you know and why. "Why do we believe George Washington's false teeth were made of wood, when in fact they were made of the teeth pulled from enslaved people he owned?" — Hannah-Jones
- Advocate for policies that promote equality, such as a reparations bill.[16] "You inherit wealth as a country, but you also inherit a nation's debt, and this is the greatest unpaid debt that this country owes." — Hannah-Jones
- Advocate from a position of equality, not superiority.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

"From the end of the Civil War to the present, the purpose of the prison has been largely to manage the Black presence in the US without addressing problems that have existed since the immediate aftermath of slavery."

— Angela Davis, Professor, Author, Lecturer

History

In 1865, following the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the 13th Amendment abolished slavery throughout the US,[17] freeing four million slaves. It provides that:

> *Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude,* **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted***, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, required the defeated Confederate states to pledge loyalty to the 13th Amendment and the Union but otherwise granted them freedom to reestablish their postwar governments however they saw fit.

Black Codes (1865-1866)

Former Confederate states used the exception within the 13th Amendment to create Black codes, laws that were extensions of slave codes and slave patrols, which, in effect, continued enslavement. In order to maintain White supremacy and the multi-billion-dollar economy once generated by slaves, Black codes created a legal way to enforce indentured servitude. They dictated where freed Blacks could work and their rate of pay, and they created harsh and regressive labor contracts (such as sharecropping) that, if broken, could result in arrest and forced labor. The codes denied Blacks legal and political equality across a spectrum of privileges, including the right to vote and when and where they could live and travel.

Black codes were enforced by all-White militia, police, and judges (often former Confederate soldiers), who maintained a legal system that made it difficult for Black people to receive justice in the courts.

Black codes also worked in conjunction with prison labor camps in the form of convict leasing. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, Southern states profited by leasing prisoners to private railways, mines, and large plantations, where they faced brutal and dangerous work conditions without any compensation. As well, orphaned children and juvenile offenders were forced to serve as unpaid laborers. These practices continued well into the 1930s and affected thousands of African Americans.[18]

"When one system ends, it can't duplicate an identical system," said Hannah-Jones. "It morphs into something else that tries to recreate it as best as possible. That's how a racial caste system works."

Reconstruction (1867-1877)

> **"Reconstruction is a brief period where this country really begins to create a multiracial democracy. Many people consider this the second founding, where we start to see movement toward those founding ideals and bringing Black people into the full democracy."**
>
> *— Nikole Hannah-Jones*

Radical Republicans in Congress opposed the Black codes and, despite vetoes by President Johnson, managed to enact the first Civil Rights Bill of 1866[19] and a New Reconstruction Act in 1867. Soon after, the 14th Amendment (1868) provided previously enslaved people with the rights of citizenship and equal protection, and the 15th Amendment (1870) provided African American men with the right to vote. (Native American Indians would not gain citizenship until 1924 nor gain the right to vote in every state until 1962.)

As a consequence, 16 African Americans served in the US Congress, more than 600 others were elected to state legislatures, and hundreds more held local offices across the South during Radical Reconstruction.[20] Though the bulk of power remained in White hands, biracial democracy existed for the first time in the South. Millions of freed African Americans began new lives, founding churches, schools, and communities.[21] In 1868 Ulysses S. Grant defeated Johnson and, with a large Black voter turnout, won a second term, serving as the 18th President until 1877.

Though African Americans made gains during Reconstruction, they nonetheless faced ongoing threats of violence and intimidation from racist people and organizations like the Ku Klux Klan.[22] The Compromise of 1877, which entailed the removal of all federal troops from former Confederate states in order to settle a hotly disputed presidential election, brought an end to Reconstruction and the era's policies, all but erasing the progress that Black people had made.

Jim Crow (1877-1968)

With a new Southern-Democratic party ("Redeemers") in power in the former Confederate states, Black men were removed from political office and Black codes morphed into Jim Crow laws. Though this system of racial apartheid was not enacted in the North, discrimination was nonetheless widespread throughout the US.

Redeemers, wishing to reassert White dominance and ensure the South had an exploitable labor system, enacted Jim Crow laws that denied Blacks basic social, economic, and civil rights. Voter suppression tactics like poll taxes, literacy tests, and deadly visits by the KKK, made it nearly impossible for Blacks (and poor Whites) to vote. Most notably, in order to maintain a caste system, Jim Crow enforced state and local segregation, including separate restrooms, drinking fountains, schools, restaurants, and transportation. Black witnesses were not allowed to testify against Whites in courtrooms with all-White judges and juries. New vagrancy laws criminalized unemployment, and many trivial offenses were treated as felonies with severe sentences or fines.

Jim Crow laws remained in effect for nearly 100 years. It would take a second Civil Rights Movement, in the works for years and finally ignited by activist and organizer Rosa Parks when she refused to give up her bus seat in 1955, to end segregation. Enactments of the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Rights Act (1965), and the Fair Housing Act (1968), put a constitutional end to Jim Crow laws, but their consequences, like those of slavery, remain evident throughout the nation.

"The obsession with race is encoded in our legal system," said Hannah-Jones, noting that much of today's criminal justice system can be traced back to Black codes, slave codes, and slave patrols, which were converted directly into modern police departments, especially in the South. For example, Angola Plantation—named after the place where most slaves in that part of Louisiana had been captured—was converted directly into Angola Prison when slavery ended. "It's been an unbroken chain from then to now," said Hannah-Jones. "To this day Black men pick cotton with an overseer with a gun in the cotton fields of Louisiana."

Problems and Challenges Today

Mass Incarceration

Today, the US has the largest prison population on Earth, with an estimated 2.3 million people held within the American criminal justice system. How did this happen, and why? A thorough examination by The Prison Policy Initiative found:

> Poverty plays a central role in mass incarceration. People in prison and jail are disproportionately poor compared to the overall US population. The criminal justice system punishes poverty, beginning with the high price of money bail: The median felony bail bond amount ($10,000) is the equivalent of 8 months' income for the typical detained defendant. As a result, people with low incomes are more likely to face the harms of pretrial detention. Poverty is not only a predictor of incarceration; it is also frequently the

outcome, as a criminal record and time spent in prison destroys wealth, creates debt, and decimates job opportunities. It's no surprise that people of color—who face much greater rates of poverty—are dramatically overrepresented in the nation's prisons and jails. These racial disparities are particularly stark for Black Americans, who make up 40% of the incarcerated population despite representing only 13% of US residents.[23]

The War on Drugs has also played a central role in levels of mass incarceration with new drug laws, mandatory minimum sentencing, and nationwide expansion of police to enforce the laws. Biased law enforcement, compounded by the confluence of mass unemployment from globalization and an economic restructuring that provided tax cuts for corporations while divesting from communities and the social safety net, has created devastating consequences for communities of color.[24]

Yet another component of mass incarceration is the divestment of the mental health system throughout the US. In 1950, more than half-a-million Americans were in the mental health system (think *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). By 1980 there were fewer than 130,000 people housed in mental health hospitals. Where did those people go? "They went to our jails," said **Damion Shade**, a criminal justice policy analyst in Oklahoma. The racial impact is specifically seen in those struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

"One in every 10 police shootings is of a person experiencing a severe mental health crisis," said Shade. "That means when the police are called to deal with those people experiencing homelessness or those struggling with addiction … it's significantly more likely that the communities with the least access to mental health care or to drug treatment will be the most impacted by that action. This has downstream effects on the ability to keep a driver's license or hold a job and keep your kids, because of the court debt that's latched onto you."

Myths and Misconceptions of Incarceration

Incarceration has something to do with guilt or innocence. "The biggest misconception is that the criminal justice system is producing outcomes based on what you do. It's not true," said Shade. He and others argue that outcomes are based on economic hierarchies implemented in many places by housing policies, education policies, health care policies, and the absence of investment.

Over 11 million jail stays occur annually in the nation's county and city jail systems. "Most of the people incarcerated are too poor to buy their freedom from a bondsman," said Shade. "If you can't pay bail in Oklahoma, the median jail stay for nonviolent felony offenses is more than six months. So, you're locked in a county jail, not able to feed your family, take care of your kids, earn any money to pay your bills, and you're innocent the entire time. The prosecutor may even decide not to try your case and you get out."

TERMINOLOGY

Felony: A crime, typically involving violence, usually punishable by imprisonment of more than one year, or by death. (Ex: murder, rape, burglary, arson)

Non-violent Felony: Does not involve the use of threat or force. Often considered "victimless crimes." (Ex: marijuana possession, shoplifting, traffic offenses)

Misdemeanor: A minor wrongdoing; a non-indictable offense. (Ex: public intoxication)

Warrant: A legal document authorizing police to make an arrest, search premises, or carry out some other action relating to the administration of justice.

Bench Warrant: Issued by a judge when a defendant violates a court rule, most often by failing to appear in court. Once issued, police can treat it like any other arrest warrant

Black and Brown communities have borne the brunt of this economic/incarceration system for decades. "Where would you go if you were a cop?" asked Shade. "Not White communities where these warrants are rare, relatively speaking, and court debts the lowest. You'd target low-income/Black communities. It is a system of oppression maintained mostly to keep the status quo and those in power, in that power."

> **"Racism is profitable."**
>
> *— Damion Shade*

Racism is happening because of crime. Uniform crime reporting and other data does not support this notion. Crime is not driving racism. "Modern criminal justice systems are still about keeping an economically exploitable population and using racism as the justification for that," said Hannah-Jones.

"As long as we're talking about criminals and thugs, we can be lulled into thinking this is okay, this is normal, this is law and order; after all, they committed a crime," said **Lida Shepherd**, co-director of the West Virginia Economic Justice Project. "So now we justify the incarceration of 2.3 million people, which is bad enough, but consider what a felony status does to someone's life chances."

An estimated one-third of Black men in America today have a felony, and therefore are legally discriminated against in employment, housing, voting, public benefits, and more. In terms of systemic racism, it is a modern adaptation of Black codes and Jim Crow.

"The failure to change our criminal justice approach is itself an act of discrimination and violence," said West Virginia University Professor **Jim Nolan**. "It harms communities, reinforces negative stereotypes, reproduces racial inequality, and ensures that stable rates of crime will continue."

Nolan maintained that the entire criminal justice system is not geared around really fixing the problem or making communities safer. "Prosecutors get promoted and recognized for winning cases. Defense attorneys win cases by concealing the truth. Police are rewarded for making lockups. A whole bunch of people are doing a lot of things that actually just make things worse. They don't really care about the people because it's blamed on an individual's bad choices, and they must take personal responsibility. This explanation doesn't get at the root of the problem, which is sociological rather than psychological."

> **"The problems of racism in the US cannot be reduced to the problems of the criminal justice system, but the criminal justice system has been an engine of not just maintaining but exacerbating that inequality."**
>
> *— Alex Vitale, Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College*

West Virginia

Data collected by Reuters News Agency in 2020 revealed that within one decade, 115 people died within West Virginia's regional jail system, and more than half had not been convicted of a crime.[25]

In West Virginia, African Americans, despite representing only 3% of the population, are in prison at 3.5 times the rate of White people. They comprise between 11.7% to 28% of the prison population, according to West Virginia attorney **Katherine L. "Kitty" Dooley**.

In terms of juvenile justice, Black children are placed in detention centers in West Virginia 1.8 times more often than their White counterparts. As well, disparities exist in terms of plea deals or adjudications, particularly when dealing with Black male youth. "They are perceived as the *implicit bias dividend*, being both guilty and dangerous," explained Dooley. "This leads to the so-called school-to-prison-pipeline, which is incredibly dangerous and devastating to our youth."

Furthermore, within West Virginia government, there are no African Americans serving as Circuit Court judges or Supreme Court justices. The state has only one Black Magistrate and three Black members in the House of Delegates.

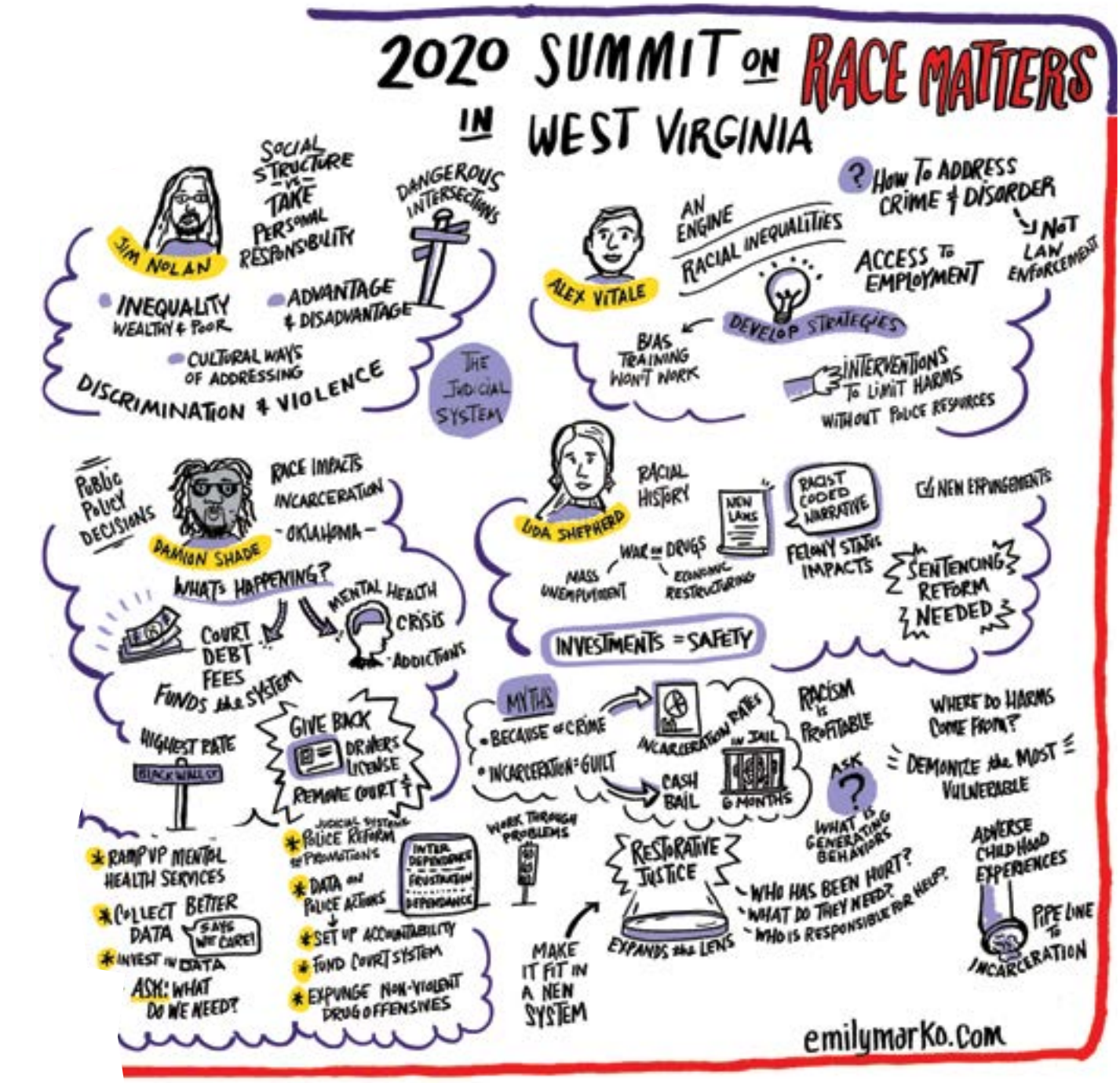
"The perceptions and perspectives of those who judge us are extremely important," said Dooley. "If you've had different experiences, and you can relate that to your fellow or sister judges or justices, then that widens our education in terms of how we're judging people who don't look like us."

Solutions

Everyone can agree that communities need to be safe. A majority of us can also agree that keeping 2.3 million people incarcerated is not working and maintaining the current system is an implausible solution for the future. Today we hear buzz phrases like “Defund the Police” and “Restorative Justice” used as strategies to remedy our broken criminal justice system. But what exactly do these things mean, and how might they contribute to criminal justice reform?

"What we hear often is the solution looks like community policing, better training for police, professionalization of the police, that we give them implicit bias training. No amount of bias training is going to fix the situation."

— Alex Vitale, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College



In major cities around the world, police funding takes up between 1% and 5% of a city's budget. In the US, law enforcement costs are considerably higher, taking up between 30% to 60% of local budgets. "The movement to defund the police is just saying there are ways to keep our country safe that don't pour 50% of our budgets into policing," said Shaun King. "Matthew 6:21 says: Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. In other words, your budget shows your priorities. We can reprioritize how we do public safety in ways that matter."

Suggestions and comments included:

- Develop strategies and redirect monies into services that can replace certain law enforcement functions. For instance, ramp up services for homelessness, possible suicides, and mental health, so that we no longer turn incidents over to the police, which often produces horrible outcomes.
  - "Look for non-policing possibilities as alternatives to turning every problem under the sun over to the criminal justice system to manage. In the process we free up resources that can be used to address things like unequal access to high-quality schools, health care, employment, and housing." —Alex Vitale
  - "Why do we assume that armed human beings are the responses to all the major challenges of our communities? If you have a mentally challenged adult who's experiencing a traumatic episode, why do we assume the way to address that problem is to call the police, to call someone who's armed and may very likely end up killing the person for the sole reason they're in mental crisis? This has happened over and over with Black women." — Angela Davis
- Transfer public safety out of the hands of the criminal justice system in as many ways as possible:
  - Start with community-level neighborhood assessments. Determine what the real challenges are for your community, and begin to articulate what kinds of interventions people would like if everything were on the table.
  - "To get past false choices we've been given for decades—that the choices are either: policing or nothing; incarceration or nothing; vengeance or nothing—start asking for things we think will really help our communities. Is it community-based mental health services? High-quality medicalized drug treatment? Targeted economic investment programs? Summer youth jobs? Each community needs to articulate that for itself. Look at a whole menu of possibilities that are occurring in other communities." — Alex Vitale

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is an approach to criminal justice that focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders by reconciling with victims and the community at large. Our current system asks: What laws have been broken, who did it, and what do they deserve? Restorative justice asks: Who has been hurt, what do they need, and whose obligation and responsibility is it to meet those needs?

"Where restorative justice is implemented, it's shown to have dramatic effects on reducing recidivism, victim satisfaction, and increased restitution," said Shepherd. "It implies all of us as a community. It's an ancient practice and one I hope we're coming back around to."

Adverse childhood experiences are a profound piece of what we call crime in the US. According to Shade, in West Virginia 55.8% of adults reported at least one adverse childhood experience, and one in seven reported at least four. "Those are the pipelines into incarceration. The most mind-boggling piece to restorative justice, fiscally speaking, is that we could treat the issues these children are experiencing many times before we ever got to the price point of a single year of incarceration. The restorative framework process could not only prevent crime but restore the individuals who have experienced these traumas before they ever end up interacting with the justice system in the first place."

In February 2021, House Bill 2094, which seeks to implement the practice of restorative justice for West Virginia youth in the juvenile criminal justice system, was adopted in the House and (at the time of this report) advanced to the Senate in 99-0 vote.[26]

Other Policy Solutions

- Hold police accountable. Implement systems of accountability that reveal, for example:
  - Each time an officer discharges a weapon, and why
  - Ongoing misconduct investigations
  - What occurs during each encounter, as captured through mandatory body cameras
- Fund the court system with tax dollars rather than making users of the court system pay.

"The man who killed George Floyd had numerous misconducts before murdering him. Why do we not hold police responsible for any misconduct still being investigated or open against them? Let's get the data with police and get systems of accountability in place so we can actually have the ability to do the nuanced work we're talking about."

— Damion Shade, Criminal Justice Policy Analyst, Oklahoma Policy Institute

- Immediately expunge the criminal records and criminal court debt for every person in the US who has committed a nonviolent drug-related offense. This would help lift entire Black, Brown, and rural communities across the nation out of economic devastation.
  - "Getting rid of the criminal court debt from nonviolent marijuana-related possession offenses for all Americans would be one of the most liberating economic impacts that any public policymaker could ever enact to do racial justice work in the US. Just getting rid of the court debt, giving people their licenses back, giving people access to mental health and substance addiction treatment they desperately need—these things would be as powerful as any form of reparations that we might imagine for the sins of the previous generations."
    — Damion Shade

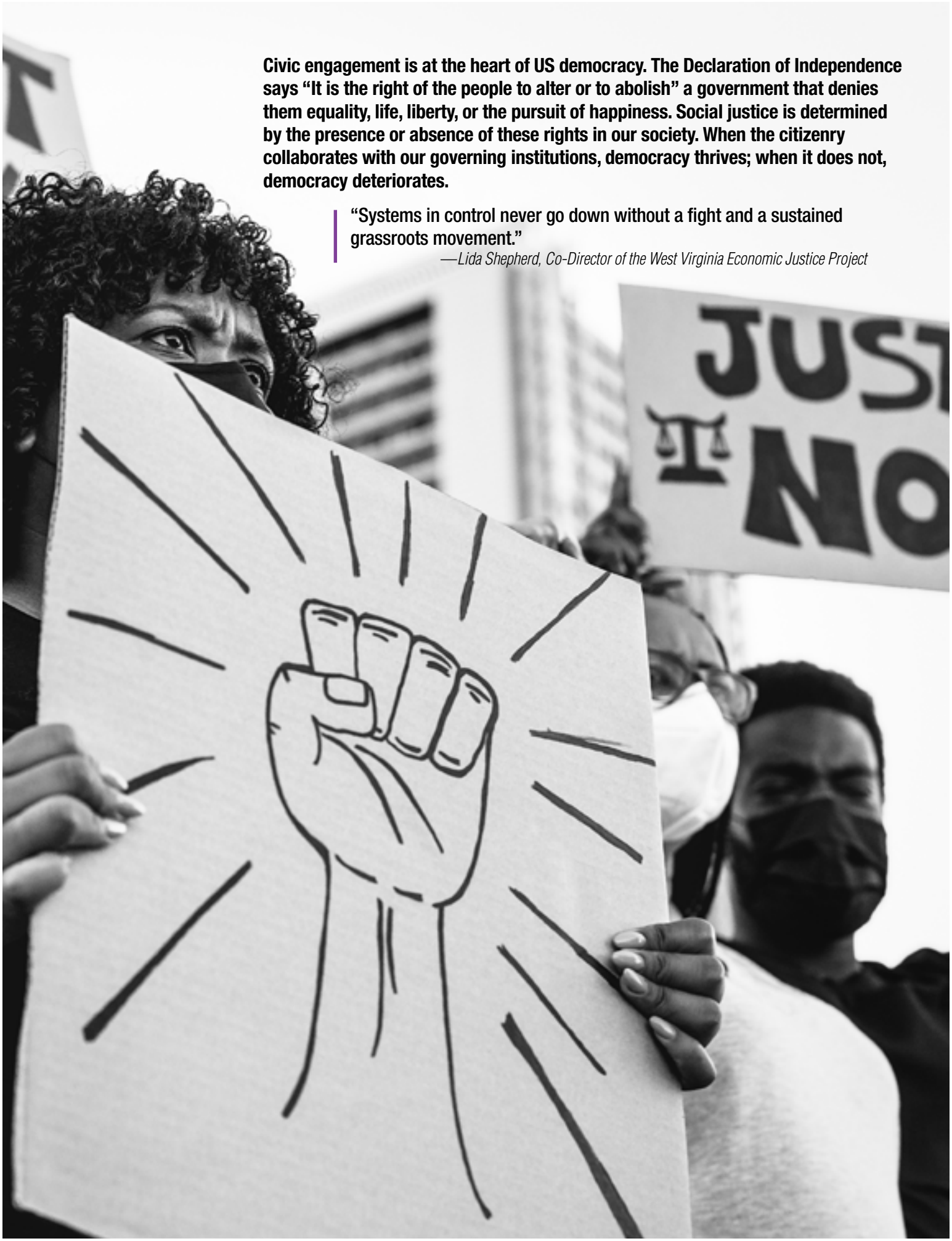
West Virginia

First, the good news, according to Lida Shepherd:

- Criminal justice reform has seen incredible leadership from both sides of the aisle, in part because of the opioid epidemic, which has ensnared so many people in the criminal legal system, and also because of concerns about costs and strain on county budgets.
- Emerging leadership from people in the recovery community and families of incarcerated and formerly incarceration people have led to gains, including:
  - Passage of a new expungement law
  - A modest bail reform bill
  - An end to the lifetime ban on food assistance, such as SNAP, for people with drug felony convictions
  - An end to the suspension of driver's licenses for failure to pay all of one's court debt upfront, as of 2020

"Where we want to move the dial in the future on criminal justice reform is sentencing reform," said Shepherd. "West Virginia has some of the harshest sentences on the books in this country, and that includes repeal of mandatory minimum sentencing laws. We'd love to see automatic expungement and eventually an end to the cash bail system." Other solutions and comments included:

- Investing in communities and families.
- Implementing and practicing Restorative Justice.
- Implementing **implicit bias training** programs designed to expose people to their unconscious and ingrained biases in order to adjust thinking and influence behavior
- Adopting **harm-reduction strategies** that don't moralize behavior or write people off as evildoers but instead look at what's generating harmful behavior in their personal life
- Gathering and **tracking data** to better understand at what points in the system racial disparities are the worst to inform effective administrative and policy solutions. Data is not static. Consistently tracking data shows that concrete steps are being taken to fix the problem.



Civic engagement is at the heart of US democracy. The Declaration of Independence says "It is the right of the people to alter or to abolish" a government that denies them equality, life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness. Social justice is determined by the presence or absence of these rights in our society. When the citizenry collaborates with our governing institutions, democracy thrives; when it does not, democracy deteriorates.

> "Systems in control never go down without a fight and a sustained grassroots movement."
>
> *—Lida Shepherd, Co-Director of the West Virginia Economic Justice Project*

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

History

As discussed throughout this report, the unalienable rights and core values the nation was founded upon did not extend equally to all men, or women. Since the founding of America, struggles for freedom, equality, and fairness have played a pivotal role in civic engagement and the ongoing fight for social justice.

> **"We had slave rebellions in the 1500s and 1600s, and organized uprisings in the 1800s. We had the struggle to end slavery. We had the emergence of the NAACP and the Urban League and other Black organizations in the 19-teens. The mid-century evolutionist movement was followed by the Civil Rights movement, because slavery was not fully abolished. It's important to recognize, at each moment in our history, new movements have emerged. They're not the same, but they're fundamentally challenging the persistence of systemic racism."**
>
> *— Angela Davis, Professor, Author, Lecturer*

For most of US history, non-White people lacked the opportunity to participate in forms of civic engagement that we often take for granted today, such as voting, peacefully protesting, and volunteering. During slavery, it was all but impossible—if not deadly—for Blacks to organize with the goal of changing their social circumstances. Still, some were willing to risk their lives in what became the earliest form of civic engagement for Black Americans: slave rebellions.

It's estimated there were at least 250 slave rebellions in North America between 1663 and 1865. One of the bloodiest, led by Nat Turner in Virginia in 1831, ended in the execution of 56 Black people and the beating of more than 200 others by angry mobs and White militias.

In 1859, John Brown's slave rebellion at a federal armory in Harpers Ferry, Virginia (what is now West Virginia) led to his execution on the grounds of treason and murder, and the death of 10 of his men, including two of his sons. Though the rebellion failed, it helped to incentivize the Civil War.

"Each generation of Blacks faced a different version of White political opposition and economic challenge. Accordingly, there was a punctuated, rather than a linear, evolution of Black civic engagement," writes Wilbur C. Rich, a professor of Political Science at Wellesley College. "Each generation had different levels of felt racial obligations and civic engagement options."

Rich noted that the Emancipation Generation lacked the information and disposable energy to build a meaningful protest movement. In the following generation, while there was some resistance to Jim Crow laws, Black people were constrained by poor communication networks between communities and by a lack of overall unity. It wasn't until the Civil Rights Generation that civic engagement truly took shape in the form of marches, civil disobedience, and lawsuits brought by organizations like the NAACP. These actions led to real progress; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 abolished Jim Crow laws, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 protected Black people's right to vote.

Angela Davis explained that in the course of engaging in the practice of resistance, knowledge is acquired; other dimensions and issues arise. "When we first set out to achieve Black liberation in the late 60s, in the movement that emerged in the aftermath of the struggle for civil rights, we had a tendency to talk about liberation for the Black man," she said. "Our vision was not yet broad enough to recognize the importance of gender and the importance of keeping Black women within the frame. Later we became aware that our very notion of gender was restrictive. We didn't know that then. We would not have achieved these insights had we not struggled."

Davis maintained that, centuries in the future when Black people will have been liberated, there will be other issues, be it for the environment, food justice, or animal rights. "I can't imagine a time when we won't be engaged in some form of struggle."

Problems and Challenges Today

Civic engagement can entail volunteering at a food bank, teaching someone to read, or helping to maintain a community garden. These efforts are important, and worthwhile and promote community well-being and kinship. Civic engagement can also take the form of political activism, as people work to improve conditions in their communities or the nation at large.

Unfortunately, civic engagement and volunteerism can feel like a luxury for those who are struggling to earn a living and don't have the bandwidth for another responsibility. Many disenfranchised communities also lack representation of what civic engagement should look like. "How can you become engaged in a system that you weren't taught how to navigate

and receive power in?" asked **Dr. Shanequa Smith**, a restorative practitioner and organizer. "Or a system that never gave you the right chance or opportunity to take your place or hear your voice in your community?" Smith asserted that those who need the most advocacy want to advocate for themselves but sometimes don't have the capacity or the knowledge. "A lot of things come from trauma," she said. "Don't expect a one-legged man to run a two-legged race."

Appalachian Fatalism and Apathy

The distinct feeling of having no hope to improve one's life, and no real power to bring needed change to fruition, is a belief that leads to apathy, which, in turn, leads to a disassociation with civic duty. "This represents an all-encompassing barrier to West Virginians being able to enact a whole host of meaningful policy changes at both the state and local level," said Jason Huffman, WV State Director for Americans for Prosperity.

According to Huffman, research indicates this apathy is due to a historic lack of competitive civic engagement paired with rational people being turned off by the unnecessary divisiveness and tribalism of contemporary politics. "I'm more concerned with eliminating that apathy and showing people a way forward," he said. "We've all met people who say *my vote doesn't matter and it doesn't matter what I do; it is what it is.* It's discouraging and the farthest thing from the truth. Joining together for a common cause is the most potent remedy for the status quo. It's a feature of our Republic, not a bug, and it's crucial to the future success of our state. You can't enact policy change without it."

For people of color, in particular, Dr. Camara Jones believes that apathy is a response to trauma and a lack of knowing (as suggested by Shaniqua Smith), often stemming from a sense of **internalized racism**.

> **"Negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth show up as self-devaluation. Say I'm Black and I need a lawyer. I might actually seek out a White lawyer over a Black lawyer. Same for a doctor, if I could even find a Black doctor. This is deeply internalizing the myth of White superiority. This level of racism turns into resignation, helplessness, hopelessness—which turns into a lot of self-destructive health behaviors. It can turn into not registering to vote, or even not voting if you are registered."**
>
> *— Dr. Camara Jones*

ANGELA DAVIS – ONE WOMAN'S PATH TO ACTIVISM

Angela Davis, born in 1944, is a scholar and an iconic figure of political activism. In her own words, she provided a snapshot of what inspired her to a life of activism:

I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, which was referred to as "Bombingham," because the basic terror that was perpetrated by Klansmen and the White Citizens' Council was a part of our daily lives there. I think growing up in the most segregated city in the South was perhaps the decisive factor in my devoting my life to the struggle for justice.

There is what I would call a broad anti-racist consciousness in the community. We were aware of the fact we were expected to stand up and fight back and not simply accept what existed because it existed. My mother and father were activists. My mother was involved with the Southern Negro Youth Congress. They did work that actually created the arena for the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. I grew up in an atmosphere which encouraged struggle, which compelled us to think beyond the present and to imagine a future where racist terror and racist segregation no longer existed.

The bombing of the 16th St. Baptist Church and the killing of four young Black girls wasn't serendipitous, because those girls had been involved. Youth in Birmingham are the ones who were willing to face the dogs and the high-powered hoses. As a matter of fact, I think it's generally the case when there are movements for radical change—it's the young people who are in the forefront; it's the young people who demand change and who move in that direction. Birmingham was no different. I was a little bit older than the four girls who were killed. Three were friends of my sisters, one lived two doors down. Another was the sister of one of my best friends and the daughter of my mother's friend. We were all reared with this sense that, in order to avoid capitulating to the representations of Black people that were offered by the White supremacists and the racists, we had to learn to stand up and fight back.

I'll never forget when we sang the Star-Spangled Banner, we also sang the Negro National Anthem. I'm so thankful to my teachers, from elementary school on, who emphasized the importance of developing a sense of ourselves that counteracted the images and representations that emanated from White supremacist circles.

— Angela Davis, Professor, Author, Lecturer

Voter Suppression

Those with the power to vote decide the outcome of elections. That is why, after all the political activism throughout America's history to constitutionalize fair voting rights, there is still an orchestrated effort to suppress the vote in many states.

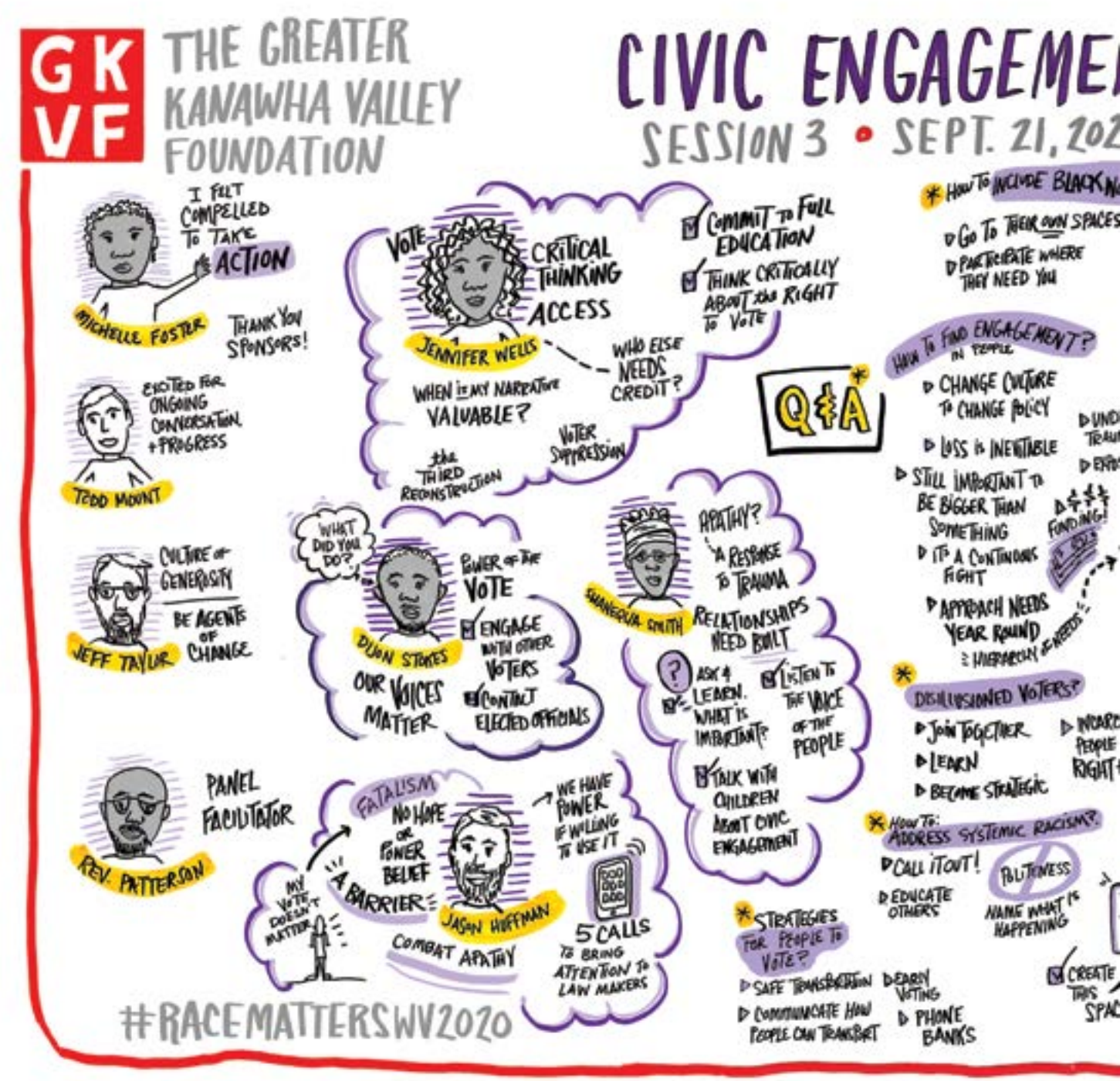
A 2020 news analysis from the Center for Public Integrity[27] reported that "making voting harder is about grabbing even more disproportionate power and delaying the impact of shifting demographics." With the non-Hispanic White population expected to become a minority within a few decades, efforts to maintain long-term power "has become more desperate and more brazen."

Aided by the US Supreme Court's 2013 ruling to strip the "preclearance" requirement from the Voting Rights Act[28], new voting restrictions were adopted in 20 states following the election of President Obama. During the 2020 election, a host of suppression efforts included slowing mail service for mail-in ballots, stopping the 2020 census count so people of color would have less representation in Congress, and, of course, stopping the actual vote count, a tactic that's been used since Reconstruction. At least 1,600 polling locations have closed since 2019, predominantly in minority communities, according to *Mother Jones*,[29] making access to polls a challenge, often compounded by hours-long waiting lines to cast a vote.

Even when suppression tactics are fully employed, Black and Brown votes are a hot issue among political analysts and media pundits during election seasons. Between election cycles, however, the issues of Black and Brown voters often tend to fade into the background, and local concerns about things like street safety, lack of clean water, or access to affordable and quality education is not on display.

> **"One of the oldest forms of racism has been voter suppression."**
>
> *— Ibram X. Kendi, Professor, Author, and Historian*

> "When we talk about urgency and importance of voting and civic engagement only during an election year or cycle, we ignore our Black and Brown communities showing up for themselves and their communities through all sorts of avenues—the local church that feeds, shelters, and mentors their community; the grandmother who informally cares for the neighborhood kids while mom and dad work odd shifts to keep family and community afloat. We miss the historical implications of why informally and creatively engaging in community is the way most folks have had to carve out their space through civic engagement."
>
> *— Jennifer Wells, Senior Organizer at Community Change*

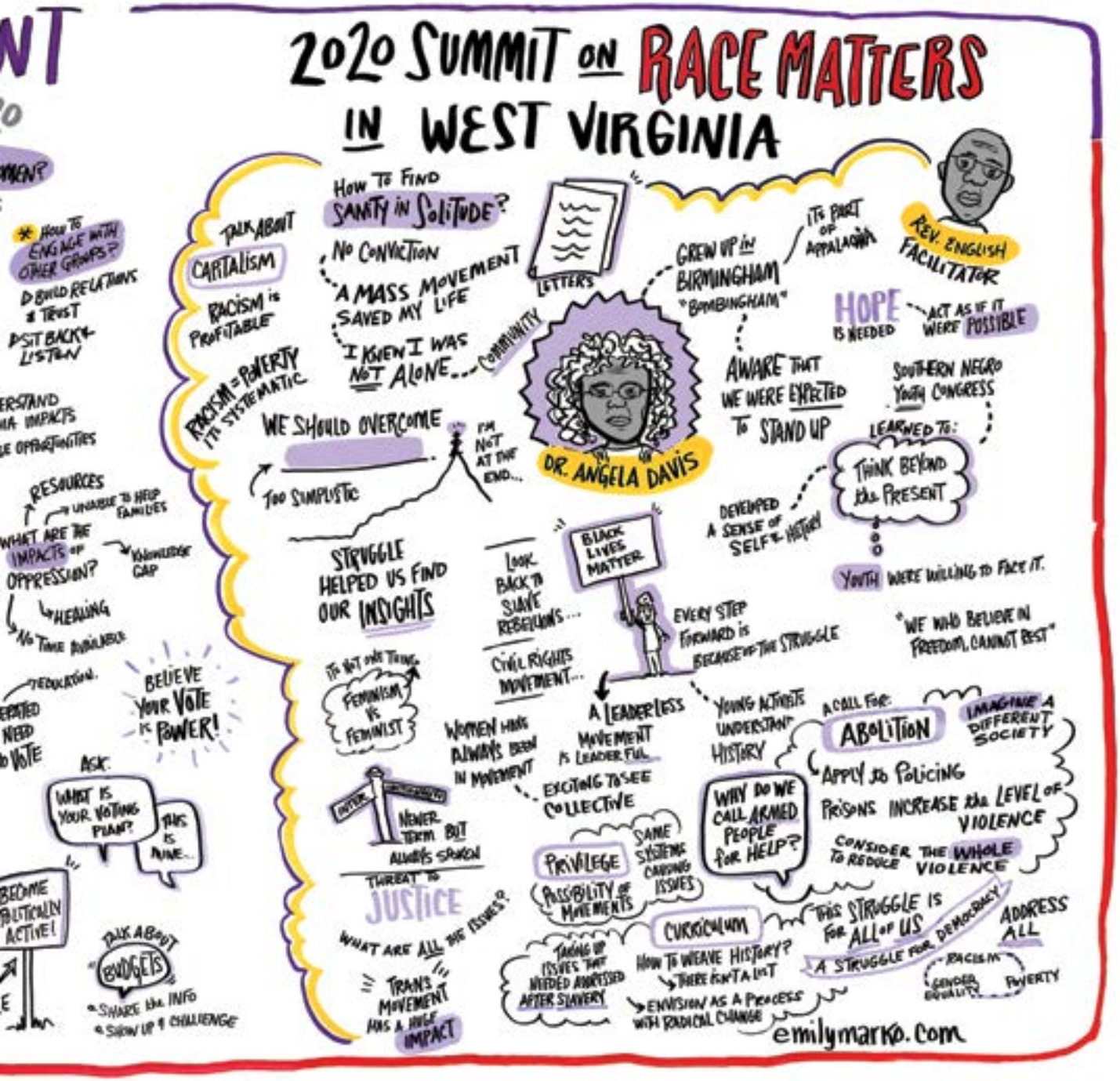


Solutions

> **"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."**
>
> *— John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States*

Adopt an Intersectionality Framework

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations—such as race, class, and gender—that creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.[30]



"Racism should have been shoved into the trash bin of history a long time ago. It's still with us largely because it's profitable. Capitalism is racial capitalism, and therefore to struggle against poverty is also to challenge racism. I think we need to get out of the habit of myopically looking at these issues, thinking we can combat poverty without being attentive to racism, that we can combat gender inequities without also addressing racism. We can't address racism without addressing capitalism. This is why the framework of intersectionality is so important."

— Angela Davis, Professor, Author, Lecturer

Create the Space to Learn

> **"For years in my community everyone was apolitical; no one voted. When I went to school and became educated and learned about my ancestors who died for my right to vote, I felt obligated to vote. One thing I was missing, though, was no one told me to become politically active. Voting is one thing but becoming a political activist is different. Because of all the internal racism that I had ingested through my life, I didn't even know I had that space until I learned and grew. So, I think we need to create these spaces for people to grow and learn that the systems we have been taught and seen have become oppressive."**
>
> *— Shanequa Smith, Restorative Practioner and Organizer*

Support Full Citizenship Policies and Practices

> **"Democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth."**
>
> *— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

- **Public education** is the first step to full civic citizenship. Work to adopt equitable policies that commit to full education across the board at all levels of government.
- **Speak up.** If your political group/commission/staff/organization all look the same and don't have multiple ways of thinking, it's doing a disservice to the citizens you serve. When you have power within your organization or government, it's your role to think about minority groups and those not represented. When politicians or those in a position of power aren't representative of the people, there's a problem taking place. If you're not speaking up against that, you're complicit in the problem.
- **Fund community organizations** and projects that are going to support civic engagement and not larger businesses or corporations.

Focus on issues that alleviate barriers to people's ability to thrive. This will create upward mobility in individual circumstances and increase civic participation.

- **Educate communities on how a budget works**, whether it's state or local, and encourage participatory budgeting. "All the communities underserved for centuries deserve resources intentionally placed back. When I learn more about Huntington's budget, the state budget, my civic responsibility is to share that information and show up when I see that money not being used for what and where it should be."
  — Jennifer Wells (see http://wvcheckbook.gov/)
- **Lead by example.**

What Ordinary Citizens Can Do

- **Communicate with your elected officials.** When your interests are not being served, contact your congressman or woman; they are there to serve you, not themselves. Your tax dollars pay their salaries. "Five calls from constituents in your district gets you a case file with your congressional office on an issue. And that's at the congressional level. State elected officials are even more responsive, and what's more, they actually want to hear from you, especially if they're working on a contentious issue." — Jason Huffman, West Virginia State Director of Americans for Prosperity
- **Engage other voters** to speak to their elected officials.
- **Educate yourself.**
  - Examine the barricades of inclusion, who gets the right to vote and how they get it.
  - Think critically as to why the right to vote is the first right that is challenged.
  - Examine how we register our citizenry.
  - Examine the access to run for elected office.
- **Use your knowledge and power.** Call for people and politicians to end voter suppression.
- **Reach out to organizations** that can take action when injustices take place. Organizations like the ACLU can help:
  - If you're being denied the right to vote when standing in line when the polls close.

    - If you're being denied the right to vote because you're transgender and don't look like the photo on your original ID card.
    - If you hear of or see voter suppression within WV, contact the ACLU at 304-355-5012 or mail@ACLUWV.org.
- **Contact law officials** when voters' rights are being abridged by other citizens.
- **Spread the message** that Black and Brown voices matter and have power.
- **Join together.** We can't fight this fight by ourselves. Start with family. Join together with people that have the same passion and issues. "We are systematically oppressed, so we must systematically get out, together." — Shanequa Smith
- **Combat apathy** by encouraging those around you to take action on critical issues.
- **Practice civic engagement** outside the seasons of voting.
- **Educate** people on how systemic and institutional racism happens. Some won't recognize it because they haven't had to. Those who have experienced it will be uplifted by the education.
- **Attend local meetings.** Local groups advertise meetings; go to them and build relationships. Take the time to discover what meetings you can attend. For the White community, start by sitting back and listening.
- **Get children engaged.** Have conversations with children about the importance of civic engagement and take them to the West Virginia State Capitol.
- **Show Up for Racial Justice** (https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/) is an organization primarily formed by White people who recognize they have a responsibility to stand up and begin the process of eliminating racism. "In West Virginia that has to be emphasized. It's not only a Black struggle with a few White allies. It's a struggle for democracy for everyone." — Angela Davis

> **"We have to always act as if it were possible to radically transform the world."**
>
> — *Angela Davis, Professor, Author, Lecturer*

HEALTH

History

The health of slaves was an economic imperative for slaveowners, because a sick slave meant lost work time. Typically, if sick slaves couldn't be cured by home remedies, a physician was employed. If a slave's condition got worse, they were taken to slave hospitals, sometimes organized by plantation owners to treat serious health issues.[31] Here, many slaves ended up becoming subjects in doctors' experiments, as physicians sought to expand their knowledge and their reputations.

Doctors justified barbaric practices using the pseudoscience that Black bodies were fundamentally different from White bodies.[32] Other pseudoscience beliefs that helped perpetuate biological racism included drapetomania, which was believed to be "the disease causing negroes to run away," and dysaethesia aethiopica, a disease causing "rascality" in Black people.[33]

After the Civil War, small pox, starvation, yellow fever, cholera, and other epidemics ravaged camps and makeshift communities where newly freed African Americans sought shelter in the South. Despite urgent pleas for assistance, White leaders were deeply ambivalent to intervene, reports Jeneed Interlandi,[34] a contributing writer for the New York Times and The 1619 Project[35] (created by Nikole Hannah-Jones). Whites worried about Black epidemics spilling into their own communities, she noted, yet they wanted their former slaves to be healthy enough to return to plantation work. "White legislators argued that free assistance of any kind would breed dependence and that, when it came to Black infirmity, hard labor was a better salve than White medicine."

To address the ongoing health crisis, in 1865 Congress established the nation's first federally funded health care program and the first federally funded relief effort: The Medical Division of the Freedmen's Bureau. Though a significant and historic action for the federal government, it nonetheless lacked serious provision and support. About 40 hospitals and almshouses, 120 doctors, and numerous nurses, stewards, and aides were deployed across the ravaged South to care for freed men, women, and children. But these efforts were soon dismantled by representatives from the former slave states, who brandished immense congressional power after forming a voting bloc that was "uniformly segregationist and overwhelmingly Democratic," writes Interlandi. "That bloc preserved the nation's racial stratification by securing local control of federal programs under a mantra of 'states' rights' and, in some cases, by adding qualifications directly to federal laws with discriminatory intent." Examples include:

- Farm and domestic workers—more than half the nation's Black workforce at the time—were excluded from New Deal policies, including:
  - Social Security
  - Collective bargaining (Wagner Act of 1935)
  - Minimum wage and an eight-hour workday (Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938)
- State-controlled crucial programs, including Aid to Dependent Children and the 1944 G.I. Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act), which excluded Black service members and their families from benefits following World War II.
- In 1945, the Hill-Burton Act expanded the nation's hospital system, giving funding priority to rural areas and communities in need but allowing states to control disbursement of funds. Southern Democrats obtained key concessions, including segregation within hospitals, which lasted until 1965 with the passage of Medicare.
- The American Medical Association (AMA) (and other professional societies) barred Black doctors and supported educational restrictions on Black students. In 2008, the AMA publicly apologized for its century-and-a-half-long record of mistreating African American physicians.[36]

> **"The differences we see in health treatment and outcomes by race are not really related to race at all—they're related to racism."**
>
> — *Dr. Camara Jones*

Because disparity was built into America's health care system and designed to exclude Black Americans, "racism is, at least in part, responsible for the fact that African Americans, since arriving as slaves, have had the worst health care, the worst health status, and the worst health outcomes of any racial or ethnic group in the US," according to the *Journal of the National Medical Association.*[37] Furthermore:

> **"Many famous doctors, philosophers, and scientists of each historical era were involved in creating and perpetuating racial inferiority mythology and stereotypes. Such theories were routinely taught in US medical schools in the 18th, 19th, and first half of the 20th centuries. The conceptualization of race moved from the biological to the sociological sphere with the march of science. The atmosphere created by racial inferiority theories and stereotypes, 246 years of Black chattel slavery, along with biased educational processes, almost inevitably led to medical and scientific abuse, unethical experimentation, and overutilization of African Americans as subjects for teaching and training purposes."**
>
> — *Journal of the National Medical Association "Race, medicine, and health care in the United States: a historical survey"*

Quality medical care morphed into a system of employer-based insurance, which was difficult for Black Americans to receive, as they were denied most jobs that offered coverage.

"In the shadows of this exclusion, Black communities created their own health systems," writes Interlandi. These systems included a national community health care movement created by lay Black women and establishment of professional organizations, like the National Medical Association, by Black doctors and nurses (most of whom trained at one of two Black medical colleges, Meharry or Howard), promulgating "a concerted war against medical apartheid."

In direct conflict with the National Medical Association, which pushed for a federal health care system for all citizens, the AMA opposed any nationalized health plan and, since the 1930s, helped to defeat single-payer/Medicaid-for-All-type proposals, a position they still hold today.[38]

An end to legal segregation of hospitals finally occurred in the mid-60's with the passage of Medicare and Medicaid programs and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited any entity receiving federal monies to engage in segregation, effectively applying to every hospital in the US. While an improvement, criteria for these programs—like age, employment, and income level—still left millions of Americans without adequate access to health care.

More than four decades later, nearly 20 million previously uninsured adults—largely people of color—finally received health insurance through the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. Many obtained coverage through the law's Medicaid expansion, which contributed to decreases in racial health disparities. However, Interlandi notes that several states, most of which are located in the former Confederacy, refused to participate in Medicaid expansion, and some are still trying to make access to the program contingent on onerous new work requirements. "The results of both policies have been unequivocal. States that expanded Medicaid saw a drop in disease-related deaths, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research. But in Arkansas, the first state to implement work requirements, nearly 20,000 people were forced off the insurance plan."

America is still the only Western industrialized country without universal health care.

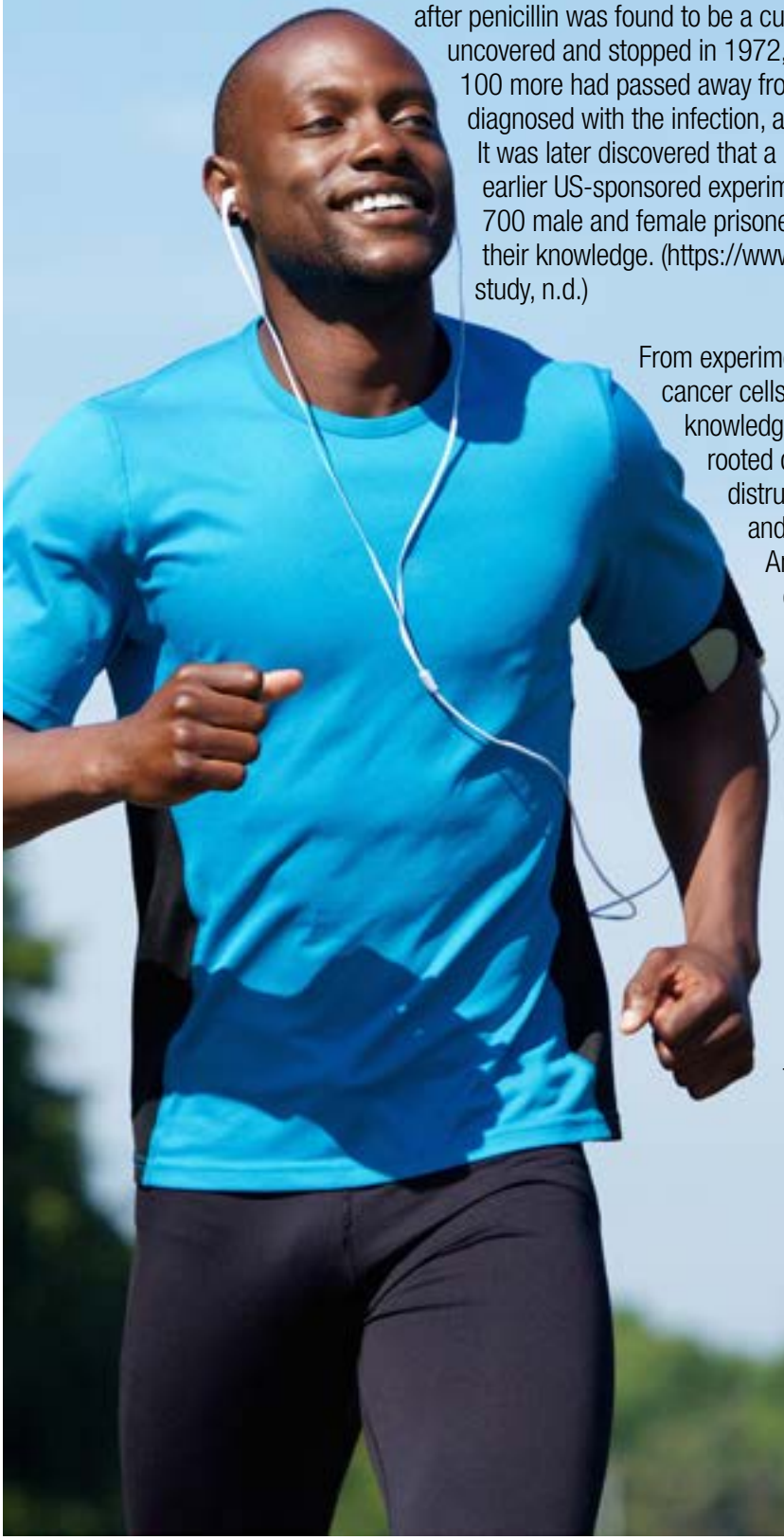
Problems and Challenges Today

Today, America has the most expensive health care system on Earth. As of 2020, about 31 million Americans were uninsured.[39]

According to a 2020 study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation,[40] most uninsured people: have at least one worker in the family; families are more likely to be low-income; and people of color are at higher risk of being uninsured than non-

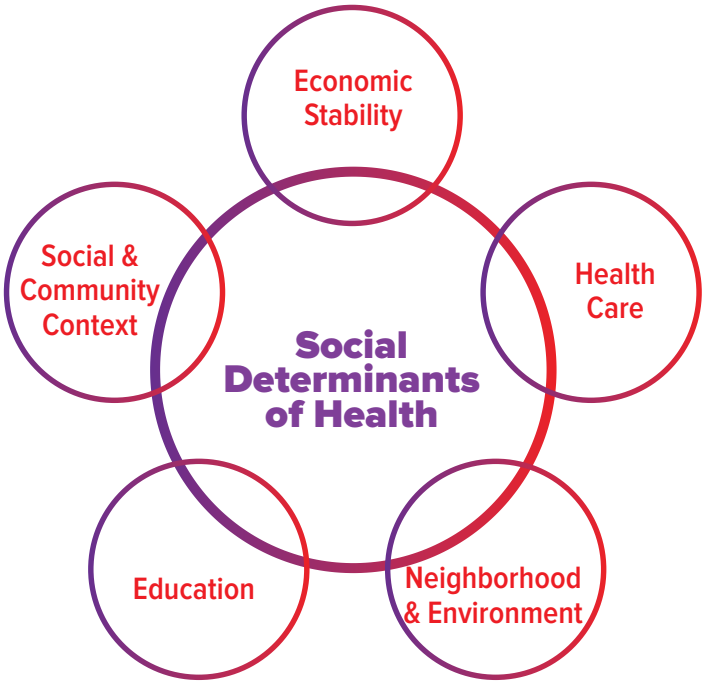
A HISTORY OF EXPERIMENTATION AND MISTRUST

Unfortunately, experimentation on Black Americans didn't end when slave hospitals were shuttered. The notorious Tuskegee Syphilis Study, run by doctors from the US Public Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, began in 1932 to study the effects of untreated syphilis. It denied treatment to participants (mostly Black male sharecroppers) after penicillin was found to be a cure in the 1940s. By the time the unethical study was uncovered and stopped in 1972, 40 years later, 28 participants had died from syphilis, 100 more had passed away from related complications, at least 40 spouses had been diagnosed with the infection, and the disease had been passed to 19 children at birth. It was later discovered that a lead researcher, Dr. John Cutler, had also conducted an earlier US-sponsored experiment in Guatemala (1946-1948) that intentionally infected 700 male and female prisoners, soldiers, and mental patients with syphilis without their knowledge. (https://www.history.com/news/the-infamous-40-year-tuskegee-study, n.d.)



From experimentation on enslaved men, women, and children, to the cancer cells famously extracted from Henrietta Lacks without her knowledge, many African Americans today are left with deep-rooted distrust in doctors and the US health care system. This distrust is furthered by historic disparities in health access and care, seen today with COVID-19 vaccinations. White Americans are being vaccinated at three times the rate of Black Americans, due largely to a combination of access and mistrust. "It's not just that there was a past history of medical experimentation on Black people that makes them suspicious of new technologies today," said scholar Dorothy Roberts in a WebMD article (https://www.webmd.com/vaccines/covid-19-vaccine/news/20210202/black-vaccine-hesitancy-rooted-in-mistrust-doubts, n.d.) "There is a continuing practice of racism in medicine and government policies that many Black people have experienced themselves. That's why there's a skepticism about the government rollout of the vaccine. It's a rational skepticism, and the only way to address it is to work toward ending the racism in medicine and health care that caused the skepticism in the first place."

Hispanic White people. The main reason for lack of coverage is the cost. Many people do not have coverage through a job, and in states that did not expand Medicaid, poor adults, in particular, remain ineligible for financial assistance. The uninsured have worse access to care, and in 2019 three in 10 went without needed care due to the cost. When care is sought, uninsured people often face unaffordable medical bills that can translate into medical debt.



As illustrated by the Social Determinants of Health, virtually every aspect of our lives, from economic stability to education, influences our health. Access to opportunities plays a vital role in shaping our chances for a healthier life. When access and opportunities aren't available, and are often made worse by decades of inequitable policies and practices, data reveals a range of differences in health outcomes.

Cultural and Societal Barriers

Polling shows a large number of White Americans will oppose social programs if they think a significant number of Black Americans will benefit from them, said Hannah-Jones. "Anti-Black racism hurts Black people the most, but we all suffer for it."

According to Dr. Camara Jones, one societal barrier to achieving health equity is our endorsement of the **myth of meritocracy**: If you work hard you will make it.

> "Many hard workers will never make it because of an uneven playing field that's been structured and perpetuated by racism, sexism, economic systems like capitalism, rural, urban, geographic divides—all these social determinants of equity or inequity. When we deny the existence of those systems, then we blame the ones who haven't made it, as if they were lazy and stupid.

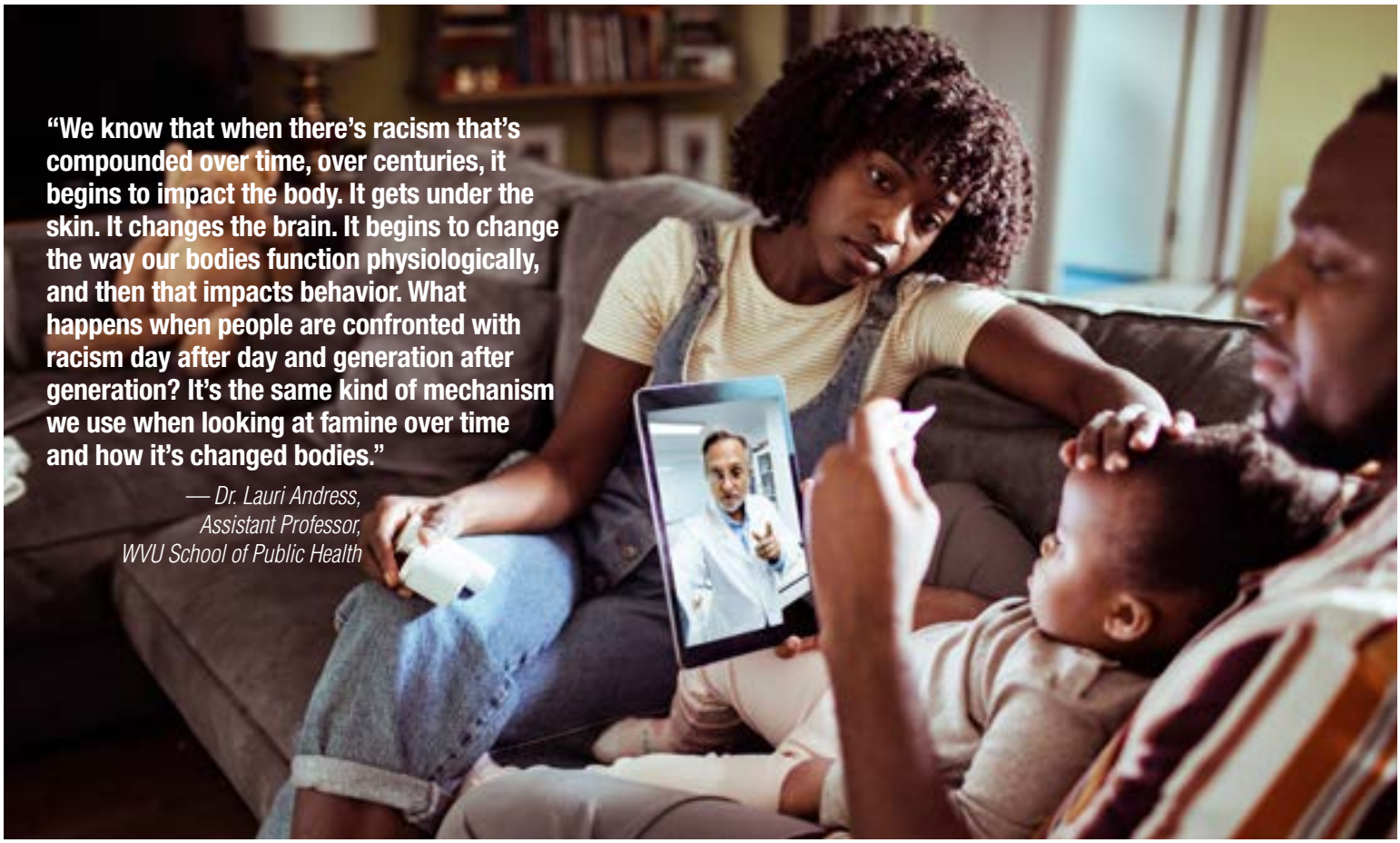
When a person of color is sick, people may ask: 'Why are those people eating so much fried chicken?' or 'Why aren't those people reading to their children?' When narrowly focused on the individual, it makes systems and structures either invisible or irrelevant. We really need to have universal access to high-quality health care, because that is how a civilized society values all of its people equally."

Health and Racial Disparities

Health disparities arise when there are differences in quality of care, access to care, and underlying exposures and opportunities. Impacts on health can also come from **personally mediated racism.** For example, "Physician disrespect can be as subtle as not giving a patient the full range of treatment options, because the physician figures that the patient wouldn't understand or couldn't afford or wouldn't comply or whatever they assume," said Dr. Jones. "Or it could be quite blatant, like sterilization of youths, which has had many iterations in our nation's history. This level of personally mediated racism can occur through acts of commission as well as omission and, importantly, can be unintentional. You do not have to have intended to do something racist to have had a racist impact."

Health can be impacted by a number of racial disparities, including:

- Different access by race to quality housing, educational and equal employment opportunities, or an unequal level of income for the same level of employment;
- Access to medical facilities, which could be physical access, financial access, or linguistic access;
- Different access to a clean environment, for instance, a well-documented disproportionate placement of toxic dump sites in communities of color; and
- Different access to power, like social media networking resources or knowing someone on a board or in government or the media to help lend a voice.



Funding and Income

Public health and mental health infrastructures have been underfunded and under-resourced for decades. The US spends approximately $3.6 trillion annually on health, but less than 3% of that spending goes toward public health and prevention. According to Trust for America's Health, "Health departments across the country are battling 21st century health threats with 20th century resources. The COVID-19 crisis demonstrates this reality in the starkest of terms."[41]

"If health care workers screen people and find out they have problems, like poverty, unemployment, or transportation, we refer them out for services," said Andress. "But the system is broken and underfunded. Simply referring them out to social services agencies won't fix what's occurring with regard to differences based on race."

West Virginia

After five straight years of attempted legislation to convene a minority health taskforce to examine the social determinants of health of African Americans in the state, it finally occurred in 2020 as the pandemic was taking a disproportionately heavy toll on Black communities.[42]

In March 2021, *Mountain State Spotlight* reported that "despite the lessons learned during COVID-19, efforts in the West Virginia Legislature to establish a permanent Minority Health Advisory Team to address the state's racial health disparities have stalled."[43] This is also despite the fact that "West Virginia has one of the *highest poverty rates* and the *lowest life expectancy* in the country. And for Black West Virginians, the poverty rate is nearly *twice as high* and the life expectancy is *about three years lower* than White residents. Black infants die at a rate nearly double that of White infants."

Income is a powerful social determinant of health. **Dr. Anthony Woart**, Director of the Minority Health Institute at Marshall University, studied the correlation between income and health disparities among selected diseases. He found that the median income of African Americans in West Virginia was $29,000 less per household compared to White counterparts, which then correlated into African Americans having higher rates of diabetes, breast cancer, colon cancer, HIV/AIDS, and prostate cancer (168 African Americans per 100,000, compared to 89 per 100,000 Whites). "A look at income can assess who is going to die first or have a better physician," said Woart. "Income is a critical issue."

Whether in West Virginia or elsewhere, "it doesn't matter what your population is," said Dr. Jones. "You're still accountable, and you still should have metrics, and they should be about diversity but also about equity."

Solutions

> **"Racism exists as a system, and we can act to dismantle the system to dismantle racism"**
>
> — *Dr. Camara Jones*

Look for Evidence

- Burst through personal bubbles and experience our common humanity. Be interested in the stories of others; believe them, take part in them.
- Develop a sensitivity to see the absences:
  - Who is not at the table?
  - What policies are not in place that could be productive?
  - Create space to find ways to bring things to the table.
  - Look at issues around social inequities within your own corporation or business, school, government, or agency. Examine all policies and make sure they're not worsening health disparities.

- Reveal inaction in the face of need.
- "Traditionally, we think of nurses, doctors, hospitals, maybe insurers, who are the only ones with a stake in health. Step back and take a look at what creates health." — Dr. Patrice Harris, Psychiatrist and Patient Advocate
    - Explore conditions that create health. There's a place for everyone:
        - If you're a city planner or a developer building houses, maximize your contributions to health through equitable planning and implementation.
        - If you're a physician, be engaged and talk about the broader framework of health. Physicians have a front row seat to all of the parameters that contribute to outcomes.

Converse and Tell Stories

- Be willing to have conversations; it's important.
- Don't minimize how difficult conversations can be. "It's been difficult to have conversations about race and

racism in **West Virginia**. My experience has been that there's a reluctance to speak about it, up until maybe this year. It almost seems as though there was no language by which to engage around racism. It was very uncomfortable, especially from some of our institutions. Even finding out how they collect data. I think we're doing better. This conference goes a long way toward that." — Dr. Lauri Andress

- Give permission to yourself and others to say the wrong thing when it's clear no malice is intended. To learn, people should feel safe having conversations and asking questions.
- Launch conversations about experiences of racism.
- Connect stories with policy action.
- Understand how to engage in deliberation and to tell stories in a way that pushes out information and creates an impact.

Center Equity

People's needs are different. One person may need more than another, but that's okay. Both people just need an equitable opportunity to achieve optimal health. Meet people where they are. There should be no wrong doors.

- Make the right thing to do the easy thing to do. Instead of a trip to the hospital, create opportunities to get health needs met at schools and elsewhere in the community. Give those entities, organizations, and social service agencies the resources they need to meet people where they are. Everyone wants to be healthy.
- **Invert the burden.** The health care system is difficult to navigate. Invert the burden away from the individual and onto the system.

> **"All of my physician colleagues are ready, willing, and able; it's part of the code of our medical ethics to be involved in driving better health outcomes andmaking sure we're centering equity in the drive to do so."**
>
> *— Dr. Patrice Harris, Psychiatrist and Patient Advocate*

Be Political

> **"As a health care practitioner, don't be afraid to be political. At a policy level, health care practitioners are influential. People listen to us. But what do we think about doing policy work? Are we being trained in our medical and nursing schools about how to do policy work? Mostly not, especially in medical schools. Graduating physicians say, 'That's politics, and I don't mix politics with science; I keep my science objective.' So we're not equipping some of the most influential people in our society with the tools needed to work in that middle space."**
>
> *— Dr. Lauri Andress*

"I think it's our responsibility as members of a society to be political," said Harris. "That is the way our society works. The notion of politics, to be political, simply means there's no correct answer, and we're going to engage in a process to hash out that answer. That's what politics is."

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

"It's not that people lack a desire to want to do well, learn well, think well, to become as educated as possible. But we have 60- to 90-million-dollar schools in the suburbs versus inner-city schools that are deprived systemically and depleted of resources, given the contrasting tax base and lack of investment in those communities."

— Michael Eric Dyson, Writer, Professor, and Lecturer

History

After the Civil War, African Americans, who had been prohibited from reading and writing as slaves, understood that in order to advance, education was of paramount importance. According to PBS' *American Experience*,[44] there was an explosion of energy in Black communities to create schools. Help came from Northern aid societies and The Freedmen's Bureau, but most of the schools that sprang up were created by Black communities that pooled their meager resources to secure buildings and hire teachers. These schools not only enrolled children, but adults and elderly people who were seeking education.

When Southern Democrats regained control of the former Confederate states in the 1870s, funding for Black segregated schools was reduced, Jim Crow was implemented, and in 1896 the US Supreme Court sanctioned "separate but equal" facilities for Blacks and Whites in the Plessy v. Ferguson decision.

Nonetheless, by 1900 there were 78 Black colleges and universities in the US, and more than 2,000 African Americans had earned higher education degrees, with approximately 390 of those receiving degrees from majority White colleges and universities.[45]

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and numerous other legal cases officially ended segregation, and various studies (including the landmark Coleman Report in 1966[46]) have shown that a diverse socioeconomic mix in the classroom is a determinant of how well a child learns. Though African Americans could officially (and theoretically) gain an equal education within a diverse socioeconomic classroom, "achieving this ideal has never been easy or simple," wrote the Library of Congress in their Civil Rights History Project.[47] "The debate continues today among policymakers, educators, and parents about how to close the achievement gap between minority and White children."

Fast forward to today and Congress' annual report, *Conditions of Education 2020*,[48] which concluded:

- The poverty rate is still the highest for Black students.
- A lack of internet access at home has become a barrier to learning for Black students.
- A high percentage of Black students attend high-poverty schools.
- More Black students with disabilities receive services for emotional disturbances.

- The disproportion between Black students and Black teachers has not improved.
- The achievement gap between Black and White students remains.
- School dropout rates are higher for Black students.
- Graduation rates and college enrollment rates remain low among Black students.

In brief, this annual report mandated by the US Congress suggests that changing the condition of education for Black students needs true commitment of every policymaker, school leader, and educator. As Justice Clarence Thomas remarked, "It takes a person with a mission to succeed."

Problems and Challenges Today

Numerous studies show that, on average, better educated people get better paying jobs. Earning a good wage not only allows a person to move up the social ladder, but also provides a sense of meaning and significance in one's life. "Work is more than a paycheck and a job; it's also about the significant contribution you can make to your broader community," said Dyson. "The ability to land a good job or start a business is tightly tied to educational attainment, but quality education remains elusive for many Black Americans."

A 2019 report by the nonprofit EdBuild,[49] found that over half of US children attended schools that were over 75% White or 75% non-White, and non-White school districts received $23 billion less than White districts, despite serving the same number of students.

According to the WV Center on Budget and Policy's State of Working West Virginia 2020 report, *The State of Racial Inequality,*[50] Black households earn 70% of the income of White households; Black men and Black women have higher unemployment rates; and disparities exist in education, health, and earnings outcomes. There are also disparities throughout the criminal legal system. "Just everywhere we could look, every piece of data that we could find, racial inequality existed," said **Sean O'Leary**, Senior Policy Analyst at the WVCBP.

Higher Education for Prisoners

Various studies show that a postsecondary education in prison reduces recidivism, reduces crime, improves the culture within prisons, improves rates of successful reentry into the community, and can improve outcomes from one generation to the next. It also has a positive effect on personal income, job opportunities, political engagement, volunteerism, and health outcomes. The Center for American Progress[51] reports that for every dollar spent on prison education, taxpayers will save about $4 to $5 that would have been spent on incarceration. Nationally, the US economy loses about $60 billion each year from labor losses caused by high rates of incarceration.

When the 1994 Crime Bill cut federally funded Pell Grant access to prisoners, the availability of prison college programs dropped dramatically. Educational programs that persisted were largely funded through states or through private funds. A small number of prisoners—like **Jule Hall,** who is now a program officer for postsecondary education in prison at *Ascendium*—were able to enroll in programs provided through universities. Hall obtained a degree in German studies from the Bard Prison Initiative and became an advocate for the transformative power of education.

"If the school-to-prison pipeline causes racial problems with education, prison is the space where we can correct that, and college in prison is one way to do it," said Hall. "We are seeing people released with an education who are contributing phenomenally to society."

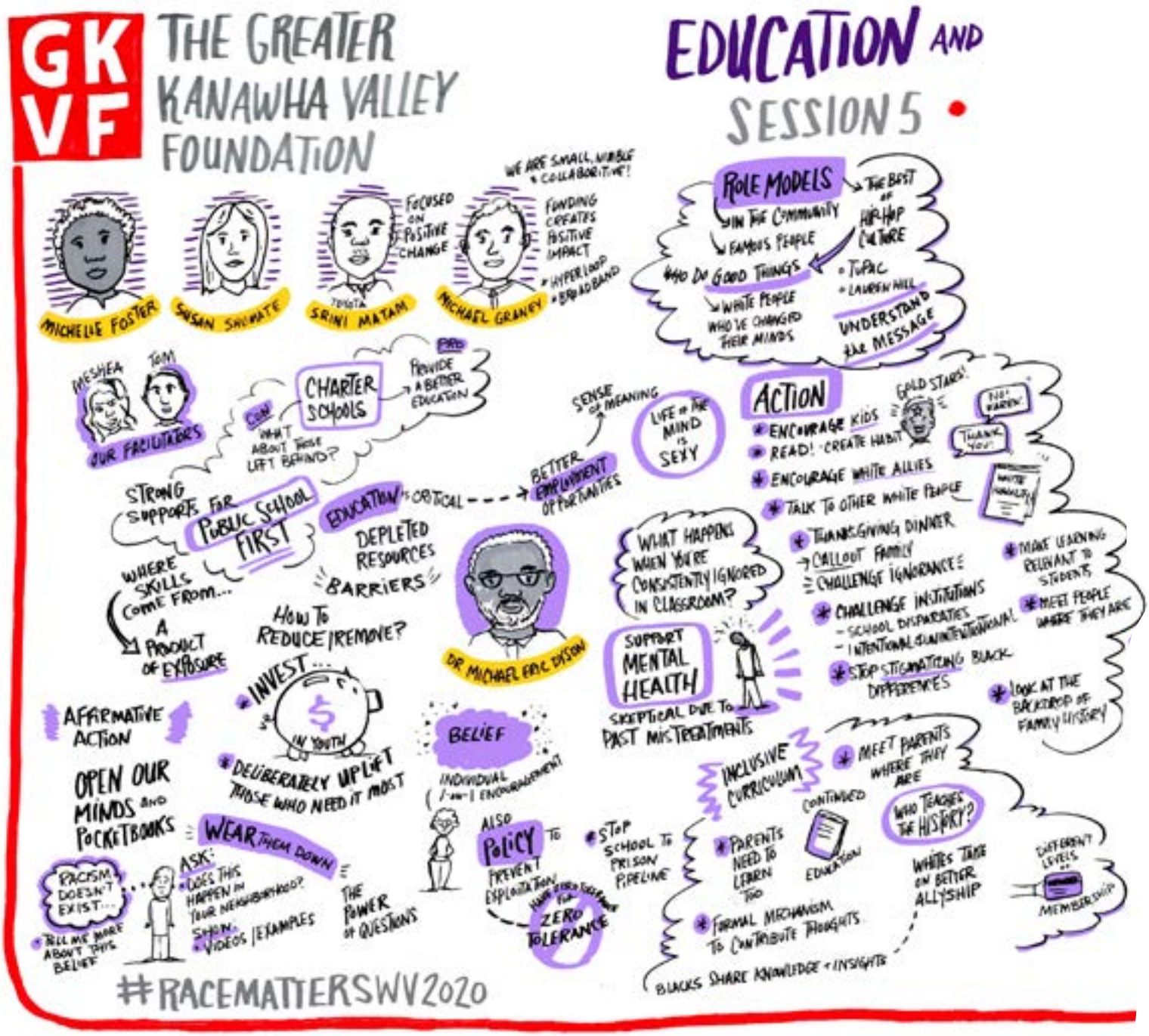
According to *Ascendium*,[52] 64% of the incarcerated population has a high school credential, making them eligible for a postsecondary education, but for most it's out of reach. Ninety-three percent of colleges don't offer education-in-prison programs, and those that do have limited capacity.

In December 2020, Congress lifted the 26-year ban on Pell Grants for prisoners, with an implementation deadline of July 2023. It is estimated that 463,000 prisoners will now have the opportunity to access higher education, which promises to expand the role of colleges in prison education. While other policies are still required to ensure affordable higher education for students in prison, as well as educational opportunities in general, reinstatement of Pell Grants is a positive step in the right direction.

Equity in Education in West Virginia

Because of West Virginia's minimally diverse population, many students, communities, and school employees have not had meaningful experiences with different cultures and backgrounds. This can pose a challenge when discussing race matters. As Ibram X. Kendi noted, "All you know is what you see and what you're used to."

Part of **Drew McClanahan**'s job as Director of the Office of Leadership Support at the West Virginia Department of Education focuses on equity work with principals and school leaders around the state. He believes educators have a responsibility to ensure that all cultures, backgrounds, and races are understood and celebrated inside West Virginia's

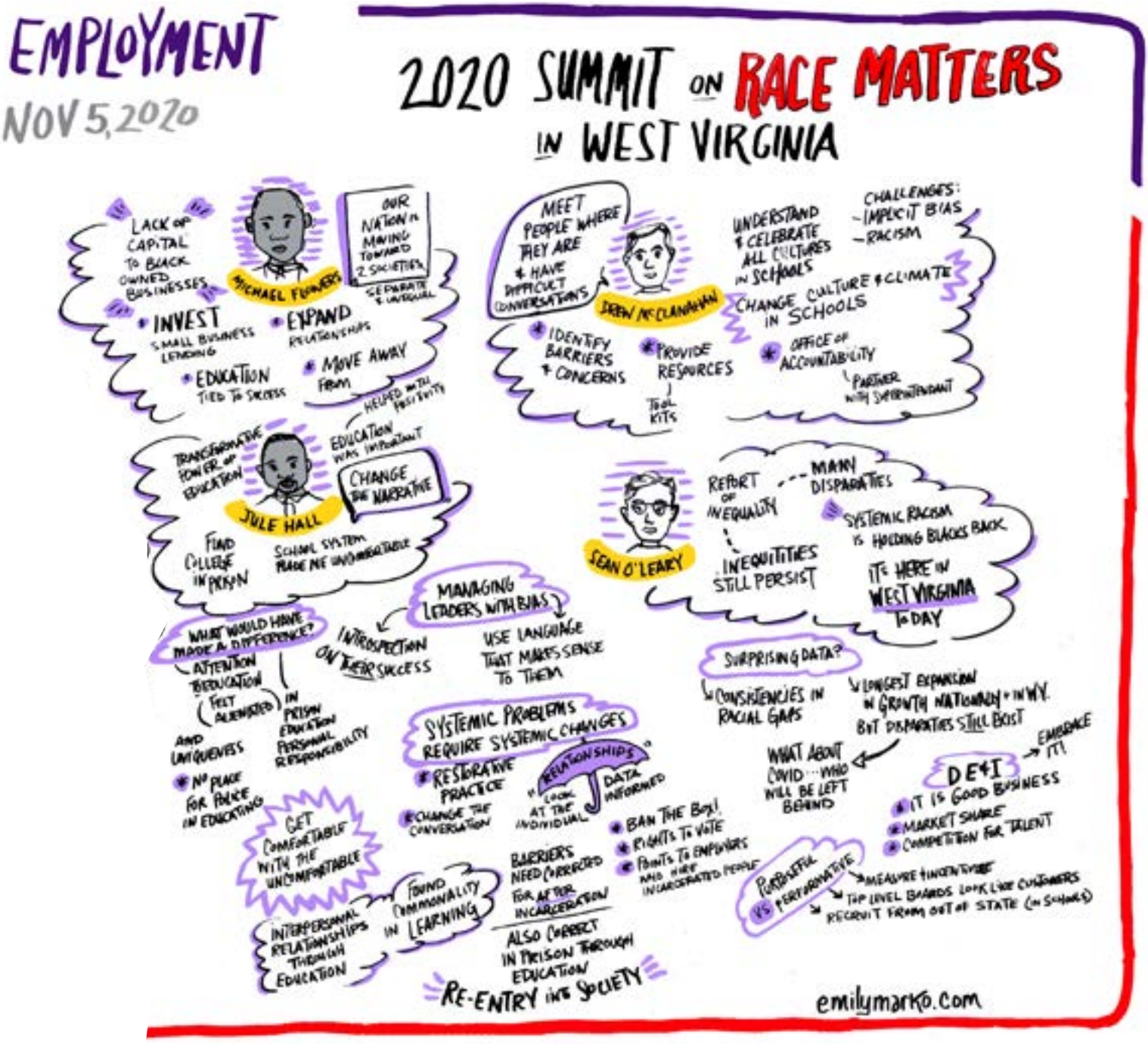


schools, regardless of how small the demographic makeup. "We understand the challenge in front of us—the concerns with both implicit bias and even outright racism that may exist inside of our schools," he said. "It's important to understand, as well, that we're now trying to look at each piece of work that we do at the Department of Education through a lens that includes equity. The commitment from our board and our state superintendent most definitely is there."

Suspensions and Expulsions in West Virginia

"There is a systemic and systematic problem with suspensions and expulsions over the discipline of African American children and poor children in the state of West Virginia," said racial and economic justice advocate **Rev. Matthew J. Watts**, a pastor on Charleston's West Side. Research, based on long-term complaints he was hearing from his community, led to a staggering finding: "Between 17,000 and 20,000 of all West Virginia students are suspended from West Virginia schools each year."

In 2017, *ProPublica*[53] reported 23,200 out-of-school suspensions in West Virginia in the 2015-2016 school year,



which was among the highest 10% in the nation. Further, where county data was available, Black students were 1.5 to 6.5 times as likely to be suspended as White students. Zero tolerance policies and lax suspension policies contributed to the problem. White students make up 90% of the state's school population and are heavily impacted as well, said Watts, particularly low-income students.

Studies have shown that student suspension and expulsion contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline. Also, as reported in *Fatherly Magazine*,[54] "Students who are suspended or expelled from school are more likely to commit crimes, abuse drugs and alcohol, and spiral into low academic achievement and delinquency… Studies have repeatedly failed to show that removal from school deters bad behavior or does much at all to maintain classroom safety and decorum."

Burnout and Alliance

Many people want to see change, but their willingness to assist in that change is sometimes lackluster, often for good reason. Perhaps they work two or three jobs and don't have time to confront a teacher or school board about what's missing in their child's curriculum. Or, in the case of some activists, they're simply exhausted. "The price of being woke is we ain't been able to go to sleep in 400 years," jokes Dyson, an African American. "We've got insomnia. Can somebody relieve us so we can sleep?"

Numerous White Americans have worked and protested for Black rights and equality, as evidenced in the Black Lives Matter protests.[55] Nonetheless, Dyson said, "If White brothers and sisters would take responsibility and say, 'White supremacy, White nationalism, this is a White people's problem; we've got it from here,' better allyship could actually help Black people address these issues and not be as exhausted as we are."

Solutions

Invest in Education

- Implement policies and practices to **uplift everyone**.
  - Individuals working within school systems must deliberately encourage, uplift, and work to **implant positive narratives** in the minds of students.
  - Provide equal opportunities to at-risk students; help them to gather the same skillsets and talents as those who have advantage and support. Exposure to opportunities promotes achievement. Apply commonsense rules of empathy and compassion.
  - **Get rid of Zero Tolerance policies**. Everyone messes up. Among other things, the practice facilitates the school-to-prison pipeline and disproportionately affects minority students.[56] Consider restorative practices instead. "We should have zero tolerance for Zero Tolerance."
    — Michael Eric Dyson
  - **Understand affirmative action**. It provides an equal footing and basis for people who have historically been prevented from flourishing within institutions.
  - **Improve student advisement** on the earnings potential associated with various degrees and career choices.
  - For those who choose not to go the traditional college route, **add the ability to earn job readiness certificates** in short amounts of time.
  - **Provide continuing education for parents**, some of whom may have been deprived of an education themselves. For example, a six-week refresher course to understand basic curricula, what will be expected of their children, and how they can help if their children come to them.
  - **Provide an outlet for parents** to voice suggestions, such as requests for more diversity in the curriculum, to school boards and school administrators.
- **Reshape funding for public schools**. In the K-12 context, find new ways to assure that the quality of education does not depend on your zip code. This means moving away from heavy reliance on property taxes as a primary funding source.
- **Practice inclusivity**.
  - Don't stigmatize Black difference. Things can be different without having hierarchy, one better than the other.
  - Practice awareness of each student's unique intellectual capabilities.
  - If a student is extra loud or fidgety, **look at possible issues**, like no food at home or no breakfast that morning.
  - Do ethnographies or family history projects with your students. Take note of how each student views their family. The investment of time will repay itself as you discover potential problems and how you can best approach them.
  - **Meet people where they are.** For instance, if you have a student using Ebonics, don't belittle the way they speak, but meet them there and teach them how and when to use formal English as well.

Make distinctions. Teach a lesson on Black English (or African American vernacular), and **don't assume that Black English is "bad English."**

Penetrate the Blindness to Bias

Those in positions of authority sometimes do not recognize their own biases. For instance, studies indicate that people—including police officers and teachers—are more likely to think Black children are older than they really are, and the consequences can result in stiffer punishments or even death (for example, the shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice).[57]

When facing another person with a fixed mindset:

- **Use self-introspection and reflection.** Ask him or her how they achieved the level of success they hold; who were their mentors and sponsors along the way? Suggest they extend that same opportunity and grace to others, whether or not they have different career paths and backgrounds.

White People Should Promote Allyship

- Encourage other White people to do the right thing. For instance, don't call the police on Black people for things you wouldn't call the police on for White people for, like a Black man napping in a Starbucks. To be a better ally, **have conversations with other White people**—hard, difficult, complicated conversations—to challenge them. This includes challenging biases within your own family.
- **Challenge your school system** to think more critically about the ways in which it disadvantages some and benefits others; for instance, why is expulsion of Black students often disproportionately higher than of White students?
- **"Look at your own institutions**—to scour them, examine them, and then galvanize them to look at practices and behaviors that are destructive and harmful or even unintentionally embodying the very White supremacy or racist ideology that we seek to oppose." — Michael Eric Dyson

Shrink the Wealth Gap

- Inside the financial services sector: Follow the lead of J.P. Morgan Chase, which recently announced a $30 million investment over the next five years to help address some of the largest drivers of the massive wealth gap between Black and White Americans. Within that investment, $2 billion will be spent and allocated on small business lending, with the focus on businesses owned and operated by Blacks and Latinos.[58]
- Outside the financial services sector: Companies can create or expand relationships with minority-owned suppliers. More Black-owned businesses will likely lead to more employment opportunities for Black workers. That, in turn, will have a positive impact on social issues.

Parents Should Encourage Their Children

- Compliment your children and **nurture their self-esteem.**
- **Encourage literacy and learning** as a habit:
  - Foster more reading at home and less TV and video games.
  - Read anything, even if it's a comic book or the back of a cereal box. This will help you to meet kids where they are and make reading a daily habit.
  - Teach kids to read on the internet if that's more suitable.
  - Help kids understand the advantages and payoffs of reading and learning; teach them that the life of the mind is enlivening.
- Make sure kids understand **they are worth the effort** invested in them.
- **Reward children** for doing the right thing.

HOUSING AND WEALTH

History

In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt began implementation of New Deal programs in response to the Great Depression's effects on the nation. As working- and middle-class people lost their jobs, they also lost their homes, and an affordable housing shortage called for new housing programs. In cities across America, public housing was introduced, primarily for White people. "It wasn't a welfare program for poor people," said Richard Rothstein, author of *The Color of Law, A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, in a 2017 interview with NPR.[59] Some projects were built for African Americans as well, "but they were always separate projects; they were not integrated."

In 1934, the newly formed Federal Housing Administration (FHA) guaranteed mortgage loans to White people but refused to insure loans in or near African American neighborhoods, commencing a practice later termed "redlining," which drew red lines around geographic areas deemed unsuitable for investment or services based on race. (These lines would divide neighborhoods with walls and highways, and persist for generations.) Simultaneously, the FHA mandated that African Americans be barred from buying homes in suburban subdivisions, which were being mass produced with government subsidies, on the grounds that property values would decline if African Americans lived in White areas, thus jeopardizing their loans. This rationale was not based on any evidence or study.

"In fact, when African Americans tried to buy homes in all-White [or] in mostly White neighborhoods," said Rothstein, "property values rose because African Americans were more willing to pay more for properties than Whites were, simply because their housing supply was so restricted and they had so many fewer choices."

As the White population moved to suburbia, vacancies spread throughout White housing projects, while in Black projects, waiting lists grew. The situation became so conspicuous, according to Rothstein, the government eventually allowed African Americans to live in White-designated projects. "At the same time, industry was leaving the cities, African Americans were becoming poorer in those areas," he said. "The projects became projects for poor people." (For an overview of public housing in the US from 1930 to the present see [footnote].[60])

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 officially ended the discriminatory practice of redlining, but it remains a major factor in the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites.

During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, home ownership was generally affordable for working-class Americans. But Black Americans were denied home ownership because of discriminatory practices by the FHA, Veterans' Affairs, GI Bill and other programs and institutions. That means Black Americans gained none of the wealth and resources afforded to White homeowners. "The White families sent their children to college with their home equities; they were able to take care of their parents in old age and not depend on their children," said Rothstein. "They're able to bequeath wealth to their children. None of those advantages accrued to African Americans, who, for the most part, were prohibited from buying homes in those suburbs."

Problems and Challenges Today

> **"Racial discrimination and economic inequality are pervasive in our society, and they exist because they provide social and economic benefit to those who are privileged, whether that privilege is based on racial identity or on wealth."**
>
> *— Dr. Valerie Wilson, Labor Economist, Economic Policy Institute, D.C.*

A Growing Wealth Gap

The racial wealth gap is one of the longest-standing vestiges of the century. Today, a typical White family has about eight times the wealth of a typical Black family. These disparities persist across education, employment status, and family income.

Most recently, the wealth gap has been affected by subprime predatory lending that drained wealth from Black households.

Over the last few decades, the gap has widened due to an overall growing inequality (not just a racial inequality) commonly referred to as the top one percent. "We got to where we are now, not because of any one particular policy battle that was lost, but over several decades and several policy battles lost," said Wilson, a labor economist at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C.

The oversized influence of the one percent on the political system has had a major impact on policies, which often serve the interest of the wealthiest people in America and not of workers or the broader population. Examples include a declining value of the minimum wage and a decline in union density, resulting in less power and influence for workers and less ability to bargain for better pay, working conditions, and benefits.

"The combination of these things … has benefitted the wealthy and contributed to a longer trend toward growing inequality, on top of the long history and legacy of structural racism in America," said Wilson.

Housing

Home ownership is a core element of the American dream and the economic underpinning of our society. It remains a vital means to building wealth and stabilizing individuals, families, and communities. Many people, however, don't have the necessary resources for a down payment or for the maintenance and upkeep a home requires. Barriers are greater now than they have been in the past, due in part to stagnant wages and an inadequate stock of affordable housing. Simultaneously, rents have been increasing at excessive rates.

While the cost of housing affects a majority of Americans, it's important to approach policies that can address current challenges through the lens of racism and inequality. "It's important we understand how that might play out differently for different groups based on their social or economic position," said Wilson. "No policy in this country has ever been race neutral, whether or not it mentions race or is as broad and universal and general as you can make it."

In terms of public housing, no significant reforms have been made since the 1992 HOPE VI program, which focused on demolishing rundown housing projects and replacing them with new federally subsidized, lower-density developments. Today, moves toward decentralized public housing can create barriers to access when, for instance, living in the suburbs can mean greater distance from job opportunities, social support networks, and health facilities—considerations that should be addressed when developing housing policies, in addition to simply keeping a roof over one's head.

NIMBY – Not in My Back Yard

"Many racial barriers in the housing field are subtle and unspoken and therefore tough to overcome," said **Brandon Dennison**, CEO of Coalfield Development, whose portfolio includes constructing energy-efficient, affordable housing in West Virginia.

While many people support racial justice in theory, their attitudes and actions can run contrary to their alleged support, which serves to exacerbate housing problems. For example, some people don't want affordable housing built in their neighborhoods or backyards; they want it somewhere else. When it is somewhere else, others maintain that since the housing is built with public money it shouldn't be too nice. Landlords may say they don't accept HUD or Section 8 vouchers,[61] which can be code language for racial or socioeconomic biases.

"Sometimes, as a society, I'm not sure we really do believe that everyone, no matter the color of their skin or income level, deserves a decent quality home," said Dennison. "We have to call that out, and we have to do better as a community when it comes to that."

West Virginia

Like most of America, West Virginia has a long history of housing discrimination, from segregated housing in coal camps to racist covenants by realtors, developers, homesteaders, and lenders. For decades, discriminatory policies were commonplace; for instance, in the 1960s and before, the Charleston Housing Authority barred unmarried women with children from using public housing, while captive markets created widespread predatory landlord practices.

Summit panelist **Nathan Tauger** writes in his 2020 study, *Racial Segregation in West Virginia Housing, 1929-1971*,[62] "Mandated school segregation allowed decision makers to segregate or reject African Americans from housing." The West Virginia Constitution mandated school segregation until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, but "the State Constitution's silence on other types of discrimination allowed segregation to continue unabated in the fields of employment, housing, and public accommodation."

While discriminatory practices have largely been outlawed, officially their ripple effects remain evident today.

"Charleston is still pretty much a segregated place," said Rev. Watts, an African American whose work focuses on the West Side community of Charleston. "It occurred when the city was being developed."

In 1974, a predominantly Black neighborhood in the Triangle District of Charleston, rich with Black culture, was destroyed to facilitate an urban development project and a new highway overpass.[63] Watts referred to the event as "the greatest displacement of African American people in the history of the state of West Virginia" and said it was a contributor to many problems in today's distressed West Side, which is where many Triangle residents relocated when driven out of their homes.

Now that urban development projects are aimed at the West Side, and a redistricting overlay has created what Watts termed "inferior zoning" for the community, concerns exist that history could repeat itself.

"That's why we believe that the West Side is still a laboratory to actually address many structural and systemic problems with racism,"[64] said Watts, who wants to move from discussion to action. "We have the opportunity to move this community forward, and we're prepared to do that. Anybody who wants to do what's right and just and fair and equitable, we'll certainly work with them. Now is the time to do it."

Young Adults

Building wealth can begin early, from teaching children the value of a piggy bank to implementing wealth-building policies like baby bond endowments (see Solutions, next section). Eventually, children transition into young adults and, like everyone else, need to make money for themselves and find a path forward to a full life. For many youths, however, the transition to adulthood can be an unsteady proposition.

Aspen Institute[65] defines the term "opportunity youth" as young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market. An estimated 4.6 million American youth fall into this category today. Despite personal aspirations, advancement is unlikely for them after being disconnected from school and work, as only 1% will ever earn an Associate's degree or higher (compared to 35% of the general population). "And the data is clear: large majority of today's and the near future's family-supporting wage jobs will require some kind of training or credential beyond a high school degree."

"The transition to adulthood is a very precarious time," said Dennison, whose work at Coalfield Development includes initiatives for young people. "The jump between high school student to adulthood becomes this canyon that young people fall into, and it's tough to ever get them back. Decisions get made in that canyon of transition that can take a lifetime to overcome."

Dennison believes a happy, productive, and well-paid life is possible without a four-year degree, which has been pushed too hard. "But we have to show very tangibly what those viable pathways are to be an entrepreneur, to be an employer, to be a vocational technical worker, or whatever it may be."

Evanston, Illinois made history in March 2021 by passing the nation's first-ever reparations bill. According to the *Chicago Sun Times*,[66] Evanston City Council approved a plan to distribute $400,000 to Black residents with ties to the city's Black community between 1919 and 1969. Evanston has committed $10 million to a reparations fund, generated by a cannabis sales tax, and presented the plan as a blueprint for other municipalities to use in efforts to amend historical wrongs against Black residents.

Solutions

Policy Proposals for Economic Equality

- **Prioritize low unemployment.** The Federal Reserve has a dual mandate of maximizing employment while keeping inflation under control. Aim for a strong, healthy labor market with low unemployment for an extended duration of time.
- **Prioritize investments** that create jobs specifically in high-unemployment and high-poverty communities that usually get left out during an economic recovery and seem to be perpetually in recession.
- **Strengthen the rights of workers** to organize, join unions, and collectively bargain.
- **Strengthen enforcement** of anti-discrimination laws and policies that have been on the books for decades. Maintain enforcement of those policies, for example, with transparency in hiring, paying, and promotion decisions.
- **Update existing labor standards** so they continue to provide a strong floor for job quality, such as increasing the minimum wage and certifying that federal overtime salaries keep pace with inflation and changes in standards of living.

Identify and **remove basic labor standards policies** that were historically rooted in racial exclusion and discrimination.

- **Create Baby Bond Endowments.** These trusts could be set up and maintained by the federal government from a child's birth to young adulthood to build a nest egg for college, a business start-up, or down payment on a home—all things that are important for building wealth.[67]
- **Employers should help "opportunity youth"** through employment, training, mentorship, or by other means. "We need to create training programs that are long enough to get people addicted to a paycheck. Once the program is over, they're more motivated to find work to sustain themselves until they can get into the kind of work they're trying to do." —Robert Hardy
- To directly target the racial wealth gap, **consider reparations**. (See *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century.*[68])

Housing

- When developing housing policies, even if they are good, universal policies, understand they will look differently to different people based on underlying structures. Focus on, target, and address issues of the most marginalized groups to make policies and solutions the most effective.
- Conduct racial impact statements or equity audits when considering new legislation. "If we're conscious and intentional of the impact of these things, then we're more likely to pass the kinds of legislation that will have a bigger impact. Often people go in with the best of intentions, but because we are blind to the fact we're building on top of a flawed structure, the legislation itself isn't adequately structured."
  — Dr. Valerie Wilson
- Learn lessons from bold policy solutions that have occurred in other cities and states, and even internationally.[69] Reach out, build coalitions or partnerships across different groups and locations to work on things people collectively want.
- Re-examine programs like the Federal Subsistence Homestead Program, which was created during the New Deal to build housing in semi-rural communities to enable farming and agriculture; the program later allowed tenants to buy the houses at cost. (In West Virginia this included Arthurdale, Red House, and Eleanor.) "Although these were segregated housing programs at the time, one could perhaps implement them again in West Virginia on an equitable basis."
  — Nathan Tauger

BOB HARDY – AFFORDABLE HOUSING'S VISIONARY

Bob Hardy, an African American and native West Virginian, is considered a visionary in the field of affordable housing development in the Charleston area, where he has worked for decades. Here, in his own words, is a snapshot of his experience.

As a young man I got a job with Western Electric, the manufacturing and supply unit of the Bell System. I had a good job, had a wife and a kid, and wanted to buy a house. But I couldn't buy a house where I wanted to because of my race.

I decided where I grew up as a kid, up on top of West Side hill, I'd just build my own house. Didn't ask nobody to help me; I'd do it myself. You can imagine what kind of problems I would have doing that. But, being a young man, feeling like everything that life presented was no problem, all I had to do was put my best efforts forward and work toward my goals, I could accomplish them.

After I had built my own house, I took on the project of building my own church, so that turned me into somewhat of a housing and house-building expert.

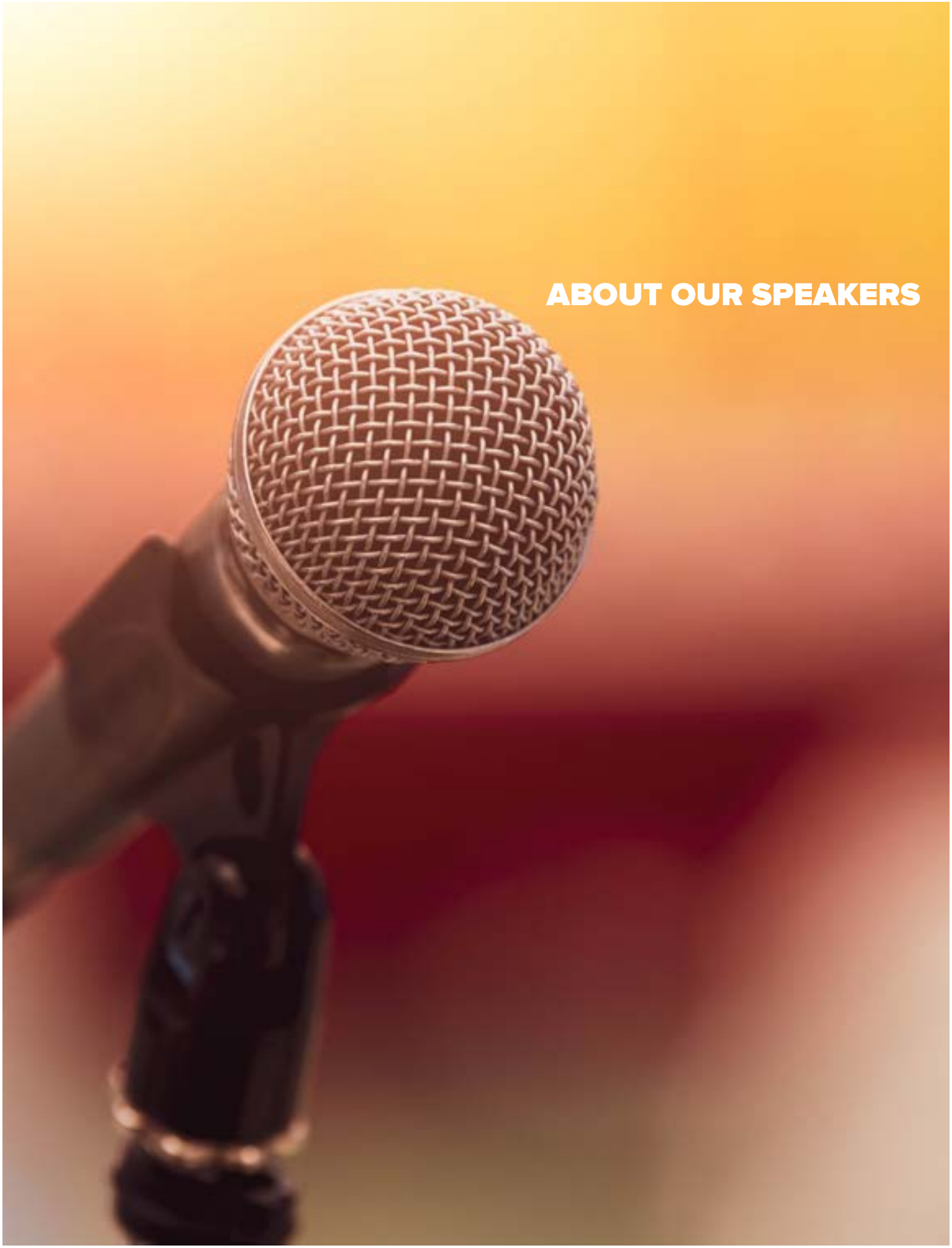
I'd worked for the Bell System for 15 years when I decided to quit and go into the building industry, which I'd wanted to do my whole life. I first worked through a program for low-income housing repair and later got into the Charleston Economic Community Development Corporation, because somebody knew I had that skill and experience. I built a house for them over on Bradford Street, and subsequently the Home Program came along and me and a friend of mine, Bill Jones, took over CECDC and started developing housing.

It initially started with a citywide housing study, which the city paid $5,000 for, if you can imagine. We surmised through this study that the West Side of Charleston was the place we needed to start because of the housing stock and the condition of the community. We wrote a grant to the WV Housing Development fund and got $210,000 to do six houses on the West Side of Charleston, which we completed. We'd also developed and repaired housing all over Kanawha County, from Cross Lanes to Upper Kanawha Valley. To develop the home buyers, we had to be certified as homebuying counselors, which we became. We successfully built and rehabbed over 30 houses on the West Side. Most of those houses were sold to individuals who went through our homebuyer program, and today, more than half of those houses are paid for, and the people who bought them at the time still live there.

I think building low-wealth housing complexes is detrimental to the health of the community, because people need space. If you have your own space, you have the opportunity to grow and expand your own ideas and knowledge and skills. You have the chance to take advantage of the opportunities that are out there.

— Robert Hardy, Executive Director, Charleston Economic Community Development Corporation

ABOUT OUR SPEAKERS



APPENDIX A / SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Understanding Racism

Keynote speaker **Professor Ibram X. Kendi** is a writer and historian and the Director of the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University. He is the author of three #1 *New York Times* bestsellers, including *How to be An Antiracist*, which has been translated into several languages. A scholar on race and discriminatory practices in America, he is a contributing writer at *The Atlantic*, and a CBS News correspondent.

Panelist **Jeff James**, born and raised in West Virginia, has worked in the publishing industry for 25 years. He is the VP and publisher of business and leadership books and e-courses for HarperCollins and author of the forthcoming book, *Giving Up Whiteness*. He has led transformational diversity, innovation, and marketing projects at national organizations, and his lifelong interest in diversity, inclusion, and innovation led him to co-found Create West Virginia, a nonprofit initiative to advance innovative economic opportunities in his home state.

Raised in Kentucky, panelist **Shaun King** is a civil rights activist and writer. He was named one of the 25 most influential people on the internet by *TIME* magazine. He is the founder and CEO of *The North Star,* a digital version of Frederick Douglass' iconic journal. After traveling to 47 states with the Black Lives Matter movement, he wrote the book: *Make Change: How to Fight Injustice, Dismantle Systemic Oppression, and Own Our Future*. He reminds us that we can take what we do best and tilt that practice towards justice.

Panelist and native West Virginian **Katherine L. "Kitty" Dooley** is a practicing attorney in the State of West Virginia. She serves on the Board of Governors of West Virginia State University, is Director Emeritus of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia, and co-chair of the YWCA of Charleston's Racial Justice and Racial Justice Endowment Committees. She is a recipient of the YWCA of Charleston's Woman of Achievement Award, a Governor's Civil Rights Award, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Living the Dream Award for Human and Civil Rights. She provides trainings on racial justice and implicit bias, and as a member and former chair of the Board of Commissioners for the Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority, spearheaded a $90 million effort to rebuild public housing in the City of Charleston.

Criminal Justice

Keynote speaker **Nikole Hannah-Jones** covers racial injustice for *The New York Times Magazine*. She is the creator and lead writer of its major multimedia initiative, The 1619 Project, named for the year the first enslaved Africans arrived in America. She wrote the project's introductory essay, "Our Democracy's Founding Ideas Were False When They Were Written. Black Americans Have Fought to Make Them True," which earned her a Pulitzer Prize for commentary. Her many awards include the National Magazine Award, the Hillman Prize for Magazine Journalism, the Peabody Award, and the George Polk Award for radio reporting for her This American Life story, "The Problem We All Live With." She is co-founder of the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting, and her reporting has been featured in various publications including *ProPublica*, The *Atlantic Magazine*, and *Politico Magazine*. She has appeared on Face the Nation, NPR, MSNBC, C-SPAN, and others, and on radio stations across the country.

Panelist **Dr. James Nolan** is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at West Virginia University. His research and teachings have focused on community policing, neighborhood dynamics, police procedures, crime measurement, hate crimes, and equity and inclusion in higher education. He worked as a police officer for 13 years in Wilmington, Delaware in various departments, including patrol, community policing, organized crime and vice, and planning and research. He is coauthor of *The Violence of Hate: Understanding Harmful Forms of Bias and Bigotry*, and his work has appeared in a variety of publications. He holds a Ph.D. from Temple University, where his studies focused on group and social processes, and he is a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

Panelist **Damion Shade** joined the Oklahoma Policy Institute in July 2018 as the criminal justice policy analyst. He grew up in Jackson, Mississippi and has lived in Oklahoma since the late 90s. He has worked as a public-school educator and has written award-winning education and justice features as a contributing writer for the *Tulsa Voice* since 2016. He earned a Bachelor's Degree from Oral Roberts University where he started several voter registration and political advocacy initiatives.

Panelist **Lida Shepherd** is codirector of the West Virginia Economic Justice Project, a program of the American Friends Service Committee, where she works statewide on issues affecting low-income and working people. Her work focuses on policy advocacy, popular education training, restorative practices, and coalition-building in support of economic justice. She graduated from the University of California-Berkeley with a degree in Peace and Conflict Studies.

Panelist **Alex Vitale** is Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College and a Visiting Professor at London Southbank University. He has spent the last 30 years writing about policing and consults with police departments and human rights organizations internationally. He is the author of *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics* and *The End of Policing*. His academic writing on policing has appeared in a variety of publications. As a frequent essayist, his work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today, Fortune*, and other publications.

Civic Engagement

Keynote speaker **Professor Angela Davis** is internationally known for her ongoing work to combat all forms of oppression in the US and abroad. A worldwide lecturer and author of nine books, a recent theme of her work has been the range of social problems associated with incarceration and the generalized criminalization of communities affected by poverty and racial discrimination. She has helped popularize the notion of a "prison industrial complex" and works to create a world without prisons. An iconic face of Black politics in the 1970s, she draws upon her own experiences in the early 70s as a person who spent 18 months in jail and on trial, after being placed on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted List" for a crime she did not commit. She has spent the past 15 years at the University of California Santa Cruz where she is now Distinguished Professor Emerita of History of Consciousness and of Feminist Studies.

Panelist **Jason Huffman** is the West Virginia State Director of Americans for Prosperity, an influential policy advocacy group that plays a central role on criminal justice reform and economic opportunity issues, recently helping to secure passage of Right to Work legislation. Born and raised in Buckhannon, West Virginia, he has worked as a policy analyst for the West Virginia State Senate and an Operations Director for the West Virginia Republican Party.

Originally from Harlem, New York, panelist **Dr. Shanequa Smith** moved to West Virginia 19 years ago to escape the impacts of systemic oppression engulfing her community during the crack epidemic. She holds a Master's degree in School Counseling from Marshall Graduate College and a Ph.D. in Human and Community Development from West Virginia University. Her life experiences and education positioned her to become a Restorative Practitioner with a focus on creating healing and learning opportunities for marginalized people. Her transformative techniques seek to help liberate individuals who experience sociohistorical trauma generated from systematic oppressions. She also enacts collaborative initiatives to reinforce the strength of community villages.

Charleston, West Virginia native and panelist **Dijon Stokes** graduated from Howard University in 2020 with bachelor degrees in both economics and political science. Prior to joining the ACLU as a staff member, he interned as a policy fellow for the ACLU-West Virginia, was a national organizing intern for the Children's Defense Fund, and a legal department intern for the Howard University Office of General Counsel. He is currently a fellow at the NAACP Next Gen Program. He resides in Dunbar, West Virginia.

Panelist **Jennifer Wells** is an experienced organizer and social worker. Her work includes an extensive background in child welfare, juvenile justice, community service, program development and fundraising. She is Senior Organizer with Community Change, serves as state chair for Care International, and is board president for the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. In 2018, she was named Social Worker of the Year by the West Virginia Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. She resides in Huntington, West Virginia.

Health

Keynote speaker **Dr. Camara Jones** is a family physician and epidemiologist whose work focuses on naming, measuring, and addressing the impacts of racism on the health and well-being of the nation. Through her work she aims to catalyze a national conversation on racism that will mobilize and engage all Americans in a National Campaign Against Racism. She has been an Assistant Professor at the Harvard School of Public Health and served as a Medical Officer and Research Director on Social Determinants of Health and Equity at the Centers for Disease Control. The recipient of many awards and honors, and elected to service on many professional boards, she is currently an Adjunct Professor at both the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University and the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Panelist **Dr. Lauri Andress** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Policy, Management and Leadership at West Virginia University School of Public Health, where she served as an Assistant Dean for Public Health Practice and Workforce Development. As a scholar on community engagement and health, she researches the connection between geography of place and health. Prior to joining academia, she worked in public health at the local and federal levels, served as a policy aide to local and congressional policymakers, and led teams that launched the Centers for Health Equity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Louisville, Kentucky.

Panelist **Dr. Patrice Harris,** a psychiatrist from Atlanta, grew up in Bluefield, West Virginia. She has diverse experience as a private practicing physician, county public health officer, patient advocate and medical society lobbyist. She was the 174th President of the American Medical Association (AMA), the first African American woman elected to that position, and is currently the Immediate Past President of the AMA. She earned a BA in psychology and a medical degree from West Virginia University, and she completed her residency in child and adolescent psychiatry and forensic psychiatry at Emory University School of Medicine. A recognized expert in children's mental health and childhood trauma, she has led efforts on local and national levels to integrate public health, behavioral health, and primary care services with supports for employment, housing and education.

Panelist **Dr. Anthony Woart** is Professor and Chair of the Department of Public Health at Marshall University and the founder and Director of Marshall's Minority Health Institute. His work focuses on the burden of health disparities among minority populations of West Virginia and the Appalachian region. He has served on several National Institutes of Health research review panels and is a member of the West Virginia Martin Luther King Holiday Commission.

Education & Employment

Keynote speaker **Dr. Michael Eric Dyson** is a renowned professor, writer, preacher, lecturer, and media personality. He earned a Ph.D. in Religion from Princeton University and has taught at distinguished universities for more than a decade. He has written over 20 books, including bestsellers, classics and award winners like *We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, which won the 2018 Southern Book Prize. He has been a preacher and sometime pastor for the last 40 years, has lectured worldwide, and has served for 30 years as a media commentator and host, appearing on major radio and television shows, including CNN, MSNBC, Real Time with Bill Maher, and The View.

Panelist **Michael Flowers** is an attorney and advocate for diversity and inclusion within the legal profession. As Director of Diversity and Inclusion at his firm, he works to develop and implement aggressive initiatives around diversity and inclusion policies and works with clients to develop diversity initiatives and strategies. He served for 12 years as a member of the Columbus State Community College Board and is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of Bucknell University and an elected member of the American Law Institute. A former chair of the Section of Business Law of the American Bar Association (ABA), he has worked on legal reform projects in six countries in Africa and now serves as a special advisor to the Board of the ABA's Rule of Law Initiative, which operates legal reform projects in more than 50 countries worldwide.

Panelist **Jule Hall** is a program officer at *Ascendium,* where he's responsible for strategic grantmaking to expand postsecondary educational opportunities for incarcerated learners. In 2011, while incarcerated, he completed an undergraduate degree in German Studies with the Bard College Prison Initiative (BPI). He would go on to complete a graduate-level, public health specialization and become a BPI-Tow Public Health Fellow. Prior to joining *Ascendium*, he worked for the Ford Foundation, where he conducted data analysis and strategic development for grantmakers concerned with gender, racial, and immigrant justice issues. As campaign coordinator

at Picture Motion, he created social impact campaigns for award-winning documentaries examining prisoner reentry, gun violence, and racial and economic inequality in America. In 2017 he served on the Documentary Selection Committee of NBC Universal and AFI DOC's 2017 Impact Lab.

Panelist **Drew McClanahan** serves as Director of the Office of Leadership Support for the West Virginia Department of Education. Prior to his role at the West Virginia DOE, he served both as a curriculum and administrative assistant principal in Kanawha County schools. He began his career teaching United States history and special education. His work with leadership has supported both beginning and experienced principals throughout West Virginia, with a focus on research-proven strategies and beliefs related to a learning-for-all mission.

Panelist **Sean O'Leary** is the senior policy analyst at the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. Since joining the Center in 2010, Sean has authored numerous reports on working family issues, economic development, and state and federal budget and tax policy, including annual reports on the state budget and the State of Working West Virginia. Sean also collaborates with WV Kids Count for the annual West Virginia Kids Count Data Book. He is author of the book *The State of My State - A Native's Son's Search for West Virginia*.

Housing & Wealth

Keynote speaker **Dr. Valerie Wilson** is a labor economist and Director of the Economic Policy Institute's Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy. She is a nationally recognized source for expert reports and policy analysis on the economic condition of America's people of color. Prior to joining EPI, Wilson served as the Vice President of Research at the National Urban League Washington Bureau in D.C. Throughout her career she has written extensively on various issues impacting racial economic inequality in the US, including employment, wage, education, and income and wealth disparities.

Panelist **Brandon Dennison** was born and raised in West Virginia. He is the founder and CEO of Coalfield Development, a West Virginia nonprofit that began in 2010. Coalfield works to rebuild the Appalachian economy from the ground up by serving as an incubator for social enterprises designed to diversify Appalachia's coal-based economy and cultivating opportunities for people facing barriers to employment. To date, they have trained over 1,000 people and helped start over 50 new businesses. One such enterprise hires locally disconnected workers to construct energy efficient affordable housing.

Panelist and native West Virginian **Robert Hardy** has worked in the arena of affordable housing development in the Charleston area for decades. A licensed contractor, and a vocational school instructor for eight years, he has worked to rehab delipidated homes in his community since the 1990s and remains an active member today. He is the Executive Director of the Charleston Economic Community Development Corporation, where he's built and rehabbed over 50 houses on Charleston's West Side.

Panelist **Nathan Tauger** served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at the Rural Appalachian Improvement League in Milton, West Virginia. Through a 2019 fellowship from the West Virginia Humanities Council, he researched the history of housing segregation in West Virginia and his findings are published in Volumes 1, 2, and 3 of the West Virginia University Law Review. He has worked with the West Virginia legislature and the Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living. He is currently studying law at Stanford Law School.

Panelist **Rev. Matthew Watts** is a native of Mount Hope, West Virginia and has served as a senior pastor at the Grace Bible Church in Charleston, West Virginia since 1993. He has worked as an engineer and a small business consultant. Recognized as a community leader and a longtime racial and economic justice advocate, he established the HOPE Community Development Corporation in 1997 to advance education, employment training, and economic revitalization in Charleston's West Side.

APPENDIX A / FOOTNOTES

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APPENDIX B / EVALUATION RESULTS

GREATER KANAWHA VALLEY FOUNDATION

MIDWEST EVALUATION

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Introduction

The 2020 Summit on Race Matters in West Virginia (SORM) was comprised of six virtual sessions with over 1,500 participants with the purpose of discussing race in a comprehensive, collaborative, and compassionate manner designed to build community in West Virginia. Participants were surveyed prior to each session to gain insight into their involvement in addressing racial disparities, the diversity of their social networks, and their views towards racial justice. A post-survey was completed after each session to gauge the impact of participant involvement in the Summit on Race Matters.

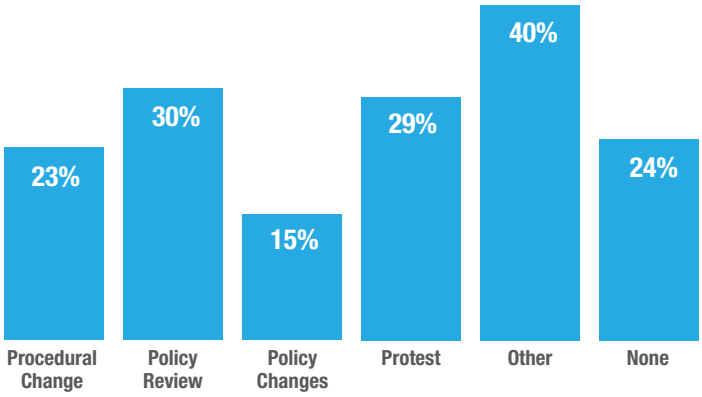
Session 1

Pre-Survey

The first Summit session served as an introduction to the state of racial disparities in the United States. This initial session had 843 participants.

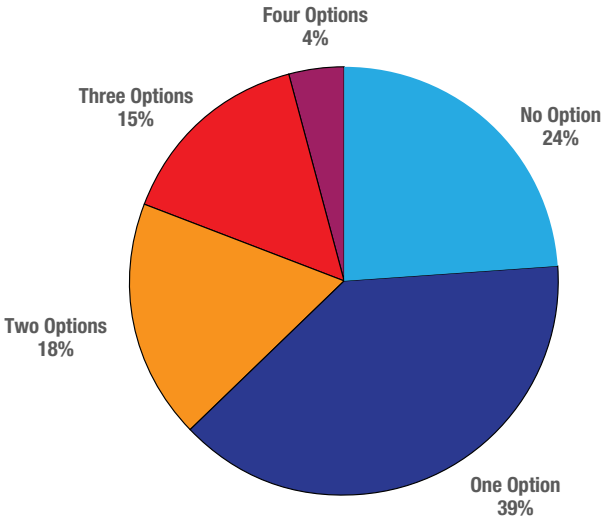
When asked if participants had discussed or engaged in activities (procedural changes, policy reviews, protest, etc.) to address racial disparities, 24% of those surveyed reported that in the preceding six months they had **NOT** discussed or engaged in any such activities. This indicates that the majority of the participants in the first session (76%) were actively involved in addressing racial disparities. The first graph below shows the distribution of types of pre-Summit engagement activities, and the second chart demonstrates the number of activities in which participants engaged. Thirty-nine% of participants surveyed engaged in at least one activity, while 37% participated in two or more.

Type of Pre-Summit Engagement Activities



The percentage total in the above graph exceeds 100, as participants were allowed to select more than one option.

Number of Engagement Activities



When asked how frequently in their personal lives participants interacted with someone from a different racial background, 53% of those surveyed indicated they had such interactions more than several times per week, while only 2% of participants responded "never," 18% responded "monthly," and 27% responded "weekly." This demonstrates that the participants in the first session belonged to diverse social networks.

Participants were asked how they viewed progress towards racial justice over the preceding 10 years. The majority of the participants (74%) believed that progress towards racial justice has been stagnant or worsened over the last 10 years, while 36% believed it had improved.

Public awareness increased by the Movement for Black Lives strengthened the likelihood that 86% of participants would engage in the political process in 2020 and beyond. Participants also showed interest in future SORM sessions, with 60% of those surveyed answering that they would attend all future sessions.

This pre-survey data shows that those who participated in the first session were actively involved in activities to address racial disparities, engaged in multiple activities, belonged to diverse social networks, believed there was work that needs to be done in the area of racial justice, and were eager to learn more about race matters in the future.

Post-Survey

The table below demonstrates how participant awareness regarding systematic and social inequalities and the needs of Black West Virginians was impacted as a result of participating in the first session of the Summit on Race Matters. The table shows that participant awareness increased a moderate amount or more in regard to the topics covered in the session.

Session 1	Moderate or more	A little	None at all
Systematic Inequalities	74%	23%	3%
Social Inequalities	69%	27%	4%
Needs of Black West Virginians	75%	22%	3%

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the current state of racial disparities specifically in West Virginia, participant responses showed that the majority were dissatisfied with where race relations were in regard to education, health care, employment, and the wealth gap.

State of Satisfaction with Racial Disparities in West Virginia in:	Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Education	89.0%	9.5%	1.5%
Health Care	88.0%	11.2%	0.8%
Employment	88.0%	11.5%	0.5%
Wealth Gap	89.5%	9.5%	1.0%

Prior to participating in Session 1 of SORM, 24% of participants who completed the pre-survey reported that they had not engaged in any activities related to racial disparities in the preceding six months. In the post-survey, 93% of respondents answered that they would be likely or very likely to discuss or engage in activities related to racial disparities as a result of their participation in Session 1, and less than 1% reported they would be unlikely or very unlikely to do so. Participation in SORM Session 1 positively impacted the likelihood of participants to engage in activities related to racial disparities.

Sessions 2 through 6

SORM Sessions 2 through 6 focused on specific areas of racial disparity. The table below lists each session, the topic, and number of participants completing surveys.

	Topic	Number of Participants
Session 2	Criminal Justice	187
Session 3	Civic Engagement	207
Session 4	Health	104
Session 5	Education and Employment	105
Session 6	Housing and Wealth	59

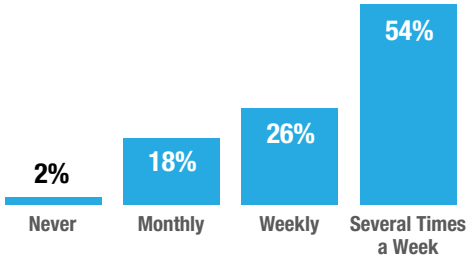
The same pre- and post-surveys administered for Session 1 were also given to participants in Sessions 2 through 6. The data below is the combined survey data for all participants in Sessions 2 through 6.

Pre-Survey

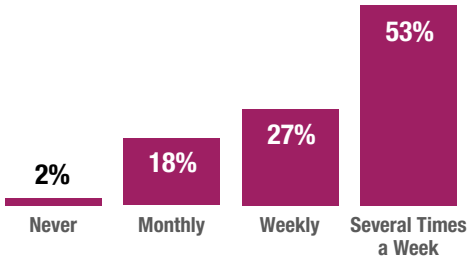
Seventy-seven percent of all participants surveyed responded that they were very likely or likely to have engaged in activities related to racial disparities in the preceding 6 months. This indicates that the majority of participants were actively engaged before their participation in the Summit. Only 1% of all participants stated that they were very unlikely to have engaged in activities related to racial disparities during that time.

The following graphs compare the answers received in the combined Sessions 2 through 6 pre-survey to those received in the Session 1 survey. The answers for these questions trend in the same direction, which is to be expected, as those who participated in the Session 1 indicated that they would participate in future sessions.

Frequency of Interaction with Other Races Sessions 2–6

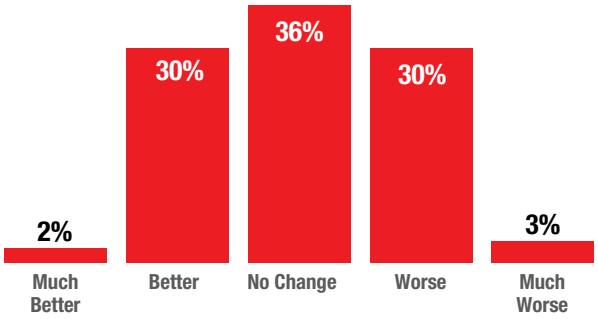


Frequency of Interaction with Other Races Sessions 1

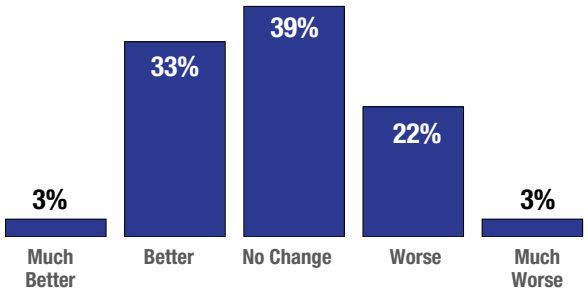


The majority of participants in all sessions indicated that they were a part of diverse social networks.

Participant Views Toward Racial Justice Over the Past 10 Years Sessions 2–6



Participant Views Toward Racial Justice Over the Past 10 Years Session 1



The majority of participants in all sessions viewed progess towards racial justice as stagnant or having worsened. Only 32% of Session 2 through 6 participants indicated they believed that things are better or much better, which is only slightly less than the 36% in Session 1.

Greater public awareness of the Movement for Black Lives increased the likelihood of 84% of participants in Sessions 2 through 6 to engage in the political process in 2020 and beyond. This was just slightly below the 86% in Session 1.

The same conclusions that were reached from Session 1 pre-survey data apply to the pre-survey data in Sessions 2 through 6. Participants were actively involved in activities related to racial disparities, they were a part of diverse social networks, they viewed racial justice over the past 10 years as stagnant or worse, and the Movement for Black Lives increased their likelihood to engage in the political process in 2020 and beyond.

Post-Survey

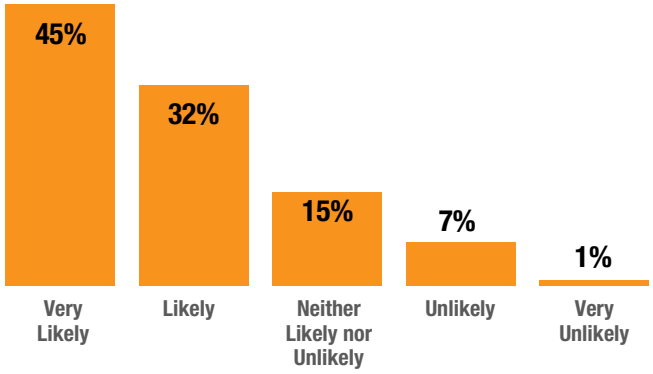
The tables below compare the post-survey results of Sessions 2 through 6 to those of Session 1. It is clear that participant involvement in all SORM sessions led to an increase in awareness regarding systematic and social inequalities and the needs of Black West Virginians. Again, we see that the majority of participants' awareness increased by a moderate amount or more as a result of their participation in the SORM sessions. We also can see that in Sessions 2 through 6 there were gains in awareness of systematic inequalities (+5%), social inequalities (+7%), and the needs of Black West Virginians (+5%) compared to Session 1. This could be due to Sessions 2 through 6 focusing on specific areas that may have made these disparities more salient than in the first, introductory session.

Session 1	Moderate or more	A little	None at all
Systematic Inequalities	74%	23%	3%
Social Inequalities	69%	27%	4%
Needs of Black West Virginians	75%	22%	3%

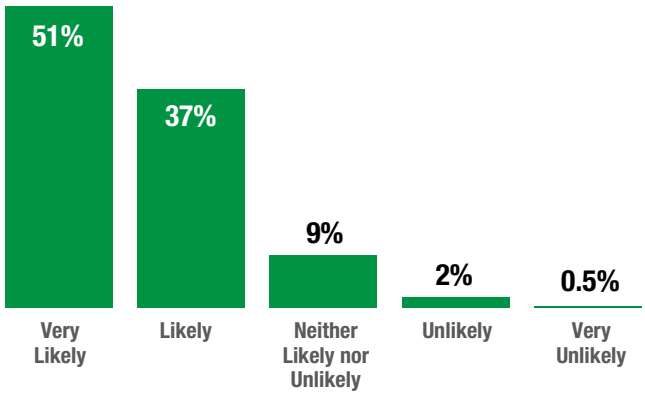
Session 2–6	Moderate or more	A little	None at all
Systematic Inequalities	79%	17%	4%
Social Inequalities	76%	18%	6%
Needs of Black West Virginians	80%	15%	5%

The following tables compare pre- and post-survey responses for Sessions 2 through 6 regarding participants' likelihood to engage in activities related to racial disparities. There was an 11-point increase in the number of participants who said they would be likely or very likely to engage in activities related to racial disparties from pre-surveys (77%) to post-surveys (88%). This indicates that participation in SORM Sessions 2 through 6 positively impacted participants' intent to engage in activities related to racial disparities.

(Pre) Before participating in the Summit, how likely were you to discuss or engage in activities (procedural changes, policy reviews, protest, etc.) related to racial disparities in the past 6 months? Sessions 2-6



(Post) After participating in the Summit, how likely are you to discuss or engage in activities (procedural changes, policy reviews, protest, etc.) related to racial disparities in the next 6 months? Sessions 2-6



Summary

It appears that participants in the 2020 Summit on Race Matters in West Virginia were more diverse and likely had more interaction with a racially diverse set of acquaintances than the typical West Virginian. Correspondingly, they were more engaged and aware of racial inequalities than a typical West Virginian. Despite this pre-existing heightened awareness, the vast majority of participants (70-80% across sessions) reported knowledge gains and an increased awareness of racial issues. Further, despite being motivated to act before SORM, there was an 11% increase in the number of people (77–88%) who reported they were likely to take action to improve racial disparities. Overall, it appears that the SORM sessions were an important informational resource and were effective in assisting people by increasing awareness and making participants feel more comfortable in taking action to change society.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer served to highlight long-standing racial inequalities in the US. While these recent events and the Black Lives Matter movement have sparked a conversation around the need for racial justice, the Summit made it clear that much work is left to be done.

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