



A CLOSER LOOK:

RACIAL JUSTICE IN OUR COMMUNITIES



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



The Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) works to create equity, opportunity and a dynamic democracy in partnership with high-impact base-building organizations, organizing alliances, and progressive unions. CPD strengthens our collective capacity to envision and win an innovative pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial and economic justice agenda.

www.populardemocracy.org



Local Progress is a network of local elected officials from around the country committed to a strong economy, equal justice, livable cities, and effective government.

www.localprogress.org



December 2, 2017

Baltimore, MD

Dear Leaders,

This past year has been one of tremendous challenge and struggle. Under a Trump administration, so many in our communities are under attack. From three different iterations of a Muslim Travel Ban to attacks on immigrant communities and threats to defund sanctuary cities, to white supremacist violence and apologism in the White House, it is clear that we are living in an era where the very promise of human safety and dignity is under siege. In scores of cities, we continue to see killings of unarmed people of color at the hands of police with little to any accountability. In Puerto Rico, we have seen the destructive confluence of climate change, predatory economic policies, and racist neglect play out in real time. In this moment, we look to our neighbors, community organizers, and local leaders to organize and lead the fight to resist hate, bigotry, and discriminatory policy. Yet we must also continue to push for progress, justice under law, good governance that supports the common good and dignity for all people.

Local Progress members and our Center for Popular Democracy partners fight for equity and justice every day. The individuals gathered here this weekend in Baltimore are part of a broader effort to ensure that people of color, immigrants, transgender people, and low-income individuals are able both to stay in their communities and thrive, with access to opportunity, safety, services, and quality jobs. We are committed to ensuring our communities have the means and ability to move, whether for new opportunities, to be with family, or to flee from oppression, rising sea levels, or devastation brought on by increasingly violent storms.

This year we have seen significant trauma in our communities. But at the same time, we have also seen community leaders, organizers and elected officials work together to create structures and policies to condemn hatred and bigotry, bring equity to our public institutions and schools, protect and defend tenants and renters from eviction, and to increase justice and accountability in our policing and criminal justice systems.

In recent weeks we watched as new diverse voices holding up progressive values entered our local elected bodies, bringing with them hope for greater equity, inclusion, and justice. We know that this work is hard, draining, and constantly requires us to dig deep. But this work is critical and important for the long-term health and vitality of our communities and our democracy. We have no choice but to fight onward. We will not rest until we win justice and safety for our communities.

In solidarity,

Sarah Johnson

Co-Director

Local Progress

Local Progress Racial Justice Strategy Session: The Time is Now

December 2-3, 2017

Baltimore, MD

Coppin State University, 2500 W. North Ave., Baltimore, MD 21216

Saturday, December 2

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 9:45 AM | Depart to Coppin State University
Meet at Hyatt Regency lobby to head over together. |
| 10:30 AM | Welcome and Opening Remarks
The time is now: putting racial justice at the top of the national 2018 agenda. |
| 12:00 PM | Lunch |
| 12:45 PM | Unpacking Our Baggage
This conversation will explore the impacts white supremacy has on you individually and on your service as community and elected leaders. |
| 1:45 PM | Police Reform: If We Don't Lead The Work, Who Will?
We will tackle how to engage in the most effective rapid response and how to transition to long term organizing through concrete LP member and community experiences. |
| 3:25 PM | Break |
| 3:40 PM | Creating a Unified Roadmap for Policy Change in 2018
In this strategy session we will work together to create a plan to engage in police reform campaigns across jurisdictions next year. <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Self-assessment tools and policy to impact change (<i>elected officials</i>)■ Grassroots action to create inside police reform (<i>executive directors</i>) |
| 5:00 PM | Bringing It All Together: Where Do We Go From Here?
We will bring back both groups to discuss and integrate our shared thinking for the year ahead as community organizations and elected leaders. |
| 6:00 PM | Dinner
Local Progress has planned a group dinner in Baltimore. |

Saturday, December 3

7:45 AM	Depart to Coppin State University Meet at Hyatt Regency lobby to head over together.
8:30 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM	Promoting Healing In Our Communities: Beyond Police Reform The discussion will focus on the experiences and impacts of racial oppression and police violence on communities.
10:00 AM	Leadership Through Lived Experiences We will break into two groups to discuss how we use our lived experiences and racial lenses to lead and support police reform and racial justice work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Black leader caucus—Creating a space in Local Progress and the CPD Network to talk about what black leaders need to do to build the work out in the progressive movement. ■ Ally caucus—How to be a good ally in terms of prioritizing racial equity and justice in policy, and using your power to support black communities to utilize their own agency.
11:00 AM	Break
11:20 AM	Introduction: Budgets and Freedom to Thrive Overview of CPD's Freedom to Thrive (FTT) report findings of how city budgets are more effective in stabilizing and nourishing communities of color than investing in policing and mass incarceration.
11:50 AM	Equitable Budgeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increasing equity and justice through the budget process (<i>elected officials</i>) LP members will do a deep dive into strong equitable budgeting examples, including processes and tactics, and a discussion of the Freedom to Thrive framework. ■ Freedom to Thrive: Building community and organizational buy in (<i>executive directors</i>) EDs will work to develop a set of working groups around FTT framework and to generate a pre-campaign launch timeline.
12:50 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM	Electoralizing Our Movement A panel discussion that looks at how to harness the energy that can translate into electoral power.
3:00 PM	Next Steps: Where Does the Work Go From Here? A brief wrap up to summarize our agreements and commitments to moving this work forward together to maximize our impact.
3:30 PM	Departures

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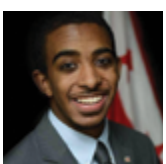
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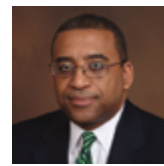
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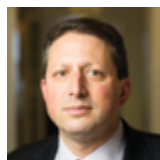
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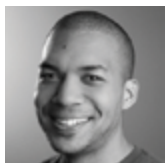
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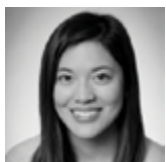
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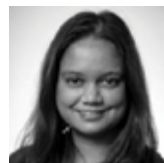
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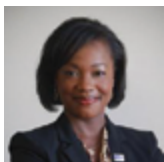


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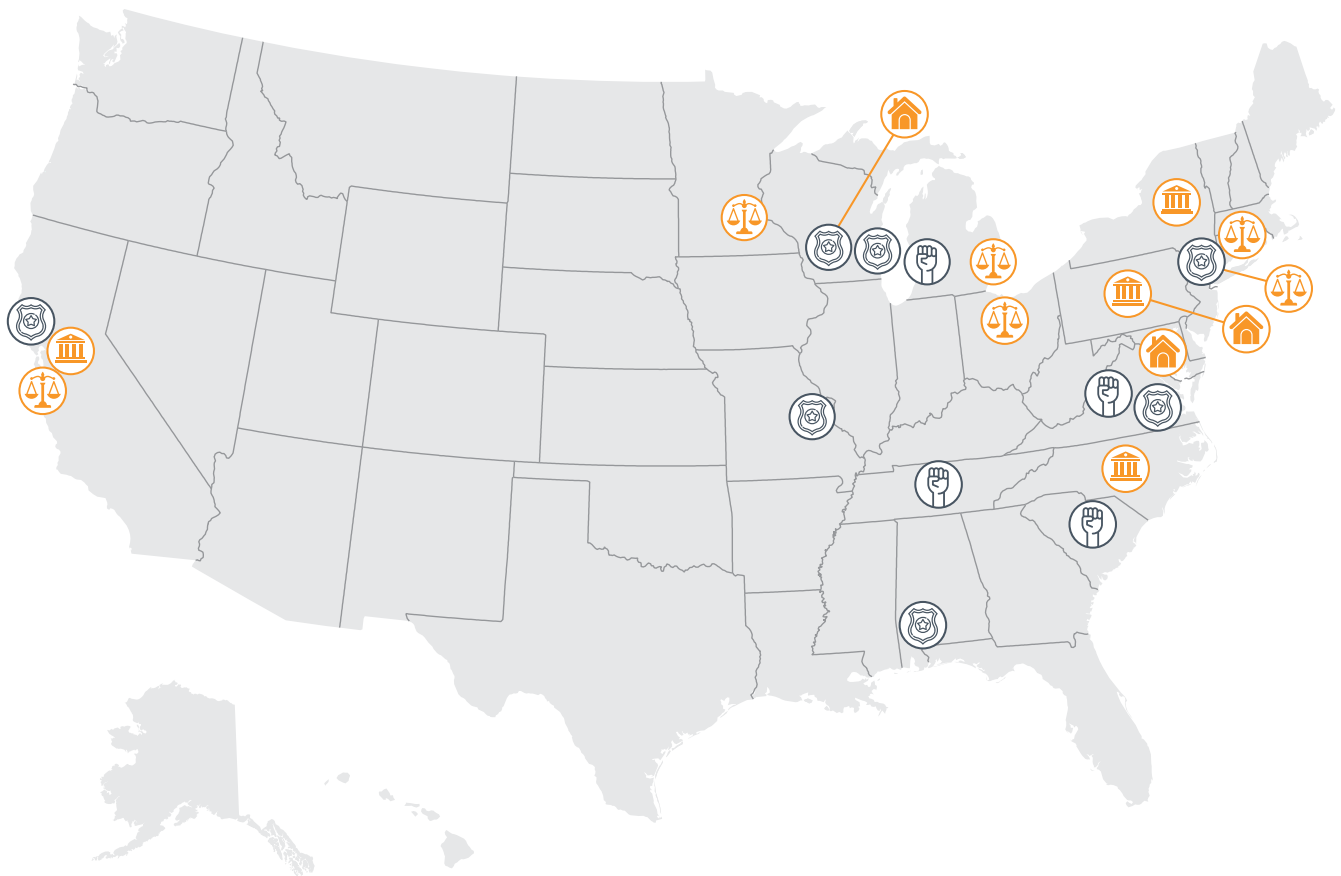
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Local Progress in Action: A Snapshot of Your Racial Justice Work



Criminal Justice Reform

Durham, NC
Contra Costa County, CA
Philadelphia, PA
New York City, NY



Justice in Policing

Milwaukee County, WI
Albany, NY
Madison, WI
Richmond, CA
St. Louis, MO
Mobile, AL
Portsmouth, VA



Affordable Housing and Tenant Protections

Philadelphia, PA
Baltimore, MD
Milwaukee County, WI



Combating Racism

Charlottesville, VA
Muskegon, MI
Florence, SC
Nashville, TN



Building Racial Equity

Minneapolis, MN
Elyria, OH
Port Huron, MI
New York City, NY
San Francisco, CA
Middletown, CT

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Durham, NC

Reversing Mass Criminalization by Deprioritizing Marijuana Arrests in Durham, NC

There is a mass incarceration crisis in the United States, and a large number of these individuals are being held for low level, nonviolent offenses such as drug possession.¹ Since the 1980s, racially biased federal drug policy has harshly penalized those who possess, use and sell, but with little long-term impact except to lock up a disproportionate number of Black and Brown people.²

In recent years, Durham's government has adopted many of the [recommendations of the Fostering Alternatives to Drug Enforcement \(FADE\) coalition](#) to address the mass criminalization of Black and Brown people. One recommendation remained unrealized, however, and **Councilmember Jillian Johnson** made it a key plank in her campaign for City Council. She campaigned on categorizing marijuana possession as a lowest-level law enforcement priority. And in 2016, her first year in office, Councilmember Johnson and her colleagues voted unanimously for an [ordinance](#) directing the city manager and the police chief to issue warnings or citations instead of making arrests for misdemeanor marijuana possession.³

A preponderance of research shows that marijuana enforcement disproportionately impacts people of color despite similar drug consumption rates across demographics.⁴ Already, since the passage of this ordinance, marijuana arrests have decreased in Durham.⁵



**Durham City Council
Jillian Johnson**

"I think my ability to act as a go-between with community groups and the city was useful and effective in figuring out a resolution."



Contra Costa County, CA

Fighting Jail Expansion in Contra Costa County, CA

New jails and expansion of existing jails are one of the many realities and consequences of a broken criminal justice system that relies on mass criminalization, particularly for communities of color. In some instances, privately owned prisons will include occupancy clauses in their contracts with counties, requiring that prisons remain at least 90 percent full, a distinct deterrent to reducing recidivism.⁶ Jail expansion in our communities is a direct assault on our freedom to thrive and further discriminates against people of color, creating significant burdens in attaining security and economic stability upon release.⁷

In Contra Costa County, the percentage of Black people in the criminal justice system is higher than the percentage of Black people in the county's general population.⁸ **Richmond Councilmember Melvin Lee Willis Jr.**, along with the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), organized community members to show up at the County Board of Supervisors meeting to speak out against the proposal to expand the jail. He also urged the City of Richmond to write a letter expressing opposition. Two other cities followed Richmond's lead. As a result of town hall meetings and rallies, which served as a way to inform the public and empower them to speak out against the expansion, people are more engaged with both county politics and the Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition. The fight was also successful in highlighting the racial inequity in the county's criminal justice system. Advocates feel that this action had a broader impact, leading to the appointment of the first African American Female District Attorney in Contra Costa County history.



**Richmond City Council
Melvin Lee Willis Jr.**

"People are more engaged with County politics and continue to be involved in Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition because of the work around the jail expansion and highlighting the racial inequity in the County's criminal justice system."



Philadelphia, PA

Targeting the Profiteers of Mass-Deportation and Mass-Criminalization in Philadelphia, PA

The private prison industry lobbies heavily at the federal, state and local levels both for policies that increase incarceration rates, and for the contracts to run the actual prison facilities.⁹ Private prison companies have an especially large stake in the immigration detention business, where corporations (like Geo Group and CoreCivic) run 65 percent of immigration detention beds.¹⁰ Since the 2016 elections, the stock prices of these companies has been rising as the Trump administration announces policy after policy to ramp up policing and immigration enforcement in communities of color.¹¹ In October 2017, the Philadelphia Board of Pensions and Retirement voted to withdraw its investments in the for-profit prison industry.¹² The board voted 6-1 in favor of liquidating the [\\$1.2 million worth of stock](#) it held in three companies: GEO Group, CoreCivic, and G4S.¹³ **Councilmember Blondell Reynolds Brown** asked the Board to consider divestment after a similar move by New York City's pension board in June 2017.¹⁴ Both cities are part of a national movement of institutional divestment from corporations that profit off of the incarceration and criminalization of people of color. In addition to municipal governments, a variety of religious and educational and financial institutions have also fully or partially withdrawn their investments in private prison corporations.¹⁵



**Philadelphia City Council
Blondell Reynolds Brown**

"This decision is about doing what is right and just. I am proud that the board has taken this tangible step to ensure that the city will no longer invest its pension dollars into an industry with an exhaustive track record of civil rights abuses."



New York, NY

Criminal Summons Reform and Jail Closure in New York City, NY

In 2015, the New York Police Department (NYPD) issued over 150,000 criminal summonses for having an open container of alcohol, being in a park after hours, littering, public urination, and unreasonable noise.¹⁶ Some of these summonses gave offenders a permanent criminal record, and missing one court date led to an arrest warrant.¹⁷ While the offenses remain illegal, the Council passed a [series of laws](#) to remedy this problem in May 2016. The bills affect the following offenses: open container of alcohol; parks rules (being in park after hours, walking on grass, disobeying signage); littering; public urination; and unreasonable noise.¹⁸

In November of 2017, Mayor de Blasio's office announced that officers gave out 50,000 fewer criminal summonses for the offenses when compared to the same time period last year.¹⁹ In an [October 2017 press release](#), the mayor and **City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito** announced that there had been a 90 percent drop in criminal summonses given out for minor offenses between June 13th and October 1st of this year when compared to the same time period last year, from 55,224 to 4,370.²⁰

For decades, Rikers Island has been associated with violence and corruption.²¹ The majority of its detainees, mostly men of color, are held there, pre-trial, for non-violent offense charges simply because they are unable to afford bail.²²

Led by impacted communities and in partnership with more than 150 organizations, [#CloseRikers](#) launched a strong campaign to close the Rikers Island Jail Complex and transform NYC's criminal justice system.²³ As a result of this advocacy, the City Council Speaker established the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, chaired by former New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. The [Lippman Commission made recommendations](#) to cut the jail population in half, re-design detention in modern, borough-based, community jails, and close Rikers for good.²⁴ The **New York City Council Progressive Caucus** has identified the implementation of the Lippman Commission's recommendations as a central goal of its 2018 Policy Platform "[Resistance & Progress](#)."²⁵



**New York City Council
Melissa Mark-Viverito**

"The Criminal Justice Reform Act has provided fairer and more proportionate outcomes for tens of thousands of New Yorkers in just the first few months of its existence. This historic decrease in criminal summonses is proof that meaningful criminal justice reform is possible without any cost to public safety or order."

Criminal Justice Reform Resources

- The Justice in Policing Toolkit for policy solutions regarding [diversion programs](#) and [decriminalization](#)²⁶
- The [Campaign to Close Rikers](#) in NYC²⁷
- Center for Health and Justice's [National Survey of Criminal Justice Diversion](#)²⁸
- Vera Institute for Justice's [Incarceration Trends](#) data tool²⁹
- Drug Policy Alliance's resources on [decriminalization](#)³⁰



Milwaukee County, WI

Standing with Community during a Time of Trauma in Milwaukee County, WI

When city leaders recognize and validate a community's trauma and experience, which may result from a shooting or incident of police brutality, it is an important indication that they are allies and potential advocates for long-term reforms.

In August of 2016, 23-year-old Sylville Smith was shot and killed by a Milwaukee Police Department officer in the Sherman Park neighborhood.³¹ Just two years after the fatal police shooting of Dontre Hamilton in Sherman Park (and subsequent lack of criminal charges for the police officer),³² Smith's killing set off wide unrest and community protests against police brutality, all within the context of long-standing racial disparities in Milwaukee. The officer who shot Smith was charged with reckless homicide but was later acquitted by a jury.³³

Throughout the unrest surrounding these shootings, **Milwaukee County Supervisor Sequanna Taylor** made sure to be on the ground with the protesters and those traumatized by the shootings. Her guiding principle was to ensure their voices be heard and their pain validated. To demonstrate that commitment, Supervisor Taylor supported a [Black Lives Matter resolution](#)³⁴ which advanced through the County Board of Supervisors. She has since remained focused on initiatives that rebuild relationships and trust with Sherman Park youth, such as job training programs, an access-to-birth-certificates initiative, and dialogue with the sheriff's office.



**Milwaukee County Board
Sequanna Taylor**

"My process was to be on the ground with my constituents who were upset by these shootings and wanted their voices to be heard."



Albany, NY

Requiring Police Officer Identification During Stops in Albany, NY

For people of color, police stops are an unwelcome but regular occurrence in daily life.³⁵ Typically these encounters are characterized by anonymity and those who are stopped may not know why they were stopped or by whom.³⁶

In Albany, there was a distrust for police officers given the recent death of a Black man in police custody³⁷ and a history of racial bias and corruption within the Albany Police Department.³⁸ The national tone also influenced these perceptions. **Councilmember Dorcey Applyrs** introduced legislation, that passed, requiring police officers to present a business card with ID information when stopping residents. The city also initiated police trainings and community forums on implicit bias. This work, coupled with other strategies initiated by the police department and local organizations to build relationships between the Albany police and Black community, has helped to bridge the relationship divide in a meaningful way, change racial influenced perceptions, and pass police reform legislation.



**Albany Common Council
Dorcey Applyrs**

"This work, coupled with other strategies initiated by the police department and local organizations to build relationships between the Albany police and Black community, has helped to bridge the relationship divide in a meaningful way, change racial influenced perceptions, and pass police reform legislation."



New York City, NY

Community Safety and Transparency in New York City, NY

The New York City Police Department's discriminatory "stop-and-frisk" policy spun wildly out of control in the years after 2001, rising to nearly 700,000 stops in 2011. The vast majority of those stopped were African-American and Latino young men. Nearly 90 percent were completely innocent (see the [NYCLU](#) for data). [Communities United for Police Reform](#) (CPR) was formed as an unprecedented coalition of grassroots groups representing those who were bearing the brunt of discriminatory policing and their allies. A judge ultimately found that the NYPD's program was unconstitutional and appointed a monitor to make sweeping changes to the program.

At the same time, CPR worked closely with **New York City Council Members Jumaane Williams and Brad Lander** to pass [the Community Safety Act](#)³⁹ over Mayor Michael Bloomberg's veto in the summer of 2013. The Community Safety Act had two components:

- **Local Law 70 established an Inspector General for the NYPD**, responsible for reviewing NYPD operations, policies, programs and practices with special attention to civil rights and making recommendations for reform. Since it was established in 2014, the IG has conducted investigations on NYPD use-of-force, chokeholds, body-worn cameras, quality-of-life enforcement, surveillance, policing of transgender New Yorkers, and policing of people in mental crisis. Many of their recommendations have been implemented by the NYPD.
- **Local Law 71 established a strong and enforceable ban on profiling and discrimination by the NYPD**. The law expanded the categories of individuals protected from discrimination to include: age, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, disability, and housing status. It created a meaningful "private right of action" for New Yorkers to bring intentional discrimination claims and/or disparate impact claims.



**New York City Council
Jumaane Williams**

"I implore you...if you have never been a young Black or Latino male or female in the City of New York, please listen to us. If you have never been lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning in the city of New York, please listen to us. If you have never been Muslim in the City of New York, please listen to us. If you have never been Asian in the city of New York, please listen to us."

The passage of the CSA was a historic victory in the movement for police accountability and would not have been possible without the leadership of community groups and advocates, elected officials, and the thousands of individuals who signed petitions, mobilized to rallies, talked to their neighbors, and called their local City Council Members.⁴⁰ Since that time, CPR and members of the City Council have been working to pass the [Right to Know Act](#) to protect the civil and human rights of New Yorkers while promoting communication, transparency and accountability in everyday interactions between the NYPD and the public. These bills are currently before council:⁴¹

- Requiring NYPD officers to identify themselves to the public and explain the reason for the interaction ([Intro 182](#)).⁴² This bill is similar to the legislation introduced and passed in Albany, NY.
- Protecting New Yorkers against unconstitutional searches ([Intro 541](#)).⁴³



Madison, WI

Supporting the Immigrant Community in Madison, WI

In the Trump era, immigrant communities in many jurisdictions across the country are under siege. The fear and uncertainty among immigrant families is palpable and constant. Many cities, in collaboration with community organizations and immigration advocacy groups, have taken several approaches to limiting cooperation with ICE at the local level to help increase the safety and protection of immigrants.⁴⁴

As in several other states, Republican state representatives in Wisconsin have repeatedly introduced legislation that would both compel municipalities to aid federal immigration enforcement efforts and financially punish cities that refuse.⁴⁵ While unlikely to pass into law, these bills stoke real fear in immigrant communities across Wisconsin, thereby eroding faith in public institutions and preventing residents from accessing needed government services.

In Madison, the state capital, **Alder David Ahrens** has embraced a time-tested approach for combating oppressive policies: grassroots organizing. He worked with community, faith, and political organizations to hold a meeting aimed at securing a commitment from local law enforcement to not cooperate with ICE. Alder Ahrens and the partner organizations expected 500 attendees. Instead, 2,500 people showed up. At the meeting, both law enforcement officials in attendance unambiguously committed to non-cooperation with ICE and reportedly one of the officials even repeated that position in a meeting with Trump the following week.



**Madison City Council
David Ahrens**

"We anticipated that 500 people would participate and we had 2500. Both law enforcement officials made an unambiguous commitment to non-cooperation. One official repeated his position in a meeting with Trump the following week. (That got almost no coverage.)"



Richmond, CA

Police Oversight in Richmond, CA

Communities of color, and particularly African Americans, have long been victims of police discrimination and violence. In the wake of the 2014 shooting of Trayvon Martin, organizing groups, including Black Lives Matter and Organization for Black Struggle, began a renewed call for accountability and justice in response to the ongoing killing of Black and Brown people at the hands of the police.⁴⁶

In Richmond, a young man named Pedie Perez was shot to death at a neighborhood corner store.⁴⁷ His parents were unaware of the time limit on lodging complaints which resulted in a long process to institute an investigation. As one result, city council members, including **Councilmember Eduardo Martinez**, instructed the city staff to do a study on possible policies which were later debated and voted on. The city passed an ordinance requiring immediate investigation in any use of excessive force resulting in injury.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the police bill of rights makes the results of investigations impossible to evaluate and so the efficacy of the new ordinance is hard to judge.



Richmond City Council
Eduardo Martinez

"In discussions with the Chief of Police and the Oscar Grant Committee who was helping the Perez family, city council members instructed the city staff to do a study on possible policies which were later debated and voted on."



Mobile, AL

Creating a Police Citizens Community Relations Advisory Council in Mobile, AL

News coverage in recent years is an ongoing reminder that for people of color, police encounters have the potential to escalate, potentially resulting in injury, or even death. Communities and families that seek answers and investigations may encounter significant obstacles in their pursuit of justice.⁴⁹

In Mobile, AL, the death of a young man at the hands of an off-duty police officer sparked a push for a response.⁵⁰

Councilman Levon Manzie helped convene a council committee and worked with the community to develop a comprehensive ordinance that included a citizen-police advisory council.⁵¹ The process and outcome created a venue for citizens and police to address directly concerns in the community.



Mobile City Council
Levon C. Manzie

"[The advisory council] created a venue for citizens and police officers to directly address concerns in the community."



St. Louis, MO

Marching in Solidarity for Justice and Equity in St. Louis, MO

In many communities, disparities result from a lack of access to decision-makers, a lack of voting power, and a history of intentional divestment and discrimination. Local leaders serve an important role in pushing the narrative for change, emphasizing the discriminatory nature of specific policies, and bringing about a shift within the legislative body.

Aldерwoman Megan Green was brand new to office when Michael Brown was killed by a Ferguson police officer,⁵² which sparked the community uprising that continues to this day. As a new Alder elected to represent a district in the predominantly white south side of St. Louis, Ald. Green was determined to stand in solidarity with those protesting and to elevate their voices through her role in office. Solidarity with the demands of the Ferguson Uprising also meant educating and engaging with her white south side residents in order to build allyship with residents of the largely African-American north side, as well as support for their political priorities. Ald. Green has [penned op-eds](#) calling on St. Louis to rethink how it pursues public safety and its spending on police,⁵³ and she has pursued a legislative agenda that [centers the demands of local activists](#)⁵⁴ to dismantle structurally racist policy and practice. In both her policy agenda and her work to engage her constituents, Ald. Green has prioritized solidarity with those leading the movement for racial equity in St. Louis; in doing so, she has helped challenge the status quo of a racially divided city.



**St. Louis Board
of Alderman
Megan Green**

"I was a brand new elected official during the Ferguson Uprising. The best lessons that I can give is to stand with the people and listen to the people. I got a lot of pushback from standing with the protests, and still do, but at the end of the day, those are voices who we need to elevate in City Hall."



Portsmouth, VA

Landing a Rare Conviction in Portsmouth, VA

For a number of reasons, police officers are almost never tried, let alone convicted, for the killing of individuals.⁵⁵ The continual lack of convictions often contributes to greater distrust between communities, particularly African Americans and people of color, and police officers and departments.

In 2015, **Virginia Commonwealth Attorney Stephanie Morales** successfully convicted an officer for the killing of an unarmed Black teen.⁵⁶ Prior to prosecution, there are no records of any officers being tried (let alone convicted) in all the records their office could find. Her successful effort blazed a new trail to make sure the matter was investigated by the state police and handled fairly for the victim. Her process was simple; she advised the community of what the process entailed and asked them to respect the requirement that she try the case in court and not in the media. Protests and marches remained peaceful and occurred without incident during the course of the trial. Ms. Morales ultimately gained the support and respect of many community members who felt that they had an ally in her office; someone who applied the law equally and who ensured no one is above the law.



**Commonwealth Attorney
Stephanie Morales**

"Prior to my prosecution, there are no records of any officers being tried (let alone convicted) in all the records we could find. I had to blaze a new trail to make sure the matter was investigated by the state police and handled fairly for the victim."

Justice in Policing Resources

- Campaign Zero's policy solutions for [police training](#), [community oversight](#) and [independent investigations and prosecutions](#)⁵⁷
- Justice in Policing Toolkit for policy solutions on [improved police training](#), [bans on biased based policing](#), [immigration detainer policies](#), [community oversight](#), [independent oversight](#), and [independent or special prosecutors](#)⁵⁸
- Local Progress [Sanctuary Cities Toolkit](#)⁵⁹
- Deputy National Political Director and Director of Campaign for Smart Justice Udi Ofer's overview of [police oversight models](#)⁶⁰



Philadelphia, PA

Expanding Tenant Protections in Philadelphia, PA

Landlords are often inclined to evict tenants in hot housing markets to offer the units at a higher rate, pricing lower-income families out of neighborhoods. In response, local policy-makers are looking at just eviction clauses and protections that require landlords to cite a reason for evictions.

In Philadelphia, evictions impact at least 1/14 of renters,⁶¹ and maybe as high as 1/7 of renters.⁶² They also overwhelmingly target African Americans.⁶³ **Councilmember at-Large Helen Gym**, along with colleagues on the council, recognized that the city needed to establish greater protections so they are facilitating as much public engagement around the issue as possible, including by organizing and partnering with groups led by people of color. The city recently created a legal assistance fund, setting aside \$500,000 for low-income tenants who face eviction.⁶⁴ They are also partnering with research-focused organizations to help share out data and legal service entities to connect with victims and lift up their stories. The hardest task the city faced was challenging the belief that individuals were to blame for their homelessness and or eviction. By emphasizing people's stories and showing the complexity of needs, the city was able to commit resources to address these issues as an urgent city issue.



**Philadelphia City Council
Helen Gym**

"The hardest task we faced was challenging the belief that individuals were to blame for their homelessness and or eviction. By emphasizing people's stories and showing the complexity of needs, we were able to commit resources to address these issues as an urgent city issue."



Baltimore, MD

Fighting for Inclusionary Housing Effectiveness in Baltimore, MD

As cities attract industries and companies, neighborhoods are rapidly gentrifying and becoming increasingly unaffordable for many moderate and low-income families due to a depleted supply of affordable housing.⁶⁵ In response, policy-makers are using a variety of tools to try and preserve units for middle and low-income individuals. Inclusionary zoning policies encourage or require developers to include a certain percentage of affordable housing for low-to-moderate income residents in their housing projects.⁶⁶ Although these policies are employed by a number of cities, negotiating the exact terms of the policy with developers, and then overseeing effective enforcement prove continually challenging for cities and their leaders.

Baltimore recently attempted to reform a fairly ineffective inclusionary housing program,⁶⁷ with active leadership from **Baltimore Councilman Bill Henry**. The law, as written, holds developers financially harmless from the inclusionary requirement, forcing the City to provide additional subsidy for any inclusionary units, on top of whatever subsidy the city provided to trigger the requirement.⁶⁸ A task force proposed revisions, so as to increase supply, distribution, and quality of affordable housing across the city. Key challenges in this work included a lack of buy-in from the Administration, (no resources for staffing or technical assistance), and a lame duck period after the primary, which resulted in a hard stop of the end of term. Ultimately, there was no acceptable compromise to either developers or advocates. The effort also called attention to the failures of existing efforts to promote inclusive, publicly-supported communities.



**Baltimore City Council
Bill Henry**

"We started with a task force to propose revisions to the City's Inclusionary Housing Program, so as to increase the supply, distribution, and quality of affordable housing across the City."



Milwaukee County, WI

Reducing Evictions and Preventing Human Sex Trafficking in Milwaukee County, WI

At a time when federal and state resources are being scaled back, cities are stepping up. With significant demands on limited resources, and uncertainty as to funding streams, local leadership is critical when it comes to identifying and protecting vulnerable residents. In recent years, Milwaukee County has prioritized efforts to provide critical resources and supports to its most vulnerable residents. The county is currently focused on reducing evictions by providing legal assistance to residents experiencing evictions, along with education and connections to affordable homes.

Milwaukee's eviction epidemic has been well chronicled by Matthew Desmond in his book "Evicted."⁶⁹ The county is also focused on reducing human sex trafficking, an industry that generates \$99 billion per year.⁷⁰ Milwaukee consistently ranks among the top five cities in the US for the recovery of trafficked adolescents.⁷¹

County Supervisor Marcella Nicholson took a similar approach in addressing both of these challenges. She took meetings, made phone calls, read extensively and was open to constructive criticism. She worked to understand the causes and brainstorm effective and realistic solutions. A legal assistance fund was established to help aid those faced with eviction; the funding comes from the sale of county-owned foreclosures and lawyers work pro-bono to represent tenants. The County also passed a resolution to reduce human sex trafficking. It allocates a specific [amount](#) of money to aid in the promotion of the National Human Sex Trafficking hotline (Polaris), and to create awareness of the issue in the county through posters, billboards, and bus shelters.⁷² It will also task a current County employee with improving relationships and updates to service providers.⁷³ The funding comes half from the Sheriff's office and half from the Department of Behavior and Human Needs. Though this work is presently ongoing and thus no data is available yet, the community remains optimistic and excited about the prospects of real change.



**Milwaukee County Board
Marcella Nicholson**

"The work is fairly recent, so no data is yet available, however many people are optimistic and excited about the changes it will bring."

Affordable Housing and Tenant Protections Resources

- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy's working paper, [Inclusionary Housing in the United States: Prevalence, Impact, and Practices](#)⁷⁴
- Information about [New York City's Eviction Defense Fund](#)⁷⁵
- See Local Progress briefs on: [Addressing the Foreclosure Crisis](#), [Affordable Housing Impact Fee Programs](#), [Banning Source of Income Housing Discrimination](#), [Housing Code Enforcement](#), [Inclusionary Housing](#), [Permanently Affordable Homeownership](#), and [Protecting Tenants in the On-Demand Economy](#) (see the Local Progress website at www.localprogress.org).


Charlottesville, VA

Investing in Racial Equity and Fighting White Supremacy in Charlottesville, VA

Local budgets are powerful documents that reflect a community's priorities. As a result of Dr. Vice Mayor Bellamy's advocacy, the Charlottesville City Council decided to remove a Robert E. Lee statue,⁷⁶ and simultaneously reallocate \$4 million into key investments and resources for under-resourced communities.⁷⁷

These budget items included: \$950,000 for the African American Heritage Center, \$250,000 to renovate and update a park in the local African-American community, \$2.5 million to public housing redevelopment, \$50,000 annually for free GED training for anyone who lives in public housing, \$50,000 to anyone who lives 30 percent below the annual median income to have access to public housing and scholarships to local community college, and a youth opportunity coordinator to focus on Black male achievement. On August 12th, 2017, white supremacists marched on Charlottesville.⁷⁸ Media coverage of the rally focused on the statue removal, but the equity package was a critical element of the council's interest in addressing the racial inequities that are perpetuated and supported by white supremacy.



**Charlottesville
City Council
Dr. Wes Bellamy**

"All of this is about equity. We need equity, and not equality. Those are two different things. Equity is giving everyone what they need in order to have the same playing field. Equality is just giving everyone the same thing. I don't want equality. I want us to have equity. And we're going to push for equity in every space, whether that's public parks, whether that's in our city budget, no matter where it is, as long as I'm on council. And I'm going to push for it until the day I die."



Muskegon, MI

A Proclamation Against Racism in the City of Muskegon, MI

Many community members are unaware, likely due to their individual experiences, of how pervasive racism and white supremacy are in our institutions, policies, and policy-makers' implicit bias. In the fall of 2016, Local Progress and the Young Elected Officials Network organized more than 500 signatures on an [open letter](#) against hate and anti-Muslim bigotry, with nearly 50 councils and school boards passing supporting resolutions.⁷⁹ This campaign was an opportunity for elected bodies to recognize the presence and impact of hate, and commit to building greater inclusivity and tolerance in their communities.

In the City of Muskegon, incidents of racism, including the hanging of a noose at an elementary school and high school, along with a racist slur written on a citizen door,⁸⁰ led **Commissioner Willie German Jr.**, to draft a [proclamation against racism](#).⁸¹ The goal of drafting the proclamation was to confront and speak out against all forms of racism in order to emphasize that it perpetuates social injustice, inequity, prejudice, hate, and discrimination. Commissioner German, Jr. identified the need to explicitly identify what racism exists and shine a light on its many dimensions. Local leaders have a critical role to play in being unafraid to name what racism is, and to push for greater community engagement in dismantling such dynamics. Creating space for community dialogue allows for a diverse set of voices to speak up with their own experiences and help educate those who may be simply unaware of how deeply and subtly racism may be perpetuated in their community.



**Muskegon City Council
Willie German Jr.**

"The awareness and reality that racism is real, in social injustice, inequity, prejudice, hate and discrimination. All areas of racism must continue to be addressed."


Florence, SC

Confronting Explicit Racism as an Elected Official in Florence, SC

Elected officials of color experience both implicit and explicit racism. Municipalities and districts also may have a tendency to avoid difficult conversations and addressing incidents that force them to address racist behavior, a form of institutionalized racism.

School Board Member Elder Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr. was the recent target of a racist incident. In an email to an employee of the district, a fellow school board member referenced the African-American school board members as Darkies, and specifically named Board Member Pipkins as the “HD” (Head Darkie),⁸² and referred to himself as “HW” (Head White). The full board was never properly informed of the incident despite the board’s attorney providing legal counsel to the Board Chair and Vice-Chairwoman. This happened in a private, secret meeting with the board member who wrote the offensive e-mail, constituting a violation of open meetings laws. Further, despite Superintendent being made fully aware of the incident immediately, he did not inform all the board members in a timely fashion, violating board policy. The board member was allowed to participate in subsequent board meetings even after the Board Chair, Vice-Chair, Superintendent, and the Superintendent’s secretary were fully aware of the incident.



**Florence One
School Board
Elder Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr.**

“A fellow school board member referenced the African-American school board members as Darkies, and specifically named me in an e-mail correspondence.”

As a victim of racism, confronting reluctant and dismissive district governance and leadership is why it is imperative that board governance develop and implement a culturally sensitive plan to definitively address the recommendations which address the pain and ugliness of institutional racism and violation of board policies by elected officials. Key priorities include: a board resolution to publicly denounce the actions of the former board member (who has since resigned); requesting a South Carolina School Board Association (SCSBA) resolution to publicly denounce the actions of the former board member and any board member who utilizes racism and defaming words concerning board members and anyone regardless of race, creed, religion; a cultural sensitivity training for all staff those with in the employ or immediate influence of the organization and the development of Race, Equity, and Diversity Training sessions; and a full investigation or audit of Florence One School District e-mail system to determine if other acts are being communicated by other individuals.



Nashville, TN

Equity and Accountability in Nashville, TN

Historic underinvestment in communities of color continues today and manifests in a myriad of ways, including uneven access to technology and digital infrastructure, a lack of access to financing and collateral, and challenges with reliable, affordable transit, to name just a few.⁸³

In Nashville, the fatal shooting of Jockues Clemmons⁸⁴ contributed to the city's renewed scrutiny of existing racial disparities in the city. As the city seeks to invest in its infrastructure and attract investments, there is a simultaneous need to engage the broader community and individual neighborhoods in mapping out concerns, needs and where inequity exists. Key areas of inequity in Nashville include transportation inequities,⁸⁵ disparities in the number of city contracts awarded to Black-owned businesses,⁸⁶ and a lack of access to digital infrastructure in low-income communities.⁸⁷

Councilwoman Tanaka Vercher is actively engaging with the community and stakeholders, including nonprofit organizations, and creating a space for uncomfortable dialogue. The process, while still ongoing, is focused on finding solid concrete actions that will create unity and validate the experiences of minority and disadvantaged communities in the city. And, while the outcome in totality remains to be determined, there is a growing response from nonprofits in the city who are prioritizing space for difficult dialogues in their platforms for community engagement.



**Nashville City Council
Tanaka Vercher**

"Symbolic gestures with no action (i.e. denouncements, etc.) fuels divides within communities, whereas solid action unifies."



Minneapolis, MN

Racial Equity for City Government in Minneapolis, MN

Integrating racial equity into government can take many forms, and structural reform is a time intensive process that requires participation from policy-maker leadership, community leaders, and city staffers.

The city of Minneapolis, led by **Council Vice President Elizabeth Glidden**, is focused on developing racial equity, diversity and inclusion within city government. Minneapolis and Minnesota have close to the worst race disparities in the nation, on almost any measure.⁸⁸ Council Vice President Glidden was the lead author on supplier diversity, workplace inclusion directions and an ordinance establishing a race equity division.⁸⁹ The work is ongoing, in partnership with community leaders, including the effort to secure full buy-in from policy-maker leadership and ensure adequate staffing within the city government structure. Two recent examples of integrating the racial equity requirement include a 20-year street investment plan and a focus on renters' rights as opposed to almost exclusive focus on property owners.⁹⁰



**Minneapolis City Council
Council Vice President
Elizabeth Glidden**

"We are still in the midst of embedding race equity structural reform in internal city structure; two examples of work impact to date include race equity requirement for 20-year street investment plan; focus on renter's rights as opposed to almost exclusive focus on property owners."



Baltimore, MD

Educating Policymakers on Equity in Baltimore, MD

Many community members feel that policymakers do not come to office with a thorough understanding of racial equity and how city policies can mitigate inequity or foster equity. Even those with strong progressive principles and fortitude will need support in fully analyzing and adjusting city practices to support and develop equity. Conducting such analyses helps ensure that resources are not allocated to the most affluent and well-represented communities at the expense of lower-income neighborhoods that also are likely to have higher populations of people of color.

Having been elected to Baltimore City Council in 2016, **Councilman Kristerfer Burnett** set out to help create a space where Baltimore and Maryland policy-makers can acquire the tools and training to effectively address institutional and structural racism. The urgency for area policy-makers to be grounded in a racial equity analysis was only heightened by the death of Freddie Gray in 2015. So, together with his colleagues in Baltimore, state elected officials in Maryland, and the local foundation Associated Black Charities, Councilman Burnett helped launch the Racial Equity Institute for Policymakers, which plans to hold its first gathering in January 2018. This Institute seeks to educate policy-makers on root, systemic causes of disparities facing communities of color in Baltimore as well as a policy agenda to address them.



**Baltimore City Council
Kristerfer Burnett**

"A task-force has now been created to discuss and review the criteria utilized by the Finance Department to assess subsidy requests and we intend to use this as a vehicle to discuss the use of a racial equity analysis."



Elyria, OH

Diversity and Inclusion in Elyria, OH

Lack of diversity within city government is one of the many realities that contributes to a disconnect between constituents and public employees, in communication, in policy development and in policy implementation. A truly inclusive process recognizes and reduces barrier to entry and engages the full community in a conversation about what needs to happen in order to achieve a more racial, gender and socio-economically representative public service at the city level.

In Elyria, the county seat of Lorain County in northeast Ohio, **Councilman Marcus Madison** has made inclusion in city hiring practices a priority. He has worked to convene residents and community stakeholders to discuss diversity and inclusion within the city government, particularly on the police force. The city has applied for foundation funding for a program to recruit women and people of color to city government and law enforcement positions, and Councilman Madison has made continuous engagement of residents key to that process.



**Elyria City Council
Marcus Madison**

"Since we have started the conversation regarding diversity and inclusion, community members have become more engaged in the process."



Port Huron, MI

Building a Space for Dialogue on Racism and the Lack of Racial Equity in Port Huron, MI

Even when there is desire, interest and motivation to discuss racism and racial equity, creating a space to do so challenging and often fraught with deeply personal stories and experiences. Finding institutions with deep connections in different communities is a critical part of building a foundation of trust for these conversations. Each entity—campus, church, agency, and business—should be able to understand how their practices and structures perpetuate racism and a lack of equity for those who study, pray, work or seek support from city services.

In his city of Port Huron, Michigan, **former Council member Alphonso Amos** has long considered racial equity to be an elephant in the room, so to speak. Yet over the last few months, he has noticed an increased commitment on the part of Port Huron's residents to have a substantive conversation about addressing racial disparities. It became clear that one deeply felt issue was the lack of diversity and inclusion in local government, school board, businesses, and in the local community college. In recent weeks, conversations have turned into trainings for the police department, business owners, and educators on how to promote better inclusion practices.



**Port Huron City Council
Former Councilmember
Alphonso Amos**

"In my community the issue of racial equity seems to always be an elephant in the room. Many people know we have problems but many want to ignore them. Over the last few months we have sparked a conversation on racism, hate and bigotry that has spread throughout the city."



New York City, NY

Combating School Segregation and Striving Toward Racial Equity in New York City, NY

In 2014, a UCLA report woke New Yorkers up to the fact that its schools are among the [most segregated in the country](#).⁹¹ The [City Council's first hearing on school segregation](#)⁹² in recent decades led to the Council's passage of the [School Diversity Accountability Act](#),⁹³ which called on the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to prioritize diversity in policy-and decision-making processes, and to issue a yearly report to the Council with annual statistics, plans for progress, and ways to measure it. In the spring of 2017, the DOE finally issued a plan for addressing the issue in a broader way: [Equity and Excellence for All: Diversity in New York City Public Schools](#),⁹⁴ which set concrete targets—increasing the number of students in integrated school by 50,000, and reducing the number of economically stratified schools by 10 percent (150 schools). In the fall of 2017, the DOE issued its [third annual report](#) under the School Diversity Accountability Act, and for the first time adopted a [“controlled choice” admissions plan for District 1](#) (on the Lower East Side) to achieve more integrated schools.

The Council has also strived to advance racial and gender equity in other ways. In May of 2015, the Council launched the [Young Women's Initiative](#), which was created to build a lasting blueprint for investing in the future of young women and girls in NYC over the long-term, especially those of color.⁹⁵ They also convened a diverse array of stakeholders and generated a report that made [recommendations](#) for health, economic and workforce development, community support and opportunity, education, anti-violence and criminal justice reform.⁹⁶

“Segregated schools cannot teach inclusive democracy.”



**New York City Council
Brad Lander**



**New York City Council
Ritchie Torres**

In 2017, the Council passed a package of legislation to conduct equity assessments, to improve City agency performance at advancing racial, gender, income, and sexual orientation equity at the NYC Administration for Children's Services, the Human Resources Administration, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.⁹⁷

In recent years, the City Council has also taken [significant steps to strengthen the New York City Human Rights Law](#), one of the strongest laws in the country. The Council passed the Fair Chance Act to "ban the box" and protect people from discrimination based on criminal record, prohibited employment credit checks, strengthened protections for interns and part-time workers, for pregnant women, and for immigrants, established proactive testing programs to root out discrimination in housing and employment, and strengthened the ways that the Human Rights Law is construed.

Building Racial Equity

Integrating Racial Equity in Public Education



San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), CA

Implementing Ethnic Studies in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), CA

Studies show that students are more likely to be motivated and stay in school when the curriculum and content is relevant to their experience and everyday lives.⁹⁸ In many instances, textbooks and accompanying materials are developed by publishers and educators that do not possess culturally nuanced views and knowledge, and as a result, students frequently fail to identify with the material and struggle to keep up and stay engaged.

The San Francisco Unified School District is made up of nearly 90 percent students of color.⁹⁹ Too many experience curriculum that has no real relevance to their lives, communities and histories, a reality that manifests in outcomes like the racial achievement gap.¹⁰⁰ In 2008, newly elected **Board of Education member and now Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer** worked with a group of like-minded educators to help establish ethnic studies courses in the district, in the face of heavy opposition. The pilot process included a Stanford University study that documented the benefits of the program. This helped push the expansion of the program so that every high school in San Francisco would offer these courses. Finally, state legislation was passed in 2016, requiring the development of a model curriculum in ethnic studies.¹⁰¹ The Stanford study showed a positive impact on attendance and an increase in GPAs for “at risk” students. It also found significant effects on GPA specific to math and science achievement.¹⁰²



**San Francisco Board of Supervisors
Sandra Lee Fewer**

“The studies from Stanford showed a positive impact on attendance, the GPAs for “at risk” students who were struggling academically went up, and the test scores in science and math went up for Black and Latino young men. Ethnic studies works!”



Middleton's Public Schools, CT

Racial Equity in Middleton's Public Schools, CT

The adaptation of racial equity tools, and ensuring that institutional leaders care about and prioritize racial equity, are both critically important in lifting up racial equity as a priority. In public school districts, an eye and commitment to racial equity helps to ensure that resources and supports are created and allocated fairly, and that staff receive appropriate training.

Last year a group of Middletown organizers, including **City Treasurer Quentin Phipps**, created the Middletown Racial Justice Coalition. The coalition has hosted a three day Racial Equity training, highlighted the need for racial equity to be a key consideration in the hiring of a new school superintendent, and prompted the school district to adopt a racial equity tool. One of the first things that this coalition did was reach out to community members to participate in a three day equity training, taking great care to include a cross section of the entire community—across race, levels of power and influence, age, and understanding of equity. The program was designed to ensure many in the community could build a common language around equity. Though this organizing effort remains in its early stages, Treasurer Phipps believes it had a major impact on the selection of the school superintendent. In addition, the Middletown human rights commission was reconstituted with a new mission of racial equity.



**Middletown Treasury
Quentin Phipps**

"In starting the work we reached out to community members to participate in a three day equity training... Our goal was to combine those that could speak truth to power, and have those in power who actually had the power to make change in the systems they control and manage."

Building Racial Equity Resources

- Seattle's [Race and Social Justice Initiative's Racial Equity Toolkit](#)¹⁰³
- Race Forward's [Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit](#)¹⁰⁴
- [Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#)¹⁰⁵

Notes

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