

FACING RACE

WASHINGTON'S RACIAL EQUITY AGENDA



2014

WASHINGTON COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

Washington State legislators play an essential role in ensuring equitable opportunity and shared prosperity for all residents. In the face of deeply imbedded and historically ingrained racial inequities, our state must be proactive in advancing public policy that promotes equity, fairness and justice.

People of color represent over 30 percent of Washington residents. This proportion is growing rapidly across all major racial and ethnic groups. Between 2010 and 2012, population **increases** for Asians (8.1 percent), Latinos (6.9 percent), African Americans (6.2 percent), Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders (6.2 percent), and American Indians (1.7 percent) were all larger than the 1 percent increase in the state's white population.¹

These population demographics are not reflected in our state legislature. While less than 70 percent of Washington residents are white, 89 percent of Washington State legislators are white. It is particularly important, then, that all lawmakers—regardless of racial or economic background—understand the racial inequities that exist in our state and share the common responsibility to level the playing field and promote prosperity for all.

This policy agenda represents the collective priorities of 54 leading organizations and institutions that represent Washington State's diverse communities of color. The goal is to provide guidance to state lawmakers in their efforts to promote a racially equitable economy and society.

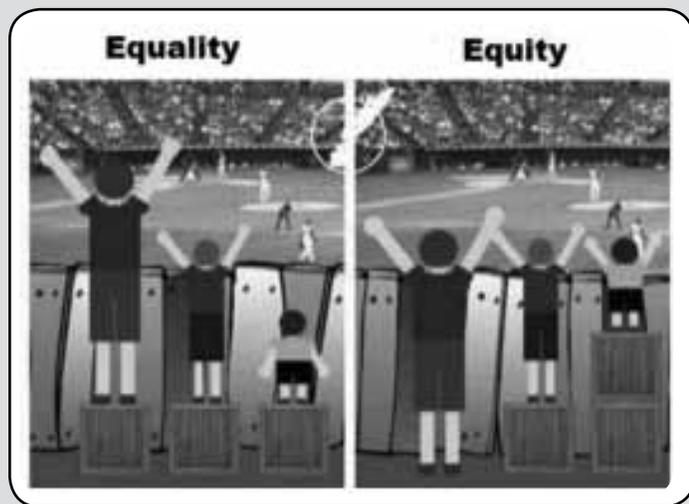
Such guidance is critical. Most legislation is neutral on its face (i.e., race silent), but not racially neutral in its impact—meaning that there is either a negative or positive effect on racial equity. While negative racial outcomes are often unintentional, they frequently occur when the potential impact on communities of color is not considered. At the same time, bills that promote racial equity should be recognized as a necessary step to closing gaps and promoting dignity and prosperity.

The “Facing Race” Agenda outlines the benefits of 16 policy opportunities that would advance racial equity and are likely to be considered in the upcoming legislative session.

We urge lawmakers to join together in common cause to create a Washington that continually strives to achieve racial and economic justice.

DEFINITIONS

Equity is a measure of fair treatment, opportunities and outcomes across race, gender, class and other dynamics, vs. **Equality**, which is a measure of sameness. This distinction is important. We are told that to be fair we must treat everyone the same (equal) – however, when we recognize the legacy of institutional and structural racism we understand that differing people and communities need different resources (equity). In order to be equitable we provide specific, unique resources that will support people and communities in getting their basic needs met and reaching their full potential.



Focusing a Global Lens <http://sherinefahmy92.wordpress.com/2013/02/06/equality-vs-equity/>

Racial Disparities are differences in measurable societal outcomes based on race. These disparities are rooted in unfairness and injustice and are perpetuated by policies and practices with racial bias (either implicit or explicit).

Racial Justice works to eliminate racial disparities resulting from interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. Equitable outcomes for all are central to racial justice efforts.³

Institutional Racism occurs when racial disparities are created and/or exacerbated by key societal institutions such as hospitals, public schools and private corporations. Disparate outcomes are the measure of institutional racism—regardless of whether there is racist intent by the institution or the individuals acting on behalf of the institution. Racial profiling, predatory lending, and disparities in health treatment are examples of institutional racism.⁴

Structural Racism is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal—that routinely gives an advantage to whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism is the interaction of these disparate outcomes across institutions. Separate and unequal schools, for instance, are a product of the interplay of numerous factors such as historic employment discrimination, housing segregation, and racialized poverty. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism because it is deeply embedded in all aspects of society.⁵

Achievement Gap evokes a deficit model, suggesting that students from certain communities are incapable of achieving at the same level as their white and Asian counterparts. **The Opportunity Gap** refers to social and institutional structures that do not provide equal opportunity to every student to succeed in the public school system.⁶

“...Sameness is not always fairness if the disadvantaged group remains disadvantaged.”²



DATA LIMITATIONS

Some statistics in the report lack information about one or more racial or ethnic groups. Where possible, we have used data in each section that includes consistent racial and ethnic categories. We were not always able to find data that included every category.

In other cases, members of one race or ethnic group are included in another category. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau follows the Office of Management and Budget's standards for maintaining, collecting, and presenting data on race. According to those standards, the category "white" includes any "person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa."⁷ However, many immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa do not believe that this categorization reflects their lived experience of race in the United States.

Additionally, statistics that aggregate members of diverse communities can be misleading. Many of the statistics available for this report aggregate all Asian communities. Some Asian communities in Washington State, such as Japanese and Chinese communities, have been established in the state longer and tend to have higher incomes, rates of insurance, educational attainment, and better outcomes in other categories than the Southeast Asian communities that have immigrated to the United States more recently. Data that refer to "Asian" residents of Washington State may not represent the actual experience of some Asian communities.

The data on American Indians and Alaska Natives also suffers from a number of problems. These include chronic undercounting by as much as 12 percent in the decennial census,⁸ a lack of disaggregation⁹ by relevant factors, racial misclassification on official documents, and small sample size.¹⁰ Additionally, many immigrants are members of indigenous communities in their countries of origin. Data about immigrants does not disaggregate members of indigenous communities.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

People of color suffer from poorer health outcomes than whites, largely due to unequal access to quality, affordable health care and lack of access to healthy food and physical activity. Studies show that people of color and immigrant communities experience greater barriers to care, lower quality of care, and a higher incidence of chronic disease than white people.¹¹ And compared to whites, Latinos are almost twice as likely to have no health insurance.¹²

As a result, large health disparities continue to persist in Washington State. Native American men live seven years fewer than their white neighbors, and children of black mothers are twice as likely to die within a year of birth as children of white mothers.¹³ There are also disproportionately larger numbers of hazardous treatment facilities, landfills, toxic release inventory facilities, and other sites with potential exposures to hazardous chemicals in communities of color.¹⁴

Health and well-being are also impacted by conditions and resources where people live, learn and work. In order to reduce racial disparities in health, the Legislature must explicitly focus on expanding access to affordable and culturally competent care and fund the programs and services that keep families healthy and thriving.

1. Broaden Access to Health Coverage: Implement the Basic Health Option

The Affordable Care Act is bringing affordable health care coverage to millions of Americans. Yet for the 160,000 Washingtonians who earn just above Medicaid eligibility (between 138 percent and 200 percent of the federal poverty level), affordable health care coverage will remain out of reach, even with tax subsidies.¹⁵ The low-income working families who will fall into this gap are disproportionately nonwhite and immigrant.¹⁶

The federal Basic Health Option builds on the success of our state's current Basic Health Plan and uses federal funds to provide affordable health coverage for low-income adults with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This new generation of Basic Health would also cover 14,000 lawfully present immigrants and refugees who are otherwise ineligible for Medicaid. The Basic Health Option offers the state legislature an opportunity to narrow the gap in access to quality, affordable health coverage.

2. Improve Access to Dental Care: Establish a Mid-Level Dental Provider

Oral health is vital to overall health and wellness. Yet many communities of color and low-income families lack access to affordable dental care. 34 out of 39 counties in Washington face a shortage of dental care options,¹⁷ and preventable dental emergencies accounted for 54,000 emergency room visits in Washington in 2011 alone.¹⁸

This scarcity is particularly acute for people of color. The lack of dental care was identified as one of the greatest areas of need among Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Latino elders in Snohomish County.¹⁹ Across the state, children of color are 18 percent more likely to have untreated tooth decay by the third grade.

The Legislature can improve access to dental care by allowing dentists to deploy mid-level dental providers in underserved areas. Mid-level providers are already at work in Minnesota, Alaska, and in over 50 countries. Enabling mid-level dental providers to provide culturally competent care to underserved communities will close a persistent gap in health care access.²⁰

3. Guarantee Access to Reproductive Health Care: Reproductive Parity Act

Due to disparities in health coverage and economic opportunity, women of color and immigrant women often have fewer options when seeking medical care. Guaranteeing access to the full range of health care services ensures that all women have control over their pregnancy decisions, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Currently, every carrier and nearly every plan in Washington already covers abortion. The Reproductive Parity Act would keep it that way, requiring insurance plans in Washington to cover abortion care if they cover maternity care. Reproductive parity would ensure that all Washington women who have insurance will have the coverage they need to make the right choices for themselves and their families.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

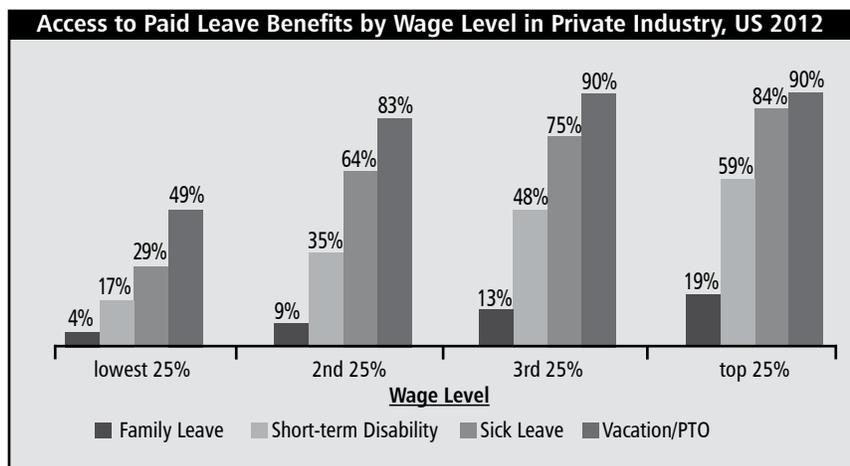
Due to historical discrimination in the labor market, residential segregation and unequal access to educational opportunities, our economy leaves many communities of color behind. The fourth quarter 2012 unemployment rate in Washington State was 8.3 percent for whites, but it was much higher for Latinos (11.2 percent) and African Americans (14.7 percent).²¹ Race-based employment disparities exist even when accounting for education, age and gender.

Given our changing labor market and the continued impact of the recession, more workers are juggling several part-time jobs, with reduced benefits and low wages. People of color are more likely to be concentrated in these lower-wage jobs, while underrepresented in professional and office jobs.²²

Moving forward, it is imperative that our state pass legislation that will enhance job quality for all workers, but especially low-wage workers, who play a critical role in our economy. Policies that improve working conditions for all workers will increase racial equity in our state, and help ensure that Washington has a productive workforce and a strong economy.

4. Guarantee Time Off for Health Needs: Statewide Paid Sick Leave

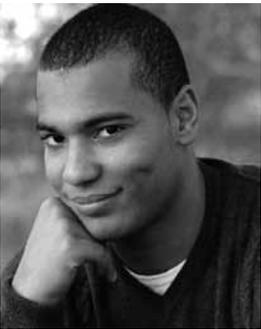
Paid time off to recover from illness, care for a sick child, or take an elderly parent to the doctor is fundamental to healthy workers and businesses. Yet race and class often shape who has the ability to take time off to address these basic priorities. Latino and African American workers are least likely to have paid sick leave.²³



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey, March 2012

In addition to the short-term financial hit from taking unpaid leave, people without sick leave often lose opportunities to advance in their career and are limited in their ability to build assets and longer-term economic security.²⁴ A parent's lack of paid sick leave can also have a negative impact on their child's health and ability to succeed in school.²⁵

Seattle has created a model for offering paid sick leave to all workers and other cities like Tacoma are pursuing similar policies. Paid sick leave advances racial equity and has positive economic benefits; expanding the policy statewide is a logical next step.



"I am a 23-year old living in Spokane. I work five days a week at a restaurant and although I've been working there for a year and a half, I do not receive paid sick days. As a result, I often have to make tough decisions between going to work sick, or losing pay.

Back in June, I cut myself with a knife while working and had to get stitches. Since I cut the muscle in my hand, it was really hard for me to grip things. I took the following day off work, but after that it was expected that I return and work my normal schedule. The first day back at my job I had to leave early because I was in too much pain to work.

I ended up missing 26 hours of work and pay. When you're working a minimum wage job, any amount of unpaid time off is significant. That was money that I needed for rent, or to pay for my groceries or phone bill. I was forced to borrow money to make ends meet, and it took awhile for my income to stabilize again. Because I'm barely scraping by (despite working full-time), I don't earn enough money to save or to prepare for something unexpected happening.

That is why it is so important that all workers have access to paid sick days. As a low-wage worker, every day that you work, or miss work counts. But we all know that sickness happens, and it's not something you can control. Statewide paid sick days would give me the security of knowing that even if I get sick or hurt I won't have to miss a bill, or go without basic necessities."

Isaiah Day, Spokane

5. Support Workers Economic Security: Fund Family and Medical Leave Insurance

Workers struggling with low wages and other challenges are least likely to have paid leave benefits. Only 43 percent of Latino workers have access to any paid leave, compared to about 60 percent of other workers.²⁶ People who work part time or in service jobs, disproportionately people of color, are less likely to receive any type of paid time off at all.²⁷

Family and Medical Leave Insurance would provide paid time off to parents welcoming a new child, or individuals supporting family members or themselves through an illness. In 2007, Washington

adopted a Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FMLI) program, however the initial program was not comprehensive, lacked funding, and has not been implemented.

Funding and fully implementing Family and Medical Leave Insurance will guarantee equitable access to time off for medical needs while supporting healthy workers and families.

6. Prevent Wage Theft

Studies across the country have found that 64 percent of low-wage workers experience wage theft (meaning they are denied the wages they are owed for work they have performed) each week.²⁸ Wage theft occurs when unscrupulous employers pay less than what is agreed, force workers to perform duties off the clock, don't pay legally required overtime, and in some cases, withhold pay all together.

The data suggests that, on average, low-wage workers lose \$51 per week to wage theft, or \$2,634 per year.²⁹ For low-wage workers, that amounts to 15 percent of their annual income, at average earnings of \$17,616 per year.³⁰ Wage theft is more prevalent in low-wage industries and among vulnerable immigrant workers.

In addition to impoverishing working families in our state, wage theft cheats the state government out of legally required taxes and insurance contributions. The Legislature can prevent wage theft by advancing policies that allow liens for unpaid wages, increase potential damages for wage theft, and prevent retaliation against employees who report abuses.³¹

7. Streamline Delivery of State-Funded Interpreter Services while Giving Interpreters Rights on the Job

In 2011, Washington ranked ninth in the nation for the percentage of our foreign born population. As Washington's population continues to diversify, the need for qualified medical interpreters is increasing.

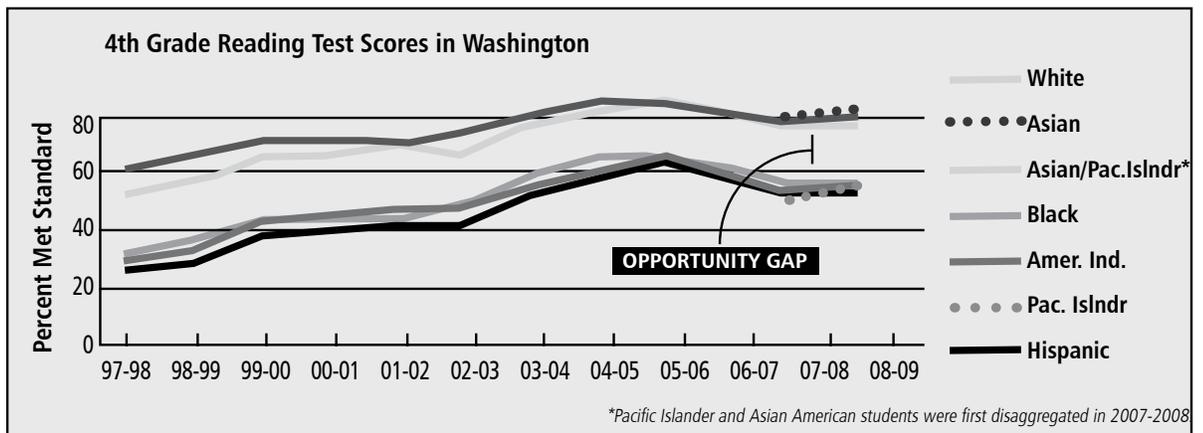
This bill would allow interpreters who serve injured workers to have union rights, creating an avenue for a predominantly immigrant workforce to improve their working conditions. Providing higher quality medical interpreters for injured workers with limited English proficiency will also help protect the rights of those who often do not have a voice to advocate for themselves in the medical field.

By organizing into a union, Medicaid interpreters have been able to lower administrative costs, raise wages and save the state \$5 million from one budget cycle to the next. The Legislature can expand the right to unionize to workers who serve injured workers. This would both streamline delivery of services (saving the state money) and create an opportunity to raise skills and wages for an immigrant-dependent workforce.

EDUCATION

All students deserve access to a quality education and to be valued for the unique experiences they bring to the classroom. Yet Washington's K-12 public schools are ranked in the bottom five U.S. states for progress towards closing the opportunity gap. As a result, African American, Latino, Pacific Islander, and Native American students lag far behind white students in math and reading. At the current pace, it will take at least 45 years to achieve equity in educational outcomes.

This is not a reflection of the true capabilities of communities of color, however. Instead, it demonstrates that the resources necessary for success, such as highly effective teachers, culturally competent curriculum and materials, and appropriate academic and social support are missing for many students of color.³² Systemic issues that disproportionately affect children of color, such as student discipline policies, cultural competency and diversity of teachers and staff, investment in early learning, and language access, must also be addressed in order to close the opportunity gap.



The Alliance for Excellent Education found that “more than \$3.1 billion would be added to Washington’s economy by 2020 if students of color graduated at the same rates as white students.”³³ By passing legislation that supports youth and strengthens our educational system, the Legislature can play an active role in ensuring the long-term success of Washington’s future workers and entrepreneurs.

8. Open Higher Education Opportunities for Immigrants: Washington State DREAM Act

The Washington State DREAM Act recognizes the significant contributions that young aspiring citizens make to our state by removing a significant financial barrier that blocks many of them from going to college. The Washington State DREAM Act extends need-based financial aid to immigrant students who otherwise qualify as Washington residents.

Under the Federal Government's Deferred Action order (DACA), immigrant students who qualify can obtain a permit authorizing them to live and work in Washington State. Yet many cannot afford the full cost of college tuition. The Washington State DREAM Act would give these students the chance to pursue a degree in higher education, capturing the potential of our state's young aspiring citizens and strengthening our economy.



"My name is Christian Valencia, and I am a DREAMer. I have been in the United States since I was four years old, and I am currently working so that I can save up for college. It's my dream to go to school and become a physical therapist.

My parents can't afford to put me through school, so I have to pay out of pocket. Because I am not a citizen, I can't get financial aid. For many people in my shoes, we have been in this country since we were young and have been raised as Americans. That is all we know. But there are so many things that keep us from getting as far as others who are

citizens – limits to education, limits to job opportunities. To have limits on our dreams is unfair.

I believe we can do better. The Washington State DREAM Act would allow DREAMers like myself to apply for state financial aid so that we can afford to go to college. For myself, and many of my fellow DREAMers, passing this bill would make a huge difference in our lives, and our ability to contribute to the economy. I hope legislators will stand up for young aspiring citizens next session and pass the Washington State DREAM Act. It's time to make all of our dreams a reality."

Christian Valencia, Renton

9. Address the Educational Opportunity Gap

In 2013, the House of Representatives passed legislation based on the recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. That legislation sought to take steps to address the academic opportunity gap, including:

- Improving data collection measures by collecting disaggregated data and setting new standards for data collected in student disciplinary actions. This will allow the state to better understand racial inequities in discipline practices and create targeted solutions.
- Increasing cultural competency for school staff to reduce cultural barriers between students of color and their teachers and staff. This is a step towards the goal of an educational system that accounts for students' various worldviews, learning styles, multiple intelligences, and cultural heritage.³⁴
- Prohibiting exclusionary discipline practices to eliminate inequities in disciplinary outcomes. Students of color and students living in poverty are more likely to be over-represented in exclusionary discipline practices and are less likely to access educational services during periods of exclusion.³⁵
- Requiring teachers working with English Language Learners (ELL) to receive training and/or certification. This step will help ensure that ELL students have teachers who are prepared to help them achieve academic English proficiency.

By advancing these recommendations, the Legislature can invest in the future of Washington and take important steps towards reducing the opportunity gap.

10. Recognize Value of Language Skills: Seal of Biliteracy

Around the country, public school systems are beginning to recognize students that have proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation through a Seal of Biliteracy. Attached to a diploma and/or transcript, the Seal can be a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions.

California and New York have established similar policies to encourage students to pursue biliteracy and acknowledge the value of language skills in a manner that can be attractive to future employers and college admissions offices. The Legislature could take this simple step to help immigrant students receive recognition for the full range of skills they possess.



CIVIL RIGHTS

While we have made great progress in the fight for civil rights, the racial disparities that continue to plague our state and country are stark reminders that we still have work to do. The racism that exists today is less overt and harder to fight against. It is institutionalized—seeping into the policies and practices of hospitals, public schools, prisons, private corporations, and other institutions.

Each session, the Legislature has the ability to make policy and budget decisions that strengthen opportunity and reduce racial and economic disparities. Washington is a progressive state, but we still have work to do to ensure that all residents enjoy equal access to opportunity, are protected from discrimination and have equal political representation.

11. Equal Opportunity for Political Representation: Washington Voting Rights Act

The Washington Voting Rights Act empowers local governments to update at-large voting systems that often lead to the marginalization and political exclusion of minority populations. Ninety-nine percent of local elections in Washington use at-large voting systems. Where communities vote in blocs, slim majorities can dominate. For example, in nine Eastern Washington counties, Latinos make up more than 33 percent of the population, but only 4 percent of elected officials.³⁶

By supporting the Washington Voting Rights Act, the Legislature can create more flexibility for local governments to improve equity in political representation where disproportionality exists.

12. Keep Families Together and Improve Community Safety: The Washington State Trust Act

Secure Communities is a federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) program that requires local law enforcement to match the fingerprints of every person arrested through a federal immigration database. If undocumented immigrants are arrested, ICE requests that local law enforcement hold the person for up to 48 hours (often much longer in practice)³⁷ even if they have not been charged with a crime.³⁸

In Washington State, only 25 percent of individuals deported as a result of Secure Communities have been convicted of serious offenses.³⁹ Yet the program erodes the relationship between immigrants and local law enforcement, tears families apart, and drains local resources.

The Washington State Trust Act would set a standard that local governments do not honor ICE's request to detain individuals unless they have a serious or violent felony conviction.⁴⁰ Through this policy, the Legislature can prevent the separation of immigrant families through detention or deportation, save the state valuable resources, and rebuild trust between police and immigrant communities.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The continuous mass incarceration of people of color directly threatens our country's values of freedom and opportunity.

In Washington State, disparate treatment of people of color occurs at every stage of our criminal justice system, including at arrest, charging, conviction and imprisonment.⁴¹ For example:

- Drivers are more likely to be searched at traffic stops if they are people of color, even though the rate of seizure during a search is higher for white drivers.⁴²
- African American felony drug offenders are 62 percent more likely than similarly situated white offenders to be sentenced to prison.⁴³
- Youth of color also receive harsher sentencing decisions—in 2005, African American and Asian-Pacific Islander youth were sentenced to the longest average terms in county detention.
- Defendants of color are significantly less likely than similarly situated white defendants to receive sentences that fall below the standard range.⁴⁴

Facially neutral policies that result in a disproportionate impact on people of color over time as well as bias (both implicit and explicit) play a large role in perpetuating the racial disparities in our criminal justice system.⁴⁵

It has been well-documented that prevention and restorative measures are more effective than putting people in prison. Focusing on the root causes of crime—policing strategies, unemployment, wages, education, and other factors—can produce more significant reductions in the crime rate than incarceration.⁴⁶ Expanding access and resources to youth at an early age and providing them with necessary support can ensure that all Washingtonians have an equal opportunity to succeed.

13. Eliminate the Death Penalty

In Washington, aggravated first-degree murder is punishable by death. The state is more likely to impose the death penalty on African American defendants than white defendants convicted of the same offense. Looking at comparable single-victim crimes, white defendants received death sentences 26 percent of the time, while people of color received death sentences 47 percent of the time.⁴⁷

Data in Washington also indicates that the race of the victim impacts whether the state imposes a death sentence. Prosecutors asked for the death penalty in 28 percent of cases with one white victim, but only 18 percent of cases involving a victim of color.⁴⁸ For cases with a white defendant and a non-white victim, the rate is less than 13 percent.

Death penalty cases are also extremely expensive. A 2006 study found that the state incurs \$800,000 in additional costs for death penalty cases relative to non-death penalty trials.⁴⁹ By eliminating the death penalty in Washington State, the Legislature can end this racial disparity in sentencing and eliminate the costly application of an inequitable law.

14. Eliminate Public Access to Juvenile Records: Youth Opportunities Act

Currently, juvenile records in Washington State are accessible to the public and published online. As a result, juvenile offenses often create barriers to educational opportunity, employment and housing.⁵⁰ These barriers fall disproportionately on youth of color, as black youth are nearly twice as likely as white youth to be arrested and black and American Indian/Native Alaskan youth are more than twice as likely to be referred to court as white youth.⁵¹ Youth of color are also significantly less likely to seal their juvenile records than white youth.

By passing the Youth Opportunities Act, Washington would join 42 other states that do not allow public access to juvenile records.⁵² The law would prohibit courts from disseminating, selling or making juvenile offense records public (except for the records of youth that were convicted of sexual offenses or other serious offenses), but would still allow access by courts, prosecutors and law enforcement. Juvenile court proceedings would continue to be open to the public and access to records would be allowed for research and statistical purposes.

Through this Act, the Legislature has an opportunity to eliminate a significant barrier to educational and occupational achievement for youth and advance equity in Washington State.

WARNING

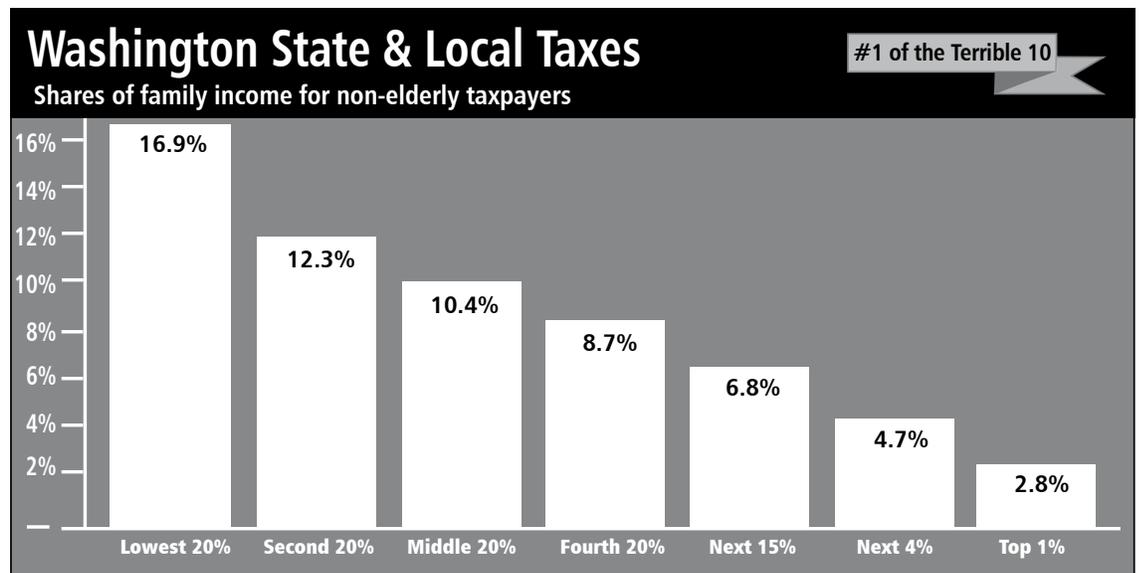
Each session, legislation is introduced that would exacerbate existing disparities in our criminal justice system and expand the criminalization of people of color. The collection of DNA upon arrest is such a policy.

People of color are over-represented in several stages of the state's criminal justice system, including at arrest, charging, conviction, and imprisonment. For example, arrest figures from 2006 reveal that Seattle's racial disparity in drug arrests is among the highest in the country; blacks are 21 times more likely to be arrested for selling serious drugs (i.e., narcotics other than marijuana) despite extensive evidence that whites constitute the majority of sellers and users of those drugs.⁵³ Expanded DNA collection upon arrest would create an increasingly skewed criminal database and further contribute to the over-representation of people of color in the criminal justice system.

BUDGET & REVENUE

Washington State has the most regressive tax structure in the country, making it the highest-tax state for poor people and people of color.⁵⁴ The bottom 20 percent of Washingtonians pay over six times as much of their income in taxes as their wealthy counterparts.⁵⁵ Including state and local sales, excise and property taxes, Washington's lowest-income families pay 16.9 percent of their total income in state and local taxes.⁵⁶

Over the past five years, our state has also seen more than \$10 billion in cuts to the programs that offer protection and stability to families that are struggling to make ends meet. With no new or sustainable revenue sources, our state continues to face a budget deficit, causing many lawmakers to consider even further decimating the social safety net.



Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax System in all 50 States"

Slashing the programs that offer protection and stability from the impact of the recession not only prolongs our economy recovery, it also disproportionately impacts communities of color and low-income families. By raising progressive and sustainable revenue, we can make crucial investments in health care, education, job training, child care and other areas that are proven to provide opportunity and create prosperity for all Washingtonians.

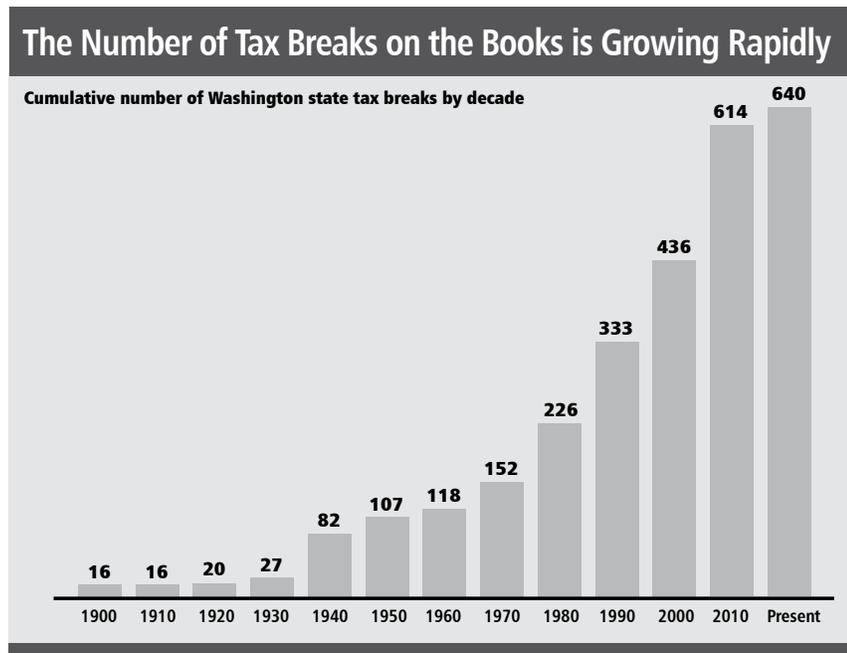
15. Enact a Capital Gains Tax

A capital gains tax is a step toward fairness in our tax structure. Capital gains taxes are incurred when the sale of shares, stocks, bonds, vacation homes, or other financial assets results in a profit. Capital assets are concentrated among the wealthiest households; by excluding the first \$10,000 of capital gains from taxation, only the wealthiest 3 percent of Washingtonians (who currently pay the smallest proportion of their income in state taxes) would see a tax increase.

Bringing fairness to our tax system is critical to advancing racial equity in Washington State. By enacting even a modest tax on capital gains, the Legislature can bring much-needed revenue and make investments in programs and infrastructure that create prosperity for all Washington residents.

16. Closing Corporate Tax Loopholes

At the same time that cuts are being made to the programs that keep families and communities healthy, our state is losing billions of dollars every year in the form of tax breaks. Economists and public finance experts agree tax expenditures should be treated as state spending or as subsidy programs.⁵⁷ Yet tax breaks are largely exempt from the accountability and transparency structures applied to other forms of state spending, and many of them have no clear public benefit.⁵⁸



Washington State Budget and Policy Center

To bring equity to our tax system, the Legislature should enact long-term tax expenditure reform that includes expiration dates for all tax breaks, allows tax breaks to be modified by a simple majority, requires the Governor to submit a tax expenditure budget, and enacts strict eligibility requirements for businesses receiving tax breaks.⁵⁹ Like a capital gains tax, corporate tax reform will address the regressivity in our tax system and raise revenue that can be invested to advance racial equity and prosperity for all.

CONCLUSION

Legislators should pass the following 16 bills in the 2014 session to reduce racial disparities and increase opportunities for all:

1. The Basic Health Option
2. Mid-Level Dental Provider
3. Reproductive Parity Act
4. Statewide Paid Sick Leave
5. Family and Medical Leave Insurance
6. Prevent Wage Theft
7. Streamline delivery of state-funded interpreter services while giving interpreters rights on the job
8. The Washington State DREAM Act
9. Address the Educational Opportunity Gap
10. Seal of Biliteracy
11. Washington Voting Rights Act
12. The Washington State Trust Act
13. Eliminate the Death Penalty
14. Youth Opportunities Act
15. Enact a Capital Gains Tax
16. Close corporate tax loopholes and enact long-term tax expenditure reform

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the immense contributions of many people — those who shared their stories and experiences, community leaders who lent their insight and feedback and those who participated in the planning and execution of the report. We would especially like to thank members of the “Facing Race” coalition, the Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable and the Racial Equity Team.

Authors:

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END NOTES

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ENDORISING ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for a Just Society
American Federation of Teachers Washington (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee
APICAT for Healthy Communities
Arab American Community Coalition
Asian Pacific Americans for Civic Empowerment (APACE)
Casa Latina
Center for MultiCultural Health
Children's Alliance
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Economic Opportunity Institute
El Centro de la Raza
Entre Hermanos
Equity in Education Coalition
Faith Action Network
Got Green
Greater Mt. Baker Baptist Church
International Community Health Services
Latinos for Community Transformation
LGBTQ Allyship
Minority Executive Directors Coalition of King County (MEDC)
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance
OneAmerica
OneAmerica Votes
Para Los Niños
Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights (POWER)
Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS)
People's Institute Northwest
Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable
Race and Social Justice Initiative
Real Change
Seattle Human Rights Commission
Seattle Indian Health Board
Seattle King County NAACP
Seattle Office of Civil Rights
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW
SEIU Healthcare 775NW
Senior Services
Skagit Immigrant Rights Council
Social Justice Fund
Solid Ground
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Tacoma NAACP
Tenants Union
Trusted Advocates Association
UAW Local 4121
UFCW Local 21
United Black Clergy of Washington
Village of Hope
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO
WFSE/AFSCME Council 28
Win/Win Network
Youth Undoing Institutional Racism