

New Report Identifies Essential Tools for Improving Life for Blacks in Washington

Seattle, Washington—March 30, 2015—Racism and inequality is a looming problem in Washington State. It casts a shadow over the lives of many Blacks, leading to a lack of economic security, poor health, and high levels of stress. A new study commissioned by an independent coalition seeks to encourage citizens and leaders alike to address these issues head-on, engage in conversations focused on solutions, and develop policies and laws to help Blacks gain equal footing with other races and ethnicities.

The comprehensive report, “Creating an Equitable Future for Black Washingtonians,” outlines some of the major ways our social, economic, and political systems in Washington State intertwine to create barriers to opportunity that impede progress within the Black community. The coalition releasing this report is composed of Centerstone, the Washington Commission on African American Affairs, and the African American Leadership Forum.

“The study will have an enormous impact because it is based on facts and quantitative data, not opinions. It changes many of the perceptions we have about Blacks in Washington,” said Andrea Caupain, CEO of Centerstone.

The report identifies multiple solutions for improving opportunities for Blacks in our state. These proposals would not only help to improve the well-being of Blacks as individuals and as communities, but they would also serve to strengthen our state’s economic and civic future. The 10 most important solutions are:

1. Enable economic policies to ensure that all families in Washington state can meet their basic needs
2. Increase the share of Black people with access to good jobs
3. Provide adequate access to an education that will allow Blacks to compete for the jobs of today and the future
4. Expand high quality early learning opportunities for Black children and families
5. Provide resources do Black students need to stay in school and excel
6. Improve state policies and programs to better meet the needs of Black youth to keep them out of the criminal justice system
7. Create community-driven strategies to create a more just and equitable political system
8. Develop strategies for Black families to use to remain healthy in challenging environments
9. Promote policies so that everyone in the Black community has adequate access to health insurance and care
10. Identify the most significant barriers to economic opportunity for Black Washingtonians today

By working toward these changes, we will strengthen the lives of our residents, enhance the communities in Washington State, and ensure that Blacks have the opportunity to contribute to our state's economy now and in the future.

“Many poor or struggling Blacks are living out their lives quietly in our cities and neighborhoods, working diligently to make it on their own,” said Ed Prince, Executive Director of the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs. “They are living and working next to us. They are Americans and they are going after their chance at a better life. This study improves their chance—by clearly revealing the issues at hand and opening the door for immediate solutions.”

This report is the first phase of a longer effort by the coalition to elevate and amplify the voices of Black Washingtonians in the decision-making processes that influence their everyday lives. Data collection was conducted by the Washington State Budget and Policy Center and the data analysis focuses on five key areas of well-being – economic security, education, health, criminal justice, and civic engagement – to highlight conditions in the Black community and contribute to a robust conversation about what an equitable future in Washington State looks like.

To download a full copy of the report, visit www.BlacksWA.org. Share this article with your network and help advance the movement to build an equitable future for Black Washingtonians and support community-driven public policy solutions.

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