

# VOICES RISING

## African American Economic Security in King County

228  
YEARS

If average Black family wealth continues to grow at the same pace it has over the past three decades, it would take Black families 228 years to amass the same amount of wealth that white families enjoy. That's just 17 years shorter than the 245-year span of slavery in the U.S.\*

**We have a huge racial wealth gap problem to solve—both nationally and locally.**

Here in King County, we've released a new study, *Voices Rising*, that explores the contributing factors behind this racial wealth gap. Through interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we gathered stories of African Americans who live, work, play, and make a home in Seattle and King County. Stories are an important part of culture. They put a human face to the numbers. Looking across all these stories, we distilled six themes underlying this economic disparity.

## KEY THEMES

### NATIONAL THEMES (THAT PLAY OUT LOCALLY)

- The legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and implicit bias (unconscious stereotyping and discrimination) are still very much present in contemporary life.
- The complexity of interdependent systems make it challenging to change course.
- Moving beyond poverty and living-wage jobs into wealth creation is both an individual and systemic tension.

**"For anyone to get good paying jobs, you have to have an education. If education is unaffordable, and if you take out loans, you're trapped."**

**"The reality is that Black families are not financially secure because [we] have not had generational wealth via estates and real estate to pass along ... There has been and yet exists an alarming financial economic disparity that began at the point of slavery."**

\*Asante-Muhammed, Dedrick, Collins, Chuck, Hoxie, Josh and Nieves, Emanuel (2016). The Ever-Growing Gap: Without Change, African American and Latino Families Won't Match White Wealth for Centuries. Retrieved from [http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Ever-Growing-Gap-CFED\\_IPS-Final-2.pdf](http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Ever-Growing-Gap-CFED_IPS-Final-2.pdf)



**"Education is the true game changer."**

### LOCAL THEMES

- Intense and rapid gentrification of Seattle, the urban core of King County, has affected the ability to purchase a home and created a significant "loss of place" for the African American community.
- There are unequal education opportunities in King County, which impact the quality of education for all kids.
- Political and social organizing for the African American community in King County is not highly coordinated.

### WHAT'S NEEDED

Related to each of these six themes, we believe we must pursue:

- Policy change that addresses the implicit bias in our education, economic, and other systems and allows everyone to share the "ladder of opportunity."
- A comprehensive approach to break the cycle of systemic barriers—in housing, education, living-wage job opportunities, and so on.
- Focused attention on African American wealth building and creating opportunities that connect African Americans to the supports they need.
- Tackling the education and community center issues that result from gentrification.
- Investment in an equitable education system that provides quality experiences for African American children and engages parents.
- Support for African American community organizing to come together around a unified agenda.

LEARN MORE

**DOWNLOAD THE REPORT AT [BYRDBARRPLACE.ORG/REPORT-VOICES-RISING](http://BYRDBARRPLACE.ORG/REPORT-VOICES-RISING)**

**We can all help advance ideas and policies that ensure everyone has a fair chance to achieve financial security.**

*Seattle Community of Practice – African American Financial Capability Initiative, including Africatown, Byrd Barr Place, Seattle King County NAACP, Skyway Solutions, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, and Washington State Commission on African American Affairs.*