

"The future rewards those who press on ... I'm going to press on."

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

# AND SO WE PRESS ON

## A COMMUNITY VIEW ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HEALTH IN WASHINGTON STATE



*And So We Press On* is the third in a series of reports assessing barriers to success for Black Washingtonians. Released in 2020, it draws on the experiences of 588 study participants from across the state to paint a picture of Black health and well-being. An addendum includes current qualitative data.

Several key themes emerge.

### EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Personal, social, economic, and environmental factors contribute to our experiences of health and well-being. While fifty-seven percent of study participants consider themselves to be healthy or extremely healthy, almost all report experiencing the adverse effects of systemic racism, a key determinant in health outcomes.

### ACCESS TO CARE

Healthcare choices and access to culturally aware care are uneven across the state, and Black Washingtonians continue to trail whites in healthcare coverage. Just fifty-three percent of participants report having access to culturally aware medical and mental healthcare providers.

### LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

The environments in which we live, work, and play have a profound impact on our health.

#### In Our Neighborhoods

**80%** of participants have access to parks and nature

**74%** have access to fresh and healthy food, but affordability varies widely

**46%** say their neighborhood promotes health and well-being

**31%** experience noise, air, and other pollution

95%

have experienced being treated unfairly due to race or ethnicity

There is an extreme shortage of medical providers that are people of color and/or culturally competent.

"I do not have hypertension. I do not have diabetes. I do not and have never had asthma ... I currently walk 4 miles daily. I kayak. I ride my bike, and I'm still healthy and BLACK."

STUDY PARTICIPANT

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## 60%

of Black children live in families with economic hardship—the most common adverse experience children face—vs. the state average of 39%

### SOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

The overwhelming majority of participants report experiencing significant adversity in their lives, including financial instability, racism, and homelessness. Effects of adverse experiences, especially in childhood, can have enduring health consequences.

### MOVING FORWARD

Participants press on, reporting that they remain hopeful by cultivating meaningful connections with family and friends, practicing their faith, maintaining a healthy mindset, actively planning for their futures, engaging in their communities, and voting and advocating for change.

"I stay hopeful by doing the best I can—tending to the parts of the garden I can reach."

STUDY PARTICIPANT

### SPONSOR ORGANIZATIONS

*And So We Press On* was supported by Byrd Barr Place, the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, and the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs.

### TAKE ACTION

*And So We Press On* was created to help inform decision-making and raise awareness of inequities in order to advance equitable health care for all Washingtonians. We encourage you to:

- Learn more.
- Share the report with others.
- Host conversations in your home, community center, faith community, or wherever you gather about how to support each other in health and wellness.
- Educate yourself and others on local and state initiatives related to health access, environmental justice, and the social safety net.

## 23%

of black Washingtonians ages 18 to 64 lack health insurance, vs. the state average of 19%

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