

A Community Approach for African American/Black Culturally Congruent Services

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Executive Summary

There is data in the Alameda County Department of Health Report, Health Inequities in the Bay Area, 2008; The City of Berkeley Health Status Report, 2007; The Surgeon General's Report, Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity; The 2020 Vision for Berkeley's Children and Youth; and numerous other reports that confirm major inequities and disparities in black communities throughout America, Alameda County, and the City of Berkeley.

Although, most of the information in this report is not new, the significance of this report is that it was developed by African Americans/Blacks, from an African American/Black perspective. The root causes of inequities and disparities in the black community are

The African American/Black population in Alameda County and within the City of Berkeley is devastated by inequities and disparities in areas that relate to the fundamental survival of human life.

rarely ever dealt with, and therefore, culturally inappropriate services continue to be used in an attempt to produce positive outcomes for the black community.

The African American/Black population in Alameda County and within the City of Berkeley is devastated by inequities and disparities in

areas that relate to the fundamental survival of human life. Although, this is a common occurrence throughout the country, this makes it all the more important that culturally congruent services must be developed, in order to reduce these inequities and disparities. The county's African American Utilization Report states, "We support and encourage the building of healthy communities where individuals, children and adults can thrive and can be all they can be. We do this by protecting the general public health, providing place/population-based services, protecting vulnerable populations, and providing a safety net for families/individuals and assistance toward self-sufficiency."¹ (Alameda County Board of Supervisors, 2008)

The African American/Black Professionals & Community Network (AABPCN) is a coalition of community groups and individuals working to address and support city and county efforts that are directed at reducing and/or eliminating inequities and disparities in the African American/Black community in the City of Berkeley and Alameda County. This report is in alignment with the continued focus of the AABPCN mission of uplifting African Americans, especially black boys, men, and the community. Individuals in this group are also committed to working with others to achieve this goal.

The African American/Black community is plagued with complex and severe community problems that have long existed and seem to be worsening. It is the viewpoint of the African American/Black Professionals & Community Network that the black community has to be included in all aspects of issues that affect and relate to their personal, family, and community existence. African Americans from all social and economic statuses

¹ Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services: African American Utilization Report, Goals and Recommendations. Winter 2011

within the community must be integrated at all levels of the decision-making process when it comes to their lives and the lives of those in their family and community.

Acknowledging and addressing the trauma that is related to racism, including institutionalized and internalized racism, must become industry standards within public health and primary care, mental health, housing, employment, and educational arenas. In fact, all service providers in Alameda County and the City of Berkeley should include the treatment and prevention of all forms of racism as an integrated part of the service delivery system for the African Americans/Black population.

The goal of this report is to provide recommendations and outcomes for reducing and eliminating inequities and disparities for African Americans/Blacks in the areas of mental and physical health, education, employment, and housing.

Developing Culturally Congruent Mental Health and Health Treatment and Prevention Services for African American/Black People

Problem Statement

Health inequities and disparities have been caused by entrenched social and racial injustices in American systems. It has been stated that every social determinant, including but not limited to education, employment, physical and mental health and housing, is impacted by the rules of law and the institutions that uphold the laws. The areas of physical and mental health are of paramount concern, due to the number of African Americans that are affected by poor physical and mental health outcomes in America, particularly in Alameda County and the City of Berkeley.

Recommendations

- 1) Use Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding such as Workforce, Education, and Training (WET), to develop a 3-year training process to transform mental health treatment and prevention services for African Americans/Blacks
- 2) Increase the use of black psychologists and clinicians who specialize in African American/Black mental health treatment, prevention, and training. Utilize experts such as Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary, Dr. Kenneth Hardy, Dr. Na'im Akbar, Dr. Gloria Morrow, and Dr. Wade Nobles
- 3) Mandate that all county and city service provider's contracts require employees to receive 16 hours of annual documented cultural competency training. Two-thirds of all training must focus on the majority of the program's client demographic make-up
- 4) The county and city obtain input and advice from African Americans in regards to mental and physical health from groups such as the Association of Black Physicians, Black Psychologist Association, Alameda County African American Mental Health Network, Black Nurses Association, National Association of Black Social Workers, consumers, and family members
- 5) Culturally congruent services be incorporated into mental and public health, and community-based agency settings for African Americans that are welcoming, respectful, and use practices and models that are designed to be culturally specific

- 6) Increase Senior Management positions for African Americans/Blacks at all agencies and organizations. These black professionals must understand practices, models, and treatment and prevention services that have been developed for African American clients, consumers, patients, and families
- 7) Provide ongoing funding and support for the Black Infant Health Program
- 8) Create accountability standards for *Health Equity Work* in the African American community and produce annual reports and assessments that provide data that confirms the effective work in the area of reducing health inequities
- 9) Use WET funding to provide stipends to African American Mental Health Interns
- 10) Create county-wide African American/Black Mental Health and Public Health Oversight Boards, led by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- Prevention and reduction in mental illness and substance abuse
- Improved physical health care
- Better treatment outcomes for clients, consumers, and patients
- Trained and knowledgeable mental health clinicians, healthcare workers, and service providers
- Healthier Black women, babies, and families
- A diverse workforce that can provide culturally appropriate services, training, and input in the mental health and primary care of African Americans
- A more productive and healthier African American/Black community.

Education, Students, and Academic Success

Problem Statement

The "Achievement Gap" is defined as the disparity of educational performances between groups of students by gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language and socioeconomics. Across the nation, educational, social and economic outcomes for most black children are in a crisis mode. The reason for the crisis is hotly debated subject matter in today's society, especially in the academic world.

Recommendations

- 1) Invest in culturally effective curriculum and learning interventions for black students
- 2) Invest funding and support for the academic success of African American males
- 3) Permanently invest in a Crisis Support System for black youth and families
- 4) Increase quality academic student support and tutoring
- 5) Provide transparency regarding equity in allocation of funds in the district
- 6) Hire qualified African American teachers, especially males
- 7) Create an annual public report with disenrollment and inter-district permit status of students
- 8) Institute ***Mandatory Cultural Competency*** training for all district staff in the area of historical trauma and internalized racism, as it relates to black culture
- 9) Develop effective culturally congruent academic programs for African American preschool children

10) Create a BUSD African American/Black Educational Oversight Board, led by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- Narrowing of the Achievement Gap
- African American parents and the community will invest in BUSD agenda
- Trust is built within BUSD through transparency and equity of allocation of funding
- Evidence-based cultural programs will increase academic success for black students
- Some recommendations in the 2020 Vision Plan will be implemented
- Hiring Black teachers and other educational staff will provide students with role models in the school setting
- More black students will attend college and other institutions of higher learning.

Alternative Approaches to Employment Development

Problem Statement

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), unemployment data through March 2011 documents African American unemployment rates to be 15.5%; double that of Whites and Asians. For black males 16-19 years of age, the BLS reports an astounding national unemployment rate of 40 percent.

Recommendations

- 1) Increase funding for the design and implementation of a comprehensive First Source compliance program
- 2) Support Ex-offender employment programs and services
- 3) Increase the availability for small business loans for African Americans
- 4) Request through ordinance that 1 to 2 percent of Public Work's budget is designated for employment and training services for individuals living below the poverty level in South Berkeley
- 5) Allow contractors with a record of hiring identified residents a fixed percentage over the lowest bid (e.g. 5% over)
- 6) Develop capital formation for African Americans/Blacks
- 7) Offer incentives in addition to punitive measures to encourage contractors to hire identified residents
- 8) Develop a Tri-Cities agreement with trade unions, contractors, department heads and representatives from surrounding cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and Richmond
- 9) Increase employment and upward mobility within the African American/Black population in Berkeley
- 10) Develop skilled training programs that leads to jobs in the trades
- 11) Advocate for a Public Service Employment Program
- 12) Create a City African American Employment Advisory Council, lead by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- Significant reduction in unemployment among all African Americans, including professionals, formerly incarcerated individuals and youth

- Trained workers in the fields of the construction industry, green economy, and the high-tech industry
- Reduced and measurable recidivism rates among the formerly incarcerated
- Increased self-esteem and reduced alienation and self-destructive behavior among youth
- African Americans will be provided with upward mobility in their careers
- Employers will work with the city and county to hire residents
- Trade unions will hire qualified African Americans
- African Americans can secure funding to start small businesses
- Increased contract compliance officers.

African American Resource Center: A Community Meeting Place

Problem Statement

The Black community in Berkeley requires a place to meet in order to organize, strategize, socialize, and be at home with each other; in a welcoming environment that offers culturally congruent services for African American/Black residents. An African American/Black Resource Center, located in South Berkeley that is funded by the City, County, University, Alta Bates, and other funding sources, will be a stabilizing foundation for the black community in Berkeley.

Recommendations

- 1) The City of Berkeley donates a building to the African American Community
- 2) The African American Resource Center is funded and supported by the city, county, Alta Bates, UCB, and other public and private organizations
- 3) Program and services will be operated primarily by African American/Black residents and groups in Berkeley
- 4) Culturally congruent services are provided to black residents in their neighborhood setting
- 5) Create a city African American/Black Community Advisory Council, led by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- The resource center will be a stabilizing force in the black community in South Berkeley
- Community empowerment, support, and involvement will increase
- Culturally-congruent services provided to African Americans
- A free community meeting place for black residents and local groups
- The city invests in the black community.

Housing and the Disappearing of Black Neighborhoods

Problem Statement

The 2010 census data states that California's African American/Black population has risen by 1.6 percent. However, the African American population in Alameda County dropped to approximately 12 percent and Berkeley's African American/Black population

has experienced a 3.6 percent decline, to now only 10 percent of the city's population (there are 14 cities in the county.)

Recommendations

- 1) Reestablish the section 8 Home Ownership Program and increase section 8 vouchers for people and their families living in South Berkeley
- 2) Designate a percentage of new housing for low- to moderate-income families in Berkeley
- 3) Pass new regulations requiring housing developers to offer more housing at below-market rates
- 4) Increase investigations into fair housing complaints in Berkeley, especially as it relates to African American/Black men
- 5) Stop foreclosures and assist residents in South Berkeley with foreclosures
- 6) Increase the number of African American/Black residents on the Berkeley Rent Board, Housing Advisory Commission (HAC), Affordable Housing Associates (AHA); and California Housing and Land Trust
- 7) Place a ten-year moratorium on apartment-to-condo conversions
- 8) Create a city African American/Black Housing Advisory Board, led by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- City of Berkeley retains its historical reputation of inclusion and diversity status
- The African American/black community is revitalized in the City of Berkeley
- More African Americans are included in the housing development arena
- Increased African American/Black population in South Berkeley
- African Americans/Blacks add to the city's revenue tax-base
- African American homeownership increases
- Black residents will increase the city's census count.

The AABPCN considers the inequities and disparities in the black community to be unacceptable and something that all health professionals, the community, and government on all levels must tackle. The powers that be must be accountable for the problems which are prevalent and pervasive in the black community. *The lack of funding can no longer be an excuse* to allow African American lives and communities to continue to spiral out of control and into an abyss. Inequities and disparities and social injustices in the black community must be dealt with head on.

***“From the depth of need and despair, people can work together,
can organize themselves to solve their own problems
and fill their own needs with dignity and strength.”***

Cesar Chavez

A Community Approach for African American/Black Culturally Congruent Services

Introduction

The African American/Black community is plagued with complex and severe community problems that have long existed and seem to be worsening. It is the viewpoint of the African American/Black Professionals and Community Network (AABPCN) that the black community must be included in all aspects of issues that affect and relate to their personal, family, and community existence. African Americans from all social and economic statuses within the community must be integrated at all levels of the decision-making process, when it comes to their lives and those of members of their family and community.

The AABPCN is a network of community groups and individuals that are working to address and support city and county efforts that are directed at reducing and/or eliminating inequities and disparities in the African American/Black community in the City of Berkeley and Alameda County. The individuals in this group are committed to working with others to achieve this goal.

Although most of the information in this report is not new, the significance of this report is that it was developed by African Americans/Blacks from an African American/Black perspective. The intent of the report is to provide additional input and recommendations in the areas of mental and physical health, education, housing, and employment that have not been included in other local reports on the same subject matter.

Blacks that are *Hand Picked* to represent the voice of the masses in the Black community may not necessarily represent their views and perspectives, and some in the community do not view them as Black leaders who speak on their issues, stand up for their causes, and/or fight for their rights. There has to be more than just one or two African Americans at the table to speak on behalf of the black community regarding their concerns. Although, African Americans have an historical cultural connection, they do not all think alike, and they have different viewpoints that should be heard.

The majority of other communities in America; e.g., the Asian community, Jewish community, Irish community, Latin community, Native American community, Indian community, and other ethnic groups, are usually provided the opportunity and respect that allows their residents to direct the course of their communities and neighborhoods. Most African Americans/Blacks from all social and economic statuses want the same opportunity to develop and provide the necessary input and leadership in the black community.

The African American/Black population in Alameda County and within the City of Berkeley is devastated by inequities and disparities in areas that relate to the fundamental survival of human life. Although this is a common occurrence throughout our country, this makes it all the more important that culturally congruent services be developed, in order to reduce inequities and disparities within the Black population.

The number of reports with data that validates and identifies inequities and disparities in the areas of physical and mental health, employment, housing, and education in the African American community is vast. There is data in various reports, such as the Alameda County Department of Public Health Report, Health Inequities in the Bay Area 2008, The City of Berkeley Health Status Report, 2007, The Surgeon General's Report, Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, The 2020 Vision Plan for Berkeley's Children and Youth, and numerous other reports, which confirms major inequities and disparities in black communities throughout America and in particular, Alameda County. The problem is that the root causes of these inequities and disparities are rarely ever addressed and therefore, culturally appropriate services are usually not established to combat the problems.

Culture offers lenses of perception, a world view, and it also provides cultural standards for living. It helps a person to equate what is good and what is evil, and what is legitimate and what is illegitimate. Culture motivates individuals to act or refrain from acting. Culture provides a mode of communication between people. Culture also includes language, physical gestures and manner of dress, along with other elements. African American/Black culture has its own roots and foundation, thereby requiring services that address the cultural norms of most individuals assigned to that cultural group.

The AABPCN believes that **Culturally Congruent Services** are paramount in the reduction of inequities and disparities for African Americans. Building appropriate efficacy and support for consumers and learning and respecting the cultural traditions of African Americans is essential for service providers, in order to eradicate inequities and disparities. Respecting individuals, honoring their traditions, and recognizing the trauma of racism and the historical trauma of African American people is necessary for effective service delivery.

Service Delivery Models and Approaches that are effective for African Americans:

Welcoming Environment – Increases Access and Retention

Creating a welcoming environment for clients/staff /students/parents is the first step in retaining them.

Client-Centered Services – Putting Clients/Students/Parents First

In client-centered programs, clients are considered first and foremost at every point in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of service delivery. Clients are the experts in their own personal circumstances and conditions. Program staff gather information from clients to design and offer appropriate services, with input from the client. Client preferences guide every aspect of the service delivery system.

Culturally Congruent Services – Requires On-going Staff Training

- Respects individuals
- Acknowledges Racism, Institutionalized Racism, and Internalized Racism
- Honors traditions and values of clients/students

- Builds appropriate efficacy and support for consumers/students
- Staff, management (especially senior management) and board is reflective of clients
- Differentiates drug culture and criminal justice subculture from culture itself
- People learn and respect cultural traditions of others.

Strength-Based Approach – People have Strengths and Resources

In a strength-based approach, the focus is on the individual's positive actions, no matter how small. Drawing on appreciative inquiry, strength-based methodologies do not ignore problems. Instead they shift the frame of reference to define the issues. By focusing on what is working well, knowledgeable, successful strategies support the adaptive growth of individuals.

Integrated and Comprehensive Services – A Coordinated Continuum of Services

An integrated delivery system is a network of providers and organizations which provides or arranges to provide a coordinated continuum of services to a defined population and is willing to be held programmatically and fiscally accountable for the outcomes of the population served.

Advocacy – Advocate for Consumers/Patients/Students/Community

Staff advocates for public policy, resources, programmatic structure, economic and social systems within institutions that benefit clients, patients, students, and all residents.

The social inequities and disparities that have been created, because of racism affect health care, mental health, housing, employment, and education. In fact, all service providers in Alameda County and the City of Berkeley should include the treatment and prevention of all forms of racism as an integrated part of the service delivery system for the African American/Black population.

It does the country, state, county, and city no good to have a population of people consistently doing worse than the rest of Americans. To have Blacks lag behind like second-class citizens in the 21st century and not address the root causes of centuries of inherent inequities and disparities in the black community will only continue to erode and eventually destroy the promises and rights of all Americans, at some point and time in the near future.

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

Developing Culturally Congruent Mental Health and Health Treatment and Prevention Services for African American/Black People

Health inequities and disparities have been caused by entrenched social and racial injustices in American systems. It has been stated that every social determinant, including but not limited to education, employment, physical and mental health and housing, is impacted by the rules of law and the institutions that uphold the laws. The areas of mental health and primary care are of paramount concern, due to the vast number of African Americans that are affected by poor physical and mental health outcomes.

Dr. Joy DeGruy writes, "Healing must occur on multiple levels, because the injury occurred on many levels. We begin, by simply telling the truth."

Mental Health

African Americans are overrepresented in the mental health system at a rate of approximately 40% in Alameda County Behavior Health Care Services and Berkeley Mental Health. Blacks make up 13.20 percent of the total county population and approximately 10 percent of the city's residents. The mental health system in both jurisdictions lacks qualified mental health professionals to provide culturally congruent services to an ever-increasing African American consumer population.

There is documented research which states that black clients are commonly misdiagnosed, are prescribed medications that are usually inappropriate for their ethnic composition, they remain in treatment for long durations, and they receive inappropriate treatment services, due to the lack of using best practices in the field of mental health services for African Americans.

Alameda County's African American Utilization Report indicates that, "African Americans are disproportionately misdiagnosed, resulting in incorrect treatment."² Consumers are receiving older medications and treatment is not leading to wellness and recovery. There are high rates of African American clients with diagnoses of schizophrenia (especially black men); bipolar disorder, antisocial personality, and conduct disorder for a large number of black youth. Substance abuse rates among black consumers are extremely high as well. Most self-medicate in order to deal with racism, stress, historical trauma and the trauma of black life in America.

There is a direct correlation between current mental health problems within the African American population that stem from *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Internalized Racism, and Institutionalized Racism*, which has been left untreated for centuries and has impacted the black population in numerous unhealthy ways. Most black mental health experts believe that treating historical trauma and including the treatment of racism in African American/Black clients can prevent and reduce the impact of serious mental health disorders.

² Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services: African American Utilization Report, Goals and Recommendations. Winter 2011

The Surgeon General's report, *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity*, states, "Culture and society play pivotal roles in mental health, mental illness, and mental health services. Understanding the wide-ranging roles of culture and society enables the mental health field to design and deliver services that are more responsive to the needs of racial and ethnic minorities."³

Providing *Culturally Congruent* treatment and prevention services to African American clients in mental health settings in Alameda County and the City of Berkeley is necessary in order to improve mental health outcomes for black clients, their families, and the community.

Health Care

It is well documented that African Americans live 10 -15 years less than other racial groups. African Americans tend to die more from coronary heart disease, strokes, and cancer than other populations. They have worse health outcomes with most diseases and conditions than most other racial groups in Alameda County. The City of Berkeley's 2007 Health Status report states that African Americans have far higher rates of illness and deaths from hypertension, heart disease, and stroke, compared to White residents of Berkeley. The elevated rate of low birth weight in African Americans persists, despite a temporary decrease in the late 1990s.

In the report *Health Inequities in the Bay Area*, former Surgeon General David Satcher and his colleagues calculated that during 1991-2000, nearly 177,000 deaths were averted because of advances in medical technology, but if we were to eliminate the disparity between African Americans and whites, we would have avoided over 886,000 deaths.

There is some health equity work being done within the black community in Alameda County and the City of Berkeley; however, it tends to focus on small segments of the population and/or the programs are not funded appropriately to provide the service level that is required to effectively address the health inequity and disparity that it was funded to do. In order to eradicate health inequities and disparities, a clear focus and funding levels must be established to serve the community in a way that significantly decreases poor health outcomes in the black community.

Recommendations

- 1) Use Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding such as Workforce, Education, and Training (WET), to develop a 3-year training process to transform mental health treatment and prevention services for African Americans/Blacks
- 2) Increase the use of black psychologists and clinicians who specialize in African American/Black mental health treatment, prevention, and training. Utilize experts such as Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary, Dr. Kenneth Hardy, Dr. Na'im Akbar, Dr. Gloria Morrow, and Dr. Wade Nobles

³ Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity*. Retrieved from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/index.html>

- 3) Mandate that all county and city service provider's contracts require employees to receive 16 hours of annual documented cultural competency training. Two-thirds of all training must focus on the majority of the program's client demographic make-up
- 4) The county and city obtain input and advice from African Americans in regards to mental and physical health from groups such as the Association of Black Physicians, Black Psychologist Association, Alameda County African American Mental Health Network, Black Nurses Association, National Association of Black Social Workers, consumers, and family members
- 5) Culturally congruent services be incorporated into mental and public health, and community-based agency settings for African Americans that are welcoming, respectful, and use practices and models that are designed to be culturally specific
- 6) Increase Senior Management positions for African Americans/Blacks at all agencies and organizations. These black professionals must understand practices, models, and treatment and prevention services that have been developed for African American clients, consumers, patients, and families
- 7) Provide ongoing funding and support for the Black Infant Health Program
- 8) Create accountability standards for *Health Equity Work* in the African American community and produce annual reports and assessments that provide data that confirms the effective work in the area of reducing health inequities
- 9) Use WET funding to provide stipends to African American Mental Health Interns
- 10) Create county-wide African American/Black Mental Health and Public Health Oversight Boards, led by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- Prevention and reduction in mental illness and substance abuse
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- Healthier Black women, babies, and families
- A diverse workforce that can provide culturally appropriate services, training, and input in the mental health and primary care of African Americans
- A more productive and healthier African American/Black community.

“Behavioral Health Care is not a ‘one size fits all’ system. A valid understanding of ethnic group experiences can only be acquired by a self-enlightened, non-defensive, open and skilled professional network of providers.”

Education, Students, and Academic Success

The "Achievement Gap" is defined as the disparity of educational performances between groups of students by gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language and socio-economics. Across the nation, educational, social, and economic outcomes for most black children are in a crisis mode. The reason for the crisis is a hotly debated subject matter in today's society, especially in the academic world.

Many African American children are not able to compete with White and Asian students. It is documented that growing up poor and White in Berkeley is more advantageous statistically (in terms of good health and academic success in BUSD) than growing up middle-class and African-American.⁴ Many Latino students are also surpassing black youth in the educational arena, and one reason is that Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) is providing the correct response by infusing culturally specific programs, services, and funding to help Latino students succeed academically.

Most African American students are struggling with low self-esteem, peer pressure, and the inability to read, write, and perform math at a proficiency rate that is expected of them. BUSD has not implemented any specialized cultural/ethnic educational programs to address their educational deficiencies, unless special education is the specialized program that is supposed to provide the academic support that African American students require. One report states that “special education in this country has reached a state of national crisis. This \$60 billion industry is impacting the lives of many American children – disproportionately black boys. Clearly, special education is a vital part of education in general, but when it is misused, black boys are the ones suffering.”⁵

The city report on children and youth services of March 2, 2009, revealed that 10th grade Berkeley High School PSAT results showed that 47 percent of all white students ranked in the top 25 percent compared to all students nationally; however, not one Berkeley High School African American student ranked in this quartile, and in fact, 70 percent of this demographic were in the lowest 25 percent nationally. It is easy to label children as “*Underachievers*” and/or “*At Risk*,” and to then blame them for their inability to succeed in an educational system that has not been fully invested in their educational success for decades.



Fewer Blacks graduate from Berkeley High School

African American youth are faced with issues such as poverty; the 2020 Vision document states that 30 percent of black students between 0-17 years of age live below the poverty level, as compared to 15 percent of all races in Berkeley.⁶ Black youth are also struggling with poor educational outcomes, high unemployment rates and communities filled with crime and violence, and some lack parental support. They are

⁴ [City of Berkeley Health Status Report, 2007](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/publichealth/reports/reports.html). Retrieved from www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/publichealth/reports/reports.html

⁵ [Black Boys and Special Education – Change Is Needed!](http://www.teachersofcolor.com/2009/04/black-boys-and-special-education-change-is-needed/) Retrieved from <http://www.teachersofcolor.com/2009/04/black-boys-and-special-education-change-is-needed/>

⁶ 20/20 Vision for Berkeley’s Children and Youth report, November 2009. Retrieved from <http://berkeleyalliance.moonfruit.com/#/about-2020-vision/4542900283>

also bombarded on a daily basis with negative media images of themselves, their parents, and their community.

A Justice Policy Institute report in 2002 revealed that the number of Black men in prison has increased to five times the rate it was twenty years ago. More African American men are in jails than in college. Some African American males will join the ranks of other young black men in jails or prison, while others continue to be warehoused in Special Education. For black youth, the choices are very clear; either they go to school and learn or go to prison, and involuntarily participate in the *Industrialized Prison System*.

The prison system is laying in wait for young African American boys. New prison construction projects are based on current fourth grade reading levels of black boys. In this society, fourth grade is the defining mark for lost dreams and future goals for so many little African American boys in elementary schools all over America. Prisons are planned and developed in relationship to how successful a little nine or ten year old black boy is in reading.

The data below are from the REPARABLE HARM: Assessing and Addressing Disparities Faced by Boys and Men of Color in California, 2009 report, which highlights the necessity for support and services for African American youth, families and the community at large.

- African American adolescents have custody rates 5.7 times that of white adolescents
- African American men are 5.5 times more likely to go to prison during their lifetime; therefore, they are overrepresented in jails and prisons
- African American children are 2.1 times more likely to witness domestic violence and 3 times more likely to be exposed to shootings, bombs, or riots
- African American children are 4 times overly-represented in the foster care system
- African American children are 8.8 times more likely to have an incarcerated parent; *men are 6.7 times more likely to be incarcerated*, thereby leaving children fatherless and young males without a positive male figure in their daily lives.

African American students across BUSD are steadily decreasing at an alarming rate from elementary to high school. In 2011, Black students make up 20 percent of the district's population in the middle schools. A report indicates that enrollment of African American students at the high school level has declined from 30 percent in 2007 – 2008 (African American student decline represented the highest percentage this period) to 20 percent in the 2009 – 2010 school year. "The longer people stay in school, the healthier they tend to be."⁷ African American students, especially black males, are disappearing. The question that needs to be investigated is ***where are they going?***

⁷ Alameda County Public Health Department; His Health, Alameda County, Male Health Status Report, 2010

Some parents in the black community have expressed concerns about this matter, and they anticipate that this trend will continue, because of increased denials of out-of-district permits, attendance concerns, and student behavior problems, all of which affect African American students at a disproportionately higher rate than other students in BUSD. Also, black students are involuntarily transferred to other educational settings that lack adequate support and assistance with their educational pursuits.

In addition to some students being abruptly disenrolled, many students will also leave the district by dropping out of school or moving to other surrounding areas in search of cheaper housing. There is also a belief by many black individuals that there is a current massive push-out of African Americans occurring in the City of Berkeley housing sector, and that too affects the African American student population in BUSD.

Recommendations

- 1) Invest in culturally effective curriculum and learning interventions for black students
- 2) Invest funding and support for the academic success of African American males
- 3) Permanently invest in a Crisis Support System for black youth and families
- 4) Increase quality academic student support and tutoring
- 5) Provide transparency regarding equity in allocation of funds in the district
- 6) Hire qualified African American teachers, especially males
- 7) Create an annual public report with disenrollment and inter-district permit status of students
- 8) Institute ***Mandatory Cultural Competency*** training for all district staff in the area of historical trauma and internalized racism, as it relates to black culture
- 9) Develop effective culturally congruent academic programs for African American preschool children
- 10) Create a BUSD African American/Black Educational Oversight Board, led by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- Narrowing of the Achievement Gap
- African American parents and the community will invest in BUSD agenda
- Trust is built within BUSD through transparency and equity of allocation of funding
- Evidence-based cultural programs will increase academic success for black students
- Some recommendations in the 20/20 Vision Plan will be implemented
- Hiring Black teachers and other educational staff will provide students with role models in the school setting
- More black students will attend college and other institutions of higher learning.

“In response, 2020 Vision is a commitment to share the responsibility of closing the achievement gap together with the fundamental guiding principle that we must work collaboratively to pool our city’s resources more effectively and efficiently to eliminate these inequities.”⁸

⁸ 2020 Vision for Berkeley’s Children and Youth report, November 2009. Retrieved from <http://berkeleyalliance.moonfruit.com/#/about-2020-vision/4542900283>

Alternative Approaches to Employment Development

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) unemployment data through March, 2011 documents African American unemployment rates to be 15.5 percent; double that of Whites and Asians. For black males 16-19 years of age, the BLS reports an astounding national unemployment rate of 40 percent.

The high unemployment rate affects all African Americans in Berkeley, especially black males. This includes African American professional workers, youth, the structurally-unemployed, and blue collar construction workers. Black construction workers are visibly absent from construction sites throughout Alameda County. In Berkeley, they were visibly missing from the construction of the Ed Roberts Campus, the YMCA Teen Center, Trader Joe's, housing, and street construction projects along with other construction projects throughout Berkeley. Black people are also missing from major construction jobs that are happening on freeways and highways all over Alameda County. "The stress of unemployment can lead to poor mental health and substance abuse. Unemployment can also influence community life and well-being."⁹

From approximately 1998 – 2004, the City of Berkeley and Berkeley Unified School



Green Jobs

District did a significant amount of capital improvement and retrofitting construction projects. First Source Construction Program, working with the city and BUSD, was able to help more than 100 Berkeley residents secure employment with these projects. These jobs provided residents with union-waged positions, with salaries ranging from \$25 - \$35.00 an hour. However, over the past several years, the city has decreased employment services for Berkeley residents.

Given the impending release of a massive number of incarcerated individuals back into the black community and the employment sector, it is imperative that employment is focused on, especially for those from low-income areas in the city. There is also a need to educate and collaborate with employers and businesses, so that they are encouraged to

hire those who have the potential to succeed in the work environment.

The four major areas that need to be enhanced in order to increase employment outcomes for African Americans/Blacks are:

- Funding for employment and training programs and services
- Support of a comprehensive employment delivery system
- Training in the trades
- First Source Compliance Agreements and Contract Monitoring

⁹ Alameda County Public Health Department; His Health, Alameda County, Male Health Status Report, 2010

Although these four areas have been discussed at length over the years, each area has been treated in a vacuum. For example, contract compliance has not been viewed in relation to construction training and union membership. The key to the success of this model of an employment program is that it must be collaborative and the approach must be systematic.

There are successful collaborative models to point to, such as Hensel-Phelps (the prime contractor that constructed the Oakland Federal Building with strong compliance monitoring from the Federal Office of Contract Compliance (OFCCP)), The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, and advocacy from community-based agencies. The positive outcomes from this collaborative effort resulted in many local hires for community residents. Of course, this was a time of affirmative action laws and class action lawsuits that created jobs at Lucky Stores, Berkeley Farms and Pinole Point Steel located in Richmond; they were out of compliance in their hiring policies.

There is a need to recreate the Public Service Employment Program (PSE) and advocate to the Department of Labor and Congressional Representatives and urge them to create a 21st Century PSE targeted to the so-called "countercyclical unemployed," i.e., those unemployed persons who would be employed in a better economy. The PSE program operated nationally in the early 1980s, and workers were paid a flat rate of \$833.00 a month. They were assigned as teachers, medical workers and to city and county governments. Of course, today's wages for PSE workers would require adjustment in order to meet the higher cost of living in today's economy. Positions could include jobs in energy, green jobs, health care, child care, education, technology, and other career fields.

Delivery System Design

Equally important in the success of such a program is the design of the system and the support it receives. It is the aim to develop a delivery system which will identify, train, place, and monitor workers in the construction trades. This system would seek to accomplish these goals in part by leveraging jobs on city construction projects, as well as incorporating other elements needed to support an individual's effort toward self-sufficiency. To create this system, the support and participation of department heads, union groups, contractors' groups, social service groups, CBOs and community leaders will be needed in order for this project to be successful.

Training in the Trades

"...If you only know a little, you can only do a little..." (SJ Waller, 100-year-old master carpenter). Over the past three years, Berkeley's First Source program has met with various members from the trade unions, general contractors, instructors and developers. The major concern shared by those closely involved in construction is the lack of trained or skilled workers. Many in the trades point to the fact that very few people under the age of forty are skilled in any construction trade. It is this lack of skills that is the main



reason used for not hiring residents on local construction projects.

Contract Compliance

The role of a Contract Compliance Officer (CCO) in the design and implementation of such a project is extremely important. There is a need for a dedicated compliance officer to enforce laws already on the books. This will enable better tracking of a contractors' compliance as well as employee retention rates. The CCO would have the authority to request a stop work order when a contractor is out of compliance, including hiring practices.

The use of the word '**Responsible**' in contracts, and the term 'lowest responsible bidder', gives the city some flexibility in encouraging contractors to hire identified residents. By seizing the time, there is an opportunity to do something special and different. Let us look at employment through a different set of lenses.

Glass Ceiling

The "Glass Ceiling" is still a very real problem for African Americans in their careers. Very few African Americans are in Senior Management positions in the county, city, BUSD, and community-based agencies. Deserving black employees are consistently over looked for promotions and upward mobility on the job.

Some blacks that are promoted are usually those that are comfortable conforming to cultural norms that are usually outside of their own. Diversity in organizations is given '*lip service*' and most agencies only value diversity on paper, as it relates to funding. A lot of African Americans that are "*comfortable in their own skin*" and proud of their ethnicity are usually viewed in a suspicious manner in the work place and are not considered Senior Management material.

By using blueprints that worked in the past, the issue of employment can be addressed through an informed, comprehensive, and creative system. A working community is a healthy community. By seizing the time, there is an opportunity to do something that can lead to actual jobs and careers for African Americans in Berkeley.

Recommendations

- 1) Increase funding for the design and implementation of a comprehensive First Source compliance program
- 2) Support Ex-offender employment programs and services
- 3) Increase the availability for small business loans for African Americans
- 4) Request through ordinance that 1 to 2 percent of Public Work's budget is designated for employment and training services for individuals living below the poverty level in South Berkeley
- 5) Allow contractors with a record of hiring identified residents a fixed percentage over the lowest bid (e.g. 5% over)
- 6) Develop capital formation for African Americans/Blacks
- 7) Offer incentives in addition to punitive measures to encourage contractors to hire identified residents

- 8) Develop a Tri-Cities agreement with trade unions, contractors, department heads and representatives from surrounding cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and Richmond
- 9) Increase employment and upward mobility within the African American/Black population in Berkeley
- 10) Develop skilled training programs that leads to jobs in the trades
- 11) Advocate for a Public Service Employment Program
- 12) Create a City African American Employment Advisory Council, lead by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- Significant reduction in unemployment among all African Americans, including professionals, formerly incarcerated individuals and youth
- Trained workers in the fields of the construction industry, green economy, and the high-tech industry
- Reduced and measurable recidivism rates among the formerly incarcerated
- Increased self-esteem and reduced alienation and self-destructive behavior among youth
- African Americans will be provided with upward mobility in their careers
- Employers will work with the city and county to hire residents
- Trade unions will hire qualified African Americans
- African Americans can secure funding to start small businesses
- Increased contract compliance officers.

Tea Party activists have argued for swift economic intervention to combat a near 10 percent unemployment rate. When the unemployment rate for African Americans exceeded that percentage for the past several decades, it has led to Blacks being stereotyped as lazy and undeserving, instead of focusing the criticism more on national and local leadership.

***Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Emanuel Cleaver, II stated that, "While overall unemployment declined this month, and the Country's unemployment rate hit a two-year low, African American unemployment slightly increased from 15.3 percent to 15.5 percent. With 13 consecutive months of private-sector job growth, the overall numbers continue to prove that the work we accomplished last Congress was effective in preventing remarkably high job loss. We laid the foundation to create new opportunities for all Americans. Unfortunately, our community has yet to reap the benefits of our efforts and we as a Caucus must ensure that they do."*¹⁰**

¹⁰ CBC Chair on Black Unemployment Numbers: No Investment, No Recovery.

Retrieved from

<http://www.theroot.com/buzz/cbc-chair-black-unemployment-numbers-no-investment-no-recovery>

African American Resource Center: A Community Meeting Place

The Black community in Berkeley requires a place to meet in order to organize, strategize, socialize, and be at home with each other, in a welcoming environment that offers culturally congruent services for African American/Black residents. An African American/Black Resource Center, located in South Berkeley that is funded by the City, County, University, Alta Bates, and other funding sources, will be a stabilizing foundation for the Black community in Berkeley.

Black people use to be connected to each other; they had family and friends around them.

South and West Berkeley, which were once historically black neighborhoods, have undergone transformation and displacement of a lot of black families, due to various reasons. West Berkeley is no longer considered a black community, and South Berkeley has seen an influx of other populations, thereby changing the makeup of the previously predominantly black neighborhood.

There is a need to reweave the social fabric of South Berkeley, which has been torn apart by crime, drugs and poverty, and some believe there has been a neglect of city services and funding that would have helped to keep the community vital and alive. But now, instead of a community, you find alienation; fear, suspicion, hunger, and need. You find people in black communities retreating behind double-locked doors and ignoring their neighbors. Black people are then further divided from each other by politicians and churches using district lines and church homes. There is a necessity for reconciliation in African American neighborhoods throughout America.

The Surgeon General's reports that, "Ties to family and community, especially strong in African, Latino, Asian, and Native American communities, are forged by cultural tradition and by the current and historical need to assist arriving immigrants, to provide a sanctuary against discrimination practiced by the larger society, and to provide a sense of belonging and affirming a centrally held cultural or ethnic identity."¹¹

Black people use to be connected to each other; they had family and friends around them. People helped each other out, not only with the material necessities, such as food, clothing, and shelter, but also spiritually and emotionally. Life is a lot easier when you are part of a network of friends and family, a community, and a neighborhood. It is this very communal connection of community that most African Americans think is missing in the black community in Berkeley.

Building community is something that can be done whether people have jobs or not, a college degree or GED, own a home or rent, and/or drive a car or walk. People can come together and create a new sense of purpose and life in a community. A black neighborhood can be a village again, with the right support and assistance from

¹¹ Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity*. Retrieved from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/index.html>

government, churches, schools, and residents. In the 2020 Vision for Berkeley's Children and Youth, report it states, "Cities across the country are researching bold and innovative strategies based on best practices. Berkeley has a strong track record of public support for and investment in our schools and community, and it is this history that will guarantee our success."¹²

San Jose has an African American Community Center for their black residents, and they have had it for decades. The African American population in that city is less than half of Berkeley's Black residents. There is a belief that by developing an African American/Black Resource Center, Berkeley will be investing in keeping a diverse community, with African Americans as a vital part of the city.

There is a fundamental need for African Americans to maintain their roots in South Berkeley. Therefore, there is a necessity to have a location where the black community can receive culturally congruent services in a welcoming, respectful, professional, and caring environment. "Recent studies show that the quality of neighborhood environments is an important determinant of opportunities and choices available to people that live there."¹³ The creation of an African American Resource Center would provide the black community with stability and visible inclusion within the city.

The vision for the African American/Black Resource Center is that it would be developed to have office space for various organizations to serve the community. Services would include, but not be limited to community support, career development, legal services, housing assistance, mental health treatment, educational support, nutritional support, and a meeting space that can be divided up when necessary to make smaller meeting spaces, or opened up for large community events. The building would be a modern green building that is environmentally friendly and located in South Berkeley.

The Motto of the Harlem Children's Zone is "For children to do well, their families have to do well. And, for families to do well, their community must do well."¹⁴ The Harlem Children's Zone efforts are focused on strengthening and empowering families, so that they can have a positive impact on their children's development. President Barack Obama has called for the creation of "*Promise Neighborhoods*" across the country based on the comprehensive, data-driven approach of the Harlem Children Zone Project.

Recommendations

- 1) The City of Berkeley donates a building to the African American Community

¹² 2020 Vision for Berkeley's Children and Youth report, November 2009. Retrieved from <http://berkeleyalliance.moonfruit.com/#/about-2020-vision/4542900283>

¹³ Alameda County Public Health Department; His Health, Alameda County, Male Health Status Report, 2010

¹⁴ Harlem Children's Zone. Retrieved from <http://www.hcz.org/>

- 2) The African American Resource Center is funded and support by the city, county, Alta Bates, UCB, and other public and private organizations
- 3) Program and services will be operated primarily by African American/Black residents and groups in Berkeley
- 4) Culturally congruent services are provided to Black residents in their neighborhood setting
- 5) Create a City African American/Black Community Advisory Council, lead by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

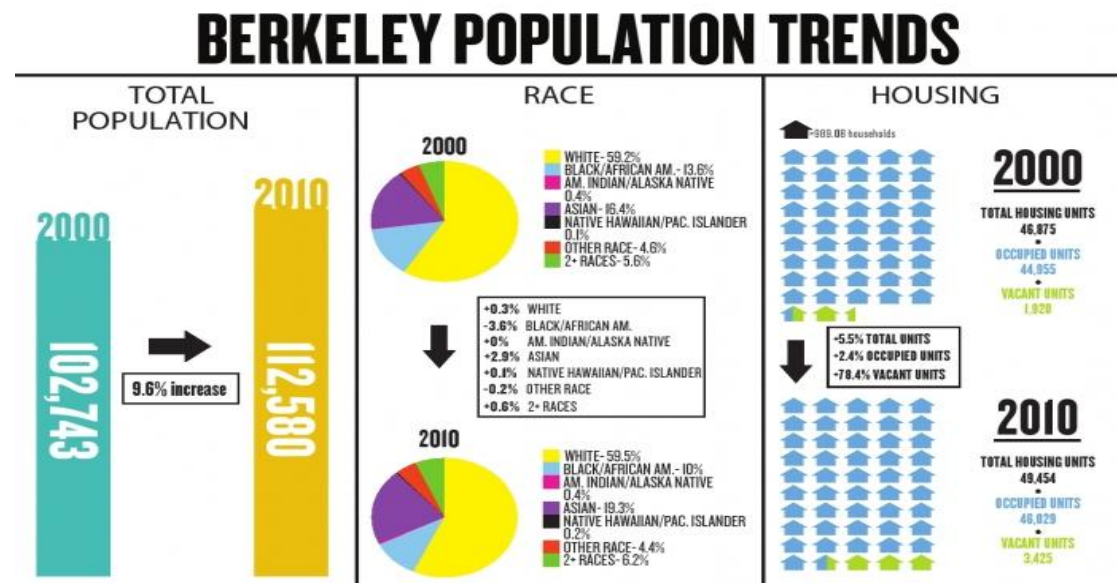
- The Resource Center will be a stabilizing force in the black community in South Berkeley
- Community empowerment, support, and involvement will increase
- Culturally congruent services provided to African Americans
- A free community meeting place for black residents and local groups
- The City invests in the Black community.

“Through a coordinated effort by hundreds of devoted men and women, The Harlem Children’s Zone has established a new method to end the cycle of generational poverty. By addressing the needs of the entire community, HCZ isn’t simply helping children beat the odds; it’s helping to change the odds.”¹⁵

Housing and the Disappearing of Black Neighborhoods

The 2010 census data states that California’s African American/Black population has risen by 1.6 percent. However, the African American population in Alameda County dropped to approximately to 12 percent (there are 14 cities in the County) and Berkeley’s African American/Black population has experienced a 3.6 percent decline, to now only 10 percent of the city’s population.

Decrease of Blacks in Berkeley



¹⁵ Harlem Children’s Zone. Retrieved from <http://www.hcz.org/>

A Community Approach for African American/Black Culturally Congruent Services
Prepared by: The African American/Black Professionals & Community Network (AABPCN)

In 1990, the African American/Black population in Berkeley was 19,309, or 18.8 percent. The decline of African American/Black residents in Alameda County and Berkeley should be of concern; however, more so to the City of Berkeley, due to its global reputation and longstanding commitment to diversity, inclusion, integration, and equality.



Berkeley public housing tenant Keith Carlisle urged the City Council at its meeting on Jan. 19 to save the City's public housing from privatization.

Blacks that are *Hand Picked* to represent the voice of the masses in the Black community may not necessarily represent their views and perspectives, and some in the community do not view them as black leaders who speak on their issues, stand up for their causes, and/or fight for their rights. There has to be more than just one or two African Americans at the table to speak on behalf of the black community regarding their

concerns. Although, African Americans have an historical cultural connection, they do not all think alike, and they have different viewpoints that should be heard.

Since 1990, there seems to have been an increase in the number of apartment conversions to condos in the City of Berkeley. During that time, there have been approximately 24,512 conversions. The average price range for a remodeled unit was \$265,000, and a unit as is cost \$245,000, which adds to the issue of affordable housing in the City of Berkeley for the African American/Black population. Therefore, securing and maintaining housing in Berkeley has become problematic for African Americans. Currently, there are 277 listed home foreclosures (as of 4/12/11) taking place in South Berkeley. There is also a need to step up measures that will ensure the continued inclusion of African American/Black homeownership in the City of Berkeley.

In most neighborhoods there is opposition to subsidized housing and providing support to low-income Americans, especially African Americans; however, if measures are not put in place to at least maintain the current 10 percent population of African American residents in Berkeley, then it will become a city that resembles most cities in Marin County and the likes thereof, which has very little diversity of residents, especially African Americans. The Bay Citizen reported on March 24, 2011 that the "U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had determined that Marin had "failed to comply" with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and two other anti-discrimination statutes."¹⁶

A closer area that reflects very little diversity in its residents is Piedmont; the number of African Americans/Blacks in Piedmont total 136 residents, or 1.2 percent. If Berkeley

¹⁶ Written by Raven Clabough Wednesday, 30 March 2011 09:17, Retrieved from [The Bay Citizen](http://s.tt/129Ff) (<http://s.tt/129Ff>)

continues to lose its African American residents, it will also lose the city's reputation and respect in the world as a city that values inclusion, diversity, and equality for all people.

Recommendations

- 1) Reestablish the section 8 home ownership program and increase section 8 vouchers for people living in South Berkeley and their families
- 2) Designate a percentage of new housing for low- to moderate-income families in Berkeley
- 3) Pass new regulations requiring housing developers to offer more housing at below-market rates
- 4) Increase investigations into fair housing complaints in Berkeley, especially as it relates to African American/Black men
- 5) Stop foreclosures and assist residents in South Berkeley with foreclosures
- 6) Increase the number of African American/Black residents on the Berkeley Rent Board, Housing Advisory Commission (HAC), Affordable Housing Associates (AHA), and California Housing and Land Trust
- 7) Place a ten-year Moratorium on apartment to condo conversions
- 8) Create a City African American/Black Housing Advisory Board lead by and comprised of 70% African American/Black members.

Outcomes

- City of Berkeley retains its historical reputation of inclusion and diversity status
- The African American/Black community is revitalized in the City of Berkeley
- More African Americans are included in the housing development arena
- Increased African American/Black population in South Berkeley
- African American/Blacks add to the city's revenue tax-base
- African American homeownership increases
- Black residents will increase the city's census count.

"You can spend the money on new housing for poor people and the homeless, or you can spend it on a football stadium or a golf course."

Conclusion

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research looked at income inequalities and health disparities; they found that socially-based disparities in health status continue to plague even the most egalitarian societies despite public policies that aim to reduce or eliminate them. In the United States, researchers have been preoccupied with the overwhelming health disparities, such as mortality rates and chronic disease prevalence that are related to race and ethnicity. But in other developed countries, public health researchers have focused on health disparities as they are related to inequalities in the distribution of income.¹⁷

¹⁷ Income inequalities and health disparities, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and UCLA School of Public Health Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1070714/>

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The AABPCN considers the disproportionate amount of inequities and disparities in the black community to be unacceptable, and something that all health professionals, the community, and government on all levels must tackle. The powers that be must be accountable for these inequities and disparities, which are prevalent and pervasive in the black community. *The lack of funding can no longer be an excuse* to allow African American lives and communities to continue to spiral out of control and into an abyss. Inequities and disparities and social injustices in the black community must be dealt with head on.

Acknowledgements

The African American/Black Professionals & Community Network's mission is to support each other and the community. Therefore, it is in keeping with this mission that individuals came together to produce this document in the hopes that by providing an African American/Black perspective regarding some of the problems in the black community that culturally congruent services will be developed.

Thank you to everyone that participated in the writing of this report.

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Note: The usage of African American and Black are interchangeable in this report.