

**City of Durham Human Relations Commission**  
**Report on Structural Racism in Durham**  
**June 5, 2018**

**Introduction**

Structural racism is considered to be a “system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often-reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.”<sup>1</sup> Quantifying and identifying such a large problem with multiple components including historical and cultural reasons can be challenging but is a necessary step to end and ameliorate inequity.

We focused on the following large areas of disparity: health, early childhood education, general education, policing, workplace/employment, socioeconomic status, and disabilities. We fully acknowledge that each of these areas can be subdivided into specific topics, policies, and procedures. We also acknowledge that this report highlights the racial disparate outcomes of decades of policies at the local and federal level, and it does not draw the line connecting specific outcomes to the specific policies that have contributed to those outcomes.

Durham has many active residents working to end structural racism, and we hope that by highlighting the most critical inequities for people of color, the HRC can work with others. Our overall goal for this report is to introduce a general outlook of structural and institutional racial disparities in the city of Durham potentially caused or perpetuated by federal, state, and municipal policy-making.

Following this document, we hope to initiate conversations about the roots of these disparities and work to challenge and amend the racially discriminatory policies and decisions (both intentional and unintentional) that contribute to these disparities. Within our goal, we hope to identify issues with the largest disparities, which may then become the focus of future HRC work.

**Purpose**

A compounding set of past and present policy decisions at each level of government has contributed to racial inequity, so we were particularly interested in how policy decisions by the city of Durham contributes to these disparities. Two examples of Durham’s influence on racial disparities are the approval of the destruction of houses and businesses in Hayti for the construction of NC Highway 147 (which caused housing disparity among others) as well as more recent decisions regarding policing policies. Over the past few years, the HRC has examined issues of racial disparities that are directly related to city decision-making regarding the Bull City Connector, hiring and firing practices among city workers, and policing. The city of Durham has the power to enact corrective policies regarding racial inequity and in some cases has begun to do so. As such, the HRC sought to gather and examine publicly available data that indicates the racial inequity Durham’s residents face so that the city has a better understanding of where, when, and how to prevent or end such disparities, rather than continually deal with the resulting harm and cost.

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<sup>1</sup> “11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism,” January 30, 2018, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/structural-racism-definition/>

(Please note: Due to a lack of consistent terminology in the data reporting of our sources, we use the terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “Latinx” as well as “black” and “African American” interchangeably. We acknowledge that this decision is not ideal or entirely accurate, but we believe using one term to discuss data from each source may distort the data in question. Rather than jeopardize the integrity of the data, we use terminology in the text that corresponds with the terminology in the data source.)

## **Notable disparity data**

### *Health disparities*

White residents in the United States continue to have better physical health, health care, and health care access than non-white residents. National research shows that minority racial and ethnic groups have poorer health and experience poorer health outcomes over the course of their lives, particularly in early life. For example, the black/African American community disproportionately has a higher infant-mortality rate and has more babies with a low birth weight. Additionally, people who identify as both LGBT and members of racial or ethnic minorities experience worse outcomes than their heterosexual counterparts due to low rates of health insurance coverage, higher risk factors for drug abuse, cancer, and other diseases as well as lack of cultural competence in the healthcare system.<sup>2</sup>

Growing evidence shows that black women experience higher cases of complications during childbirth and pregnancy. It is especially true for women who attend hospitals disadvantaged by segregation. Black women, who give birth in hospitals that disproportionately serve black minorities, experience higher rates of birth-related embolism and emergency hysterectomies. One study estimated that the rate of harm for black women would fall by nearly 50 percent if black mothers gave birth at the same hospitals as white women.<sup>3</sup>

Even accounting for risk factors like low educational attainment, obesity, and neighborhood poverty, the city’s black mothers still face significantly higher rates of harm. As of 2010, “Although minorities make up 41% of all Durham births, they account for approximately 57% of all infant deaths and low birth weight babies. Blacks are the minority group that are most impacted. Over half of infant deaths in Durham between 2005 and 2009 happened in African American families.”<sup>4</sup> Some studies indicate that obese women of all races do better than black woman who are of normal weight. Black mothers who are college-educated fare worse than women of all other races who never finished high school. And black women in the wealthiest neighborhoods do worse than white, Hispanic, and Asian mothers in the poorest neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup> While these studies took place in New York and California, the disparities to maternal care likely extend beyond the scope of study to the city of Durham.

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<sup>2</sup> Krehely, Jeff, “How to Close the LGBT Health Disparities Gap,” accessed 6/1/18, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2009/12/21/7048/how-to-close-the-lgbt-health-disparities-gap/>

<sup>3</sup> Waldman, Annie, “How Hospitals Are Failing Black Mothers,” accessed 3/26/18, <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-hospitals-are-failing-black-mothers>

<sup>4</sup> 2011 Durham County Community Health Assessment, “CHAPTER 7: Reproductive Health,” accessed 6/1/18, <http://www.dconc.gov/home/showdocument?id=1348>

<sup>5</sup> Waldman, “How Hospitals Are Failing Black Mothers”

Data on the city of Durham reinforces the notion that non-white residents face challenges accessing healthcare services and having health insurance. In Durham in 2017, 6.5% of children lacked health insurance. Although we do not have a racial breakdown for this data, we can point out that non-white residents make up more than two-thirds of Durham's total uninsured residents. It's also worth noting here that Durham's rate of uninsured children is higher than the state's and the country's. Durham residents notice these biases and challenges too—more newly immigrated Latinx residents in Durham believed there was significant bias within the healthcare system compared to their national counterparts.

Durham County produced an in-depth Community Health Assessment for 2014 that includes extensive examination of health and environmental disparities in the county: <http://healthydurham.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CHA-Final-Document.pdf>. We encourage any interested Durham community member to bolster their understanding of racial disparities by reading the assessment.

### *Early childhood disparities*

However, the divide between white and non-white children is not limited to health and health care. Of the 2015 Durham community, 37% of black and 35% of Hispanic infants and children up to 8 years old lived in homes at or below poverty, compared to only 8% of similar-aged white infants and children. Living at or below poverty often means struggling to get many basic needs, not just health care. Early childhood is a time of rapid and crucial physical, mental, and emotional development, and poverty can negatively affect this development especially for African American families who are least likely to afford high-quality care for children under 6 years.<sup>6</sup>

### *General education disparities*

As education continues beyond early childhood, so does the gap between white and non-white residents. According to US Census estimates for years 2012 to 2016, education attainment among Durham residents varied significantly by race. About 96% of white residents were estimated to have at least a high school diploma. During the same period, about 86% to 88% of black and American Indians/Alaskan Natives (AIAN) residents were estimated to have reached the same level of education. The Hispanic population with at least a high school degree was estimated to be at the lowest percentage—about 45%. Having a high school diploma is often not enough to work in many of today's professional fields. It opens the door to more job opportunities and postsecondary education.

The divide between white and non-white residents with postsecondary education expands after high school graduation. The previously cited US Census estimate projected approximately 62% of white Durham residents to have a Bachelor's degree or higher. In comparison, only one-third (roughly 33%) of black residents were estimated to have similar education attainment. Like the high school diploma estimates, Durham's Hispanic population was estimated to have the lowest percentage of holding a Bachelor's degree or higher. Completing a postsecondary education program often feels

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<sup>6</sup> Malik, Rasheed and Jamal Hagler, "Black Families Work More, Earn Less, and Face Difficult Child Care Choices," accessed 6/1/18, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2016/08/05/142296/black-families-work-more-earn-less-and-face-difficult-child-care-choices/>

like a requirement to compete for many professional opportunities, but it ultimately can lead to better career opportunities, job security, and higher wages.

### *Policing disparities*

Examining data generated by public institutions shows further division between white and non-white residents. Even though data shows marijuana usage rates are similar between white and black people,<sup>7</sup> black Durham residents made up 80% of misdemeanor marijuana charges by the Durham Police Department in 2016.<sup>8</sup> In 2014, the HRC and the city concurred with the F.A.D.E. recommendations to reduce racial disparities in traffic stops and searches, primarily through the implementation of a written consent search policy.<sup>9</sup> The policy had a positive impact of reducing the the overall number of traffic stops and searches, meaning fewer black drivers are now subject to these actions.<sup>10</sup> But it's worth noting here that even with reduced numbers, wide racial disparities still persist: in 2018 black drivers accounted for 59% of traffic stops, compared with 27% of whites.<sup>11</sup> The 2016 HRC report on the Durham County jail contains further information about a variety of city and county disparities that disproportionately impact communities of color.<sup>12</sup> As the report notes, over 75% of the Durham County jail population is black, even though only 38% of the population of Durham County as whole is black. The city is responsible for over 60% of the jail's population. This kind of data points to an alarming relationship between the police and Durham's non-white communities (particularly the black community), a relationship which the data demonstrates is the racialized impact of race neutral policies. Beyond the clearly disproportionate targeting of non-white communities by Durham's police, the stress of this relationship can have an unquantifiable impact on the mental and emotional states of Durham's black residents.

### *Workplace/employment disparities*

Employment in the US is not evenly distributed between white and non-white residents. The chart below shows national percentages of unemployment in the fourth quarter of 2017 as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>13</sup> Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino communities had higher unemployment in each of the three categories than the corresponding total.

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<sup>7</sup> Dews, Fred, "Charts of the week: Marijuana use by race, Islamist rule in Middle East, climate adaptation savings," 08/11/17

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2017/08/11/charts-of-the-week-marijuana-use-by-race/>

<sup>8</sup> F.A.D.E. presentation to the Human Relations Commission in April 2018, citing data from the Durham Police Department's 2016 Misdemeanor Marijuana Report.

<sup>9</sup> The city's mandatory written consent to search policy, implemented in October 2014, applies to all searches city-wide—of pedestrians, property, vehicles, and homes.

<sup>10</sup> According to data provided by the Southern Coalition for Social Justice to the HRC in April 2018: "In the 41 months prior to the implementation of a mandatory written consent policy, Durham Police Department reported 4,088 consent searches during the course of traffic stops, or 100 a month. In the 41 months since the policy's implementation, DPD reported 631 such searches, or 15 a month."

<sup>11</sup> Data provided to the City of Durham Human Relations Commission by the Southern Coalition for Social Justice to the Human Relations Commission in April 2018

<sup>12</sup> The City of Durham Human Relations Commission, "Recommendations: Durham County Detention Facility,"

[https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20151/Durham-County-Detention-Facility-Recommendations---FINAL\\_Rev-Feb-7--2018](https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20151/Durham-County-Detention-Facility-Recommendations---FINAL_Rev-Feb-7--2018)

<sup>13</sup> "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," 1/30/18,

[https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee\\_e16.htm](https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e16.htm)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black or African American</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>
<i>Total (Men and women), 16 years and over</i>	3.9	3.4	7.0	2.8	4.7
<i>Men, 16 years and over</i>	4.0	3.5	7.8	2.8	4.3
<i>Women, 16 years and over</i>	3.8	3.3	6.3	2.7	5.2

Beyond simply becoming employed, white Durham residents may have a better likelihood to remain employed by the city of Durham. For example, according to a January 2, 2015 memo provided to the HRC, the workforce for they city of Durham was 53% white and 41% black. Yet between 2008 and 2014, roughly 70% of the people terminated in the city workforce were black and 25% were white.

#### *Socioeconomic status disparities*

As expected, disparities in the previous areas signals overall socioeconomic disparities. These disparities reflect a wider range of issue including food access, wealth generation, personal finance, ability to earn a living wage, and home ownership. In terms of food, North Carolina is one of eight states with higher food insecurity rates than the national average (food insecurity is “the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food”).<sup>14</sup> In terms of savings and assets, 49% of black Durham County residents and 56% of Hispanic/Latino residents were asset poor compared to only 21% of their white counterparts,<sup>15</sup> meaning they had little to no financial cushion to survive a financial crisis. This disparity widens for women of color: black women in North Carolina make 44 cents for every dollar a man makes, and for Latinas, it is 48 cents.<sup>16</sup>

Homeownership and foreclosure are rooted in the nation’s deep history of racial discrimination in the housing market, such as redlining, restrictive covenants, and explicit exclusion from federal government homeownership benefits following the Great Depression. This history is exacerbated by today’s income disparities, and continue to signal significant wealth disparities. The Census Bureau also shows that between 1994 and 2017, non-Hispanic white US residents have had the largest homeownership rate. In 1994, Hispanic US residents had the smallest homeownership rate, but by

<sup>14</sup> Accessed 11/13/17, <http://www.DOSomething.org>

<sup>15</sup> Durham People’s Alliance, 2/6/14, <https://www.slideshare.net/garrettdixon/assets-and-inequality-in-durham-pa-meeting>

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Willets, “A New Report Shows that Women of Color Are ‘Particularly Burdened’ by Gentrification in Durham,” 4/25/18, Indy Week, <https://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/a-new-report-shows-that-women-of-color-are-particularly-burdened-by-gentrification-in-durham/Content?oid=13695963>

2017, black US residents had become the group with the smallest homeownership rate.<sup>17</sup> The City of Durham has a 53% owner-occupied housing unit rate,<sup>18</sup> but other data aligns with the Census Bureau findings and shows homeownership is not evenly spread throughout racial groups: the white homeownership rate in Durham is 66% but the black homeownership rate is 41%.<sup>19</sup> Data on foreclosures, or the loss of homeownership, for Durham County further highlights the racial divide. According to a 2013 report, "On average, [census] tracts without foreclosures are whiter and younger than county and foreclosure tract averages."<sup>20</sup>

Another way in which people can generate income and build wealth is through business ownership. Yet, again, disparities persist:

- In Durham, for every 4.43 businesses owned by whites, there is one business owned by a black person, even though the population is almost 1 white person for every black person.<sup>21</sup>
- Durham black business ownership grew less than any other area in NC between 2007 and 2012. It grew only by 1,000, or 14 percent, during that time. This is compared to over 30 percent black firm growth in NC during that time.<sup>22</sup>
- There are no black-owned firms in real estate, finance, or accommodations in Durham.<sup>23</sup>
- An October 2014 report showed that the city spent only 2.66 percent (\$5.5 million) on contracting with minority-owned or women-owned firms between 2007 and 2012. Specifically, the city awarded 2 percent of contracts to black-owned firms, .3 percent to Hispanic-owned, .03 percent to Asian-American-owned, and no contracts to American Indian-owned firms. The city awarded .61 percent of contracts to white female-owned firms as well during that time.<sup>24</sup> (In 2015, the city obtained a report to assess whether there was legal justification for the creation or continuation of city programs to encourage more minority contracting. In its 2015 report, the consulting firm issued 17 recommendations to the City of Durham to enhance its contracting with minority and women owned firms.<sup>25</sup>)

### *Disabilities disparities*

The topic of disability deserves its own inquiry and lengthy discussion, but data for North Carolina indicates there is some racial disparity in people identifying as disabled. Among non-institutionalized, working-age (ages 21 to 64) North Carolina residents in 2015, 20% of

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<sup>17</sup> US Census Bureau, "Figure 8. Quarterly Homeownership Rates by Race and Ethnicity of Householder for the United States: 1994–2017," accessed 6/3/18,

<https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/charts/fig08.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> US Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Durham County, North Carolina," accessed 6/3/18,

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/durhamcountynorthcarolina/PST045217>

<sup>19</sup> National Association of Homebuilders, "Black Homeownership Rates by County," 3/18,

<http://eyeonhousing.org/2018/03/black-homeownership-rates-by-county/>

<sup>20</sup> UNC Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity, "Neighborhood Level Foreclosures in Durham County: Census Tract Characteristics and Foreclosure," 12/13,

[http://www.law.unc.edu/documents/poverty/publications/durham\\_foreclosure2.pdf](http://www.law.unc.edu/documents/poverty/publications/durham_foreclosure2.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> This data comes from a presentation by NCCU Professor Dr. Henry McKoy at a recent forum hosted by the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People and based on 2015 Census Data.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Griffin & Strong, P.C., "Durham County/City of Durham, North Carolina: Multi-jurisdictional Disparity Study October, 2014," 10/14, <https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1852>

<sup>25</sup> Griffin & Strong, P.C., "Durham County/City of Durham, North Carolina: Multi-jurisdictional Disparity Study January 2015," 1/15, <https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2648>

Native American residents and 14% of black/African American residents had a disability. In comparison, 11% of white NC residents had a disability.<sup>26</sup> Although data about disability can be categorized by race, disparities exist between people who do and do not identify as disabled. Disability status can be another lens through which Durham studies its structures and institutions.

### *Conclusion*

Compiling these kinds of data points illustrates large-scale inequities between white and non-white Durham residents interacting with nearly every facet of someone's life. In each one of these facets, local government has a role to play in addressing and remedying racial disparities, many of which may be rooted in a history of explicitly racially motivated public policies. We acknowledge that all disparities have multiple contributing factors in addition to race (e.g. gender, economic status, sexual orientation), but it is undeniable that race is present at every step and thus must be addressed head on. We cannot solve racial disparities without acknowledging them. Abolishing racial disparities in Durham will require a multi-faceted approach not limited to but including policy, direct civic action, and legislation.

According to one African-American Durham resident, "[t]he disparities are the social determinants of my community's very survival." We encourage our local elected officials to examine the available tools and ways in which it could proactively address and end racial inequities in Durham at the front-end of its decision making processes, rather than waiting to react once the disparities have manifested in stores, data, and entrenched harm to our community. If any community is up to this task, it is Durham.

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<sup>26</sup> Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S., "2015 Disability Status Report: North Carolina," accessed 6/4/18, [http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/StatusReports/2015-PDF/2015-StatusReport\\_NC.pdf?CFID=3065464&CFTOKEN=3fe625c2b0220eb0-ED470830-92F6-CD90-846A4ABD8AF2180C](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/StatusReports/2015-PDF/2015-StatusReport_NC.pdf?CFID=3065464&CFTOKEN=3fe625c2b0220eb0-ED470830-92F6-CD90-846A4ABD8AF2180C)