

# EVERY BLACK VOICE

## Community Participatory Research Report 2023: The Unfiltered Voice of Black Asheville

Presented By: The Racial Justice Coalition of Asheville, Inc.

# Together We Speak: Acknowledging Our Partners In Change

As we present the findings and insights of this pivotal project, it is with a profound sense of gratitude that we acknowledge the myriad voices and hands that have contributed to its fruition. "Together We Speak" is not just a title but a reflection of the communal effort, shared wisdom, and collective journey embarked upon by each individual and group involved in this endeavor.

From the early conception to the final touches, this project has been a tapestry woven from diverse threads of dedication, expertise, and heartfelt participation. We extend our deepest gratitude to each individual who has contributed their insights, expertise, and time. This project's success reflects a collective commitment, a community working together for a shared purpose.

## Lead Contributors:

Special recognition is deservedly given to Lauren Ruso and Mike Holmes, whose contributions have been paramount to this project. Their dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment have been the driving forces behind our progress.

## Community Voices:

The heart of this endeavor has been the community members whose stories and perspectives form the essence of our findings. Your willingness to share has been the guiding beacon, illuminating our path with invaluable insights.

## Inspirational Figures:

We express our gratitude to those who, perhaps unknowingly, inspired and contributed to this project. Your influence has woven through our community's narrative, enriching this work profoundly.

## Campaign Designers:

Acknowledgment is extended to Rob Thomas, Dr. Tamarie Macon, and Erin Richardson for their vision and dedication in conceptualizing and designing this impactful campaign.

## 'Walk the Walk' Campaign Supporters:

We thank Tashia (Grits) Etheridge, Michael-Jamar Jean Francois, and Rob Thomas for their essential roles in supporting the 'Walk the Walk' Campaign and shaping the interview guide. Your insights have been critical in guiding our discussions and deepening our understanding.

## Dedicated Canvassers:

We owe Ayotunde Dixon, Bruce Browder, Devin Jones, and Anna Smith a debt of gratitude. Your dedication to collecting these stories has been pivotal in bringing forth the voices of our community.

## Community Experts:

Thank you to the community experts who shared their knowledge, ensuring our approach was comprehensive and sensitive to the nuances of our subject matter.

## RJC Team:

RJC Team, your contributions to this community have been invaluable: Rob Thomas, LaVie Montgomery, Tre Williams, Sparrow, Kristyn Harris, David Greenson, Kit Molina-Nauert, Atalaya Dorfield, Phylis Utley, Fél Marquez, Derrick Lewis, and Ty Johnson.

## Additional Acknowledgments:

Dr. Ameena Batada, Dr. Reid Chapman, Dr. Megan Underhill, and our UNCA/UNC student volunteers.

In conclusion, while this section aims to express our gratitude, words may not capture the depth of our appreciation. Your collective voices and efforts have shaped this report and sown the seeds for continued dialogue and change within our community. Together, we have spoken; through this symphony of voices, we find our strength and purpose.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, 'Every Black Voice,' represents an in-depth study conducted in the Greater Asheville Area, North Carolina, focusing on the Black community's experiences, challenges, and aspirations, especially in the context of reparations and systemic change. Through comprehensive research, community engagement, and detailed analysis, this report covers five critical impact areas: Housing, Education, Economic Development, Criminal Justice, and Healthcare.

## Key Findings:

- **Housing:** The Black community in Asheville faces significant challenges, including gentrification, displacement, and housing discrimination. A substantial portion of the community struggles with affordability and has experienced homelessness.
- **Education:** There is a strong call for more culturally relevant education, increased Black representation among educators, and addressing economic barriers to higher education.
- **Economic Development:** The community experiences economic marginalization and difficulties accessing equitable employment and business opportunities due to systemic barriers and gentrification.
- **Criminal Justice:** Systemic biases within the criminal justice system lead to feelings of mistrust and fear among Black residents. The community calls for reform, enhanced community engagement, and police training focused on cultural sensitivity.
- **Healthcare:** Disparities in treatment and accessibility are significant concerns. The community advocates for culturally informed healthcare, more African-American healthcare professionals, and affordable healthcare services.

## Recommendations:

- Develop affordable housing and homeownership programs to alleviate housing issues.
- Implement a year-round curriculum inclusive of Black history and culture in education.
- Advocate for inclusive economic policies, supporting Black entrepreneurship and equitable hiring practices.
- Reform the criminal justice system with community-led initiatives and bias training for law enforcement.
- Establish culturally competent healthcare services, making healthcare more accessible and affordable.

## Methodology:

The research methodology involved engaging 243 community members through interviews and discussions, recording and transcribing these conversations, and using analytical frameworks to identify themes and patterns. The participants represented diverse backgrounds, ages, and experiences within Asheville's Black community.

## Community Engagement and Solidarity:

This report stands in solidarity with Greater Asheville's Black community, emphasizing the importance of listening to and acting upon their voices in the journey towards reparative justice. It invites readers to understand and contribute to racial equity efforts actively.

## Conclusion:

"Every Black Voice" underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms across various sectors in Greater Asheville. By implementing the community-driven recommendations, the report envisions a more equitable and inclusive future for Asheville's Black residents, where their voices are heard and instrumental in shaping policy and societal change.





# INTRODUCTION



## Asheville's Past and How It Shapes Today:

Asheville's story, like many American cities, is deeply affected by a history of racial discrimination and inequality. Some key moments from the past that have had a lasting impact include:

- The use of enslaved people to build and develop the city's infrastructure.
- After the Civil War, promises made during Reconstruction were broken, leading to the creation of oppressive laws (known as Black codes) and segregation practices (like Jim Crow laws).
- Practices such as redlining (where certain communities were denied loans or financial services), predatory lending, and urban renewal projects significantly hindered the ability of Asheville's Black community to build wealth.

## The Echoes of History in Today's Asheville:

These predatory practices from the past have led to ongoing problems in wealth, education, health, and justice for Black residents. Recognizing this, the City of Asheville and Buncombe County have committed to reparations - a step towards fixing these historical wrongs and building a future where everyone has equal opportunities and rights.



# BACKGROUND OF STUDY



## Current Situation:

Presently, Asheville is navigating a critical phase in its reparations journey, marked by the City and County's resolutions in 2020. This process reflects on the past and is a proactive step toward dismantling systemic racism and building a more equitable future.

## Local Specifics:

Asheville's distinct approach to reparations, underscored by community-led initiatives and the RJC's advocacy, serves as a model for addressing systemic racism. This local specificity highlights the importance of empowering the Black community in policy-making processes, ensuring their voices lead toward transformative justice.



# STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY



## Statement of Solidarity:

As we chart the course of this study, we stand in unwavering solidarity with the Black community of Asheville and beyond. Our commitment transcends mere acknowledgment of past injustices; it is a resolute pledge to actively participate in the journey toward a future where equity and justice are not just ideals but realities. This research is more than an academic endeavor—it is a part of a collective, enduring effort to dismantle systemic racism and rebuild on foundations of equality and respect. In the spirit of the Racial Justice Coalition's mission and reflecting the aspirations of those whose voices have long been marginalized, we dedicate this work to the pursuit of a society where the promise of freedom and fairness is fulfilled for all, recognizing that our collective liberation is inextricably tied to the realization of justice for the Black community in Asheville. Together, we strive towards a future where each step is informed by the lessons of the past and guided by the principles of equity and inclusivity.



## Call to Action:

As we unfold the pages of this study, revealing the stories, struggles, and aspirations of Asheville's Black community, we invite you, the reader, to observe and actively engage. This is more than a narrative of past inequities; it is a living dialogue calling for collective action and understanding. We encourage you to reflect on this research, consider its implications in your own life and community, and ponder how you can contribute to the journey toward racial equity. Whether through community involvement, informed discussions, or personal reflection on biases and actions, your participation is crucial. Together, let's turn the insights from this study into meaningful steps forward, building a more just and equitable Asheville for all its residents. Every voice matters in this endeavor, and yours is no exception. Join us in this vital conversation as we strive to understand and transform our community for the better.





# STUDY SCOPE

## The aim of this study:

- Investigate the role of the Racial Justice Coalition (RJC) in advocating for and guiding the reparations process in Asheville and Buncombe County.
- Understand the contributions and perspectives of the Black community through the Every Black Voice (EBV) Campaign.
- Examine the methods and impacts of the community-driven reparations approach, focusing on systemic inequalities.
- The study encompasses the historical context of racial injustice in Asheville, the reparations process initiated in 2020, and the ongoing efforts of RJC and community members in shaping this path toward equity.



# METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW



## Our Community, Our Stories: Understanding How We Explored Black Voices in Asheville:

In this study, we embarked on a journey through Asheville, engaging in conversations with community members and attending meetings to delve into the topic of reparations. Guided by the RJC's 'Walk the Walk Campaign,' we aimed to capture the true sentiments of Asheville's Black community. Through these discussions, informed by key principles of reparations and community engagement, we gathered diverse stories and perspectives. Our goal was to authentically represent what reparations mean to our community, highlighting their hopes, concerns, and aspirations. This journey was not just about listening; it was about understanding and reflecting the genuine voice of our community.





# METHODOLOGY



## EVERY BLACK VOICE CAMPAIGN: OUR RESEARCH APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITY'S VOICES

### 3.1 How We Talked to People (Data Collection)

- **Choosing Our Participants:** This is like inviting a diverse group of guests to a community discussion. We carefully selected people from Asheville's Black community to represent various experiences and viewpoints.
- **Our Conversations:** Imagine having a guided but open conversation over coffee. That's how our interviews were structured enough to cover essential topics but flexible enough to let people share their personal stories freely.
- **Recording for Accuracy:** With everyone's okay, we recorded these talks to ensure we got all the important details.



Photo from our Shiloh Community Every Black Voice event led by our Community Engagement Director, Erin Barksdale.

# METHODOLOGY



## 3.2 TRANSLATING CONVERSATIONS INTO DATA (TRANSCRIPTION AND CODING)

- **Turning Talks into Text:** Like writing down the stories from a community meeting, we transcribed every interview word-for-word to capture the true essence of what was said. Otter.ai is the software utilized.
- **Organizing Thoughts:** Imagine sorting through a box of diverse letters, categorizing them by themes and ideas. We did that with the transcribed texts, using special software to help us stay organized and thorough.



Photo featuring our canvassing director, Mike Holmes, who lead the transcription team and one of our transcriber, Devin Jones.



# METHODOLOGY



## 3.3 MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL (ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK)

- **Finding Common Threads:** We looked for patterns and common themes in the stories shared, much like piecing together a tapestry from individual threads to reveal the bigger picture.
- **Exploring the Details:** We delved into the finer details within these big themes, highlighting our community's unique experiences and perspectives.
- **Bringing It All Together:** Finally, we combined these insights to present a comprehensive picture of what our community thinks and feels about the reparations process.



## IN SUMMARY: OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Our research method is like building a mosaic. Each piece - from talking to people to analyzing their words - is placed with care to ensure we faithfully represent the diverse voices of Asheville's Black community. We've tried to make this process as clear and relatable as possible, so everyone can understand how we've reached our findings.

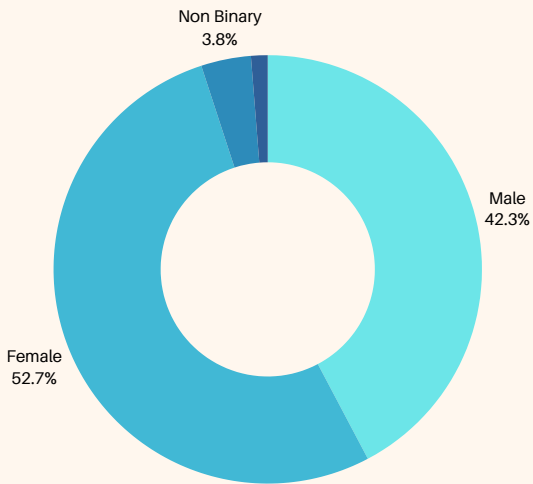




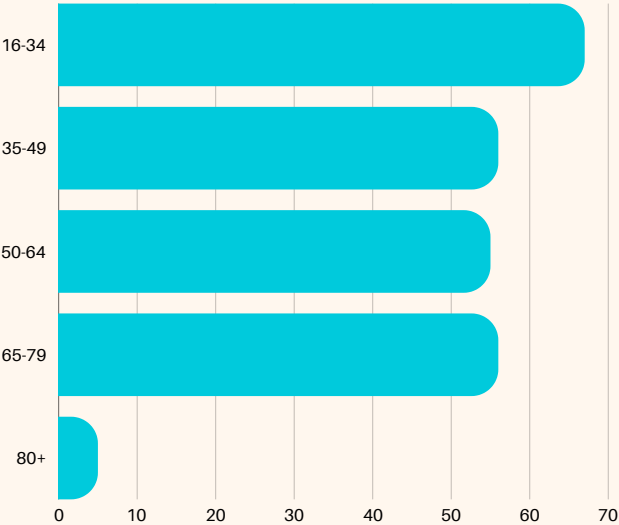
# DEMOGRAPHICS

In our study, we talked to 239 people from different walks of life in our community. A good number, 141, identified as Black, and 66 as African American, with others having diverse backgrounds like Afro-Latinx and Multi-racial. More women (126) participated than men (101), and we also heard from those who identify as non-binary or gender fluid, showing the variety of gender experiences in our community. Our group ranged in age from young adults to those in their late 70s, giving us a wide range of views and life experiences. This mix of people, with their different backgrounds, ages, and genders, helped us understand the many unique perspectives in our community, enriching our study with a variety of viewpoints.

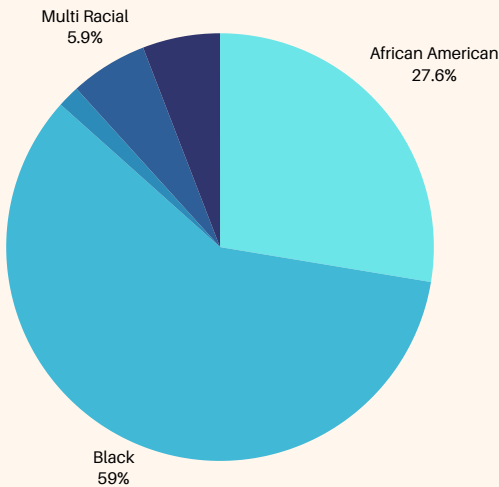
## Gender Identity of Community Members



## Age of Community Members



## Racial Makeup of Community Members



# NEIGHBORHOODS



The provided packed circle chart illustrates the distribution of survey participants, self-identified by participants, across various neighborhoods. A visual representation of demographic engagement in our data analysis. The chart indicates a diverse range of participation, with West Asheville leading at 47 respondents, followed by Southside with 31, and North Asheville contributing 15 participants. Other notable neighborhoods include Burton Street, Shiloh, and Montford, each providing 14, 14, and 12 participants. Other participation is noted from neighborhoods like Bingham (10), East Asheville (12), and Downtown (9). The chart also includes smaller communities such as Klondyke, South Asheville, Arden, and Hillcrest, each contributing 8 or fewer respondents. This diversity in representation highlights the varied perspectives and demographics within our study. The chart serves as a tool for understanding the geographical spread of our data and underscores the importance of each neighborhood's voice in shaping the outcomes of this report.



# RESIDENCY AND FAMILIAL TIES



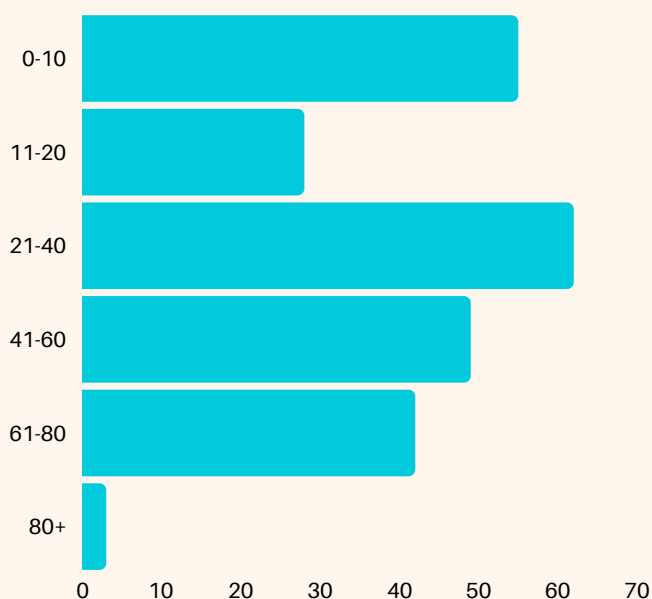
Our study of 239 community members in Asheville found a fascinating mix of how long people have lived here and their families history in the area. Let's look at what this tells us about our community:

**New Neighbors and Seasoned Residents:** Out of everyone we talked to, 55 people have lived in Asheville for up to 10 years. These are our newer neighbors, and they likely see the city with fresh eyes. Then we have 28 people who've been here for 11-20 years, 62 who've called Asheville home for 21-40 years, and 49 for 41-60 years. These groups have seen Asheville change over the decades. A notable 42 participants have been part of Asheville for an impressive 61-80 years, and 3 have been here for over 80 years, offering us a glimpse into our city's rich, living history.

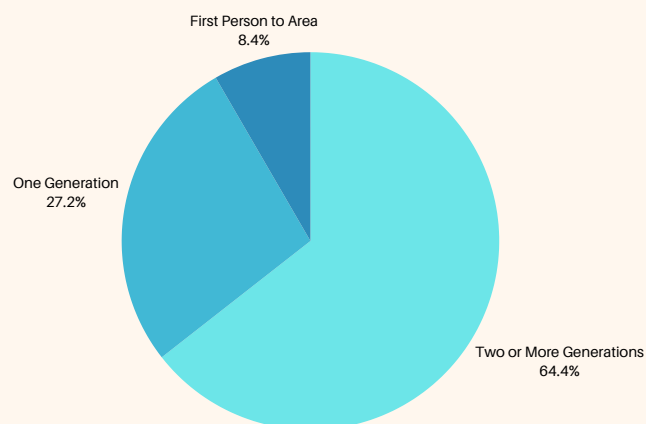
**Deep Family Roots:** The story gets even more interesting when we look at how long their families have been in Asheville. About 20 of our participants are the first in their families to live here, making them pioneers of sorts. Another 65 are the first generation here, which shows us a wave of families putting down roots. But a significant 154 people have family ties going back two generations or more. This means they carry stories, traditions, and a deep connection to Asheville passed down from their parents and grandparents.

This mix of new and long-standing residents and those whose families have deep roots in Asheville paints a colorful picture of our community. It shows us a city that's both welcoming new stories and nurturing rich, historical narratives. Understanding this diverse blend of personal and family histories helps us appreciate the different perspectives and experiences shaping how we see Asheville today.

## Years of Residency in Asheville



## Generational Family History in Asheville



# IMPACT AREA: HOUSING



## COMMUNITY HOUSING LANDSCAPE: CHALLENGES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Introduction

In the heart of our community lies a complex and evolving housing landscape marked by profound challenges deeply rooted in history. The housing experience in our area is not just about the structures we inhabit but about the narratives, struggles, and dreams that these buildings encompass. This section delves into the pressing issues of gentrification, displacement, and discrimination that significantly impact our community members, painting a picture of a community grappling with change and seeking equitable solutions.

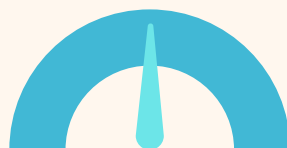
### Gentrification and Displacement

A staggering **64.4%** of our residents have faced the realities of **gentrification**. While bringing development and renewal, this phenomenon often comes at a high cost. It reshapes neighborhoods, displaces long-standing residents, and alters our community's cultural and economic fabric. As newer, often more affluent, inhabitants move in, the original residents, many of whom have spent generations in these neighborhoods, find themselves economically and culturally sidelined. The physical changes in the community are stark, but the emotional and social impacts are even more profound.

Half of our community, **50.2%**, has experienced **displacement**. This displacement is not merely a change of residence; it represents a loss of home, history, and community ties. It's a disruption of life that affects not just the individuals and families who move but also the broader community fabric, leaving a palpable sense of loss and frustration.



GENTRIFICATION



DISPLACEMENT



DISCRIMINATION

### Discrimination in Housing

Adding to these challenges is the pervasive issue of **discrimination** in housing, as reported by **57.3%** of our residents. This discrimination manifests in various forms – from difficulties accessing housing and financial services to facing biases in rental and buying processes. Such experiences hinder individuals' ability to secure safe and comfortable housing and contribute to a broader sense of injustice and inequality within the community.



# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES

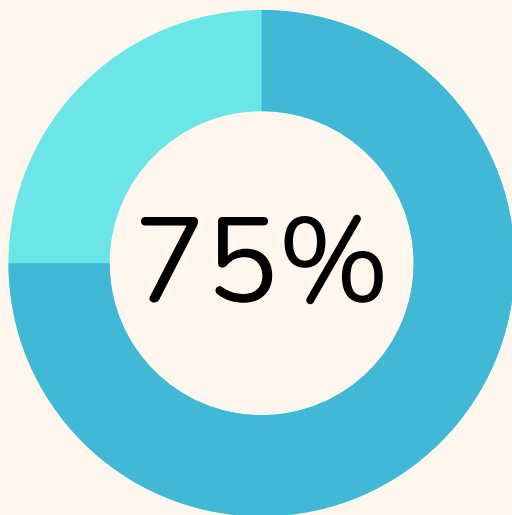


“  
"We went through that whole thing with losing granddaddy's house... in a blink of an eye, the white man came and swooped it right away."  
”

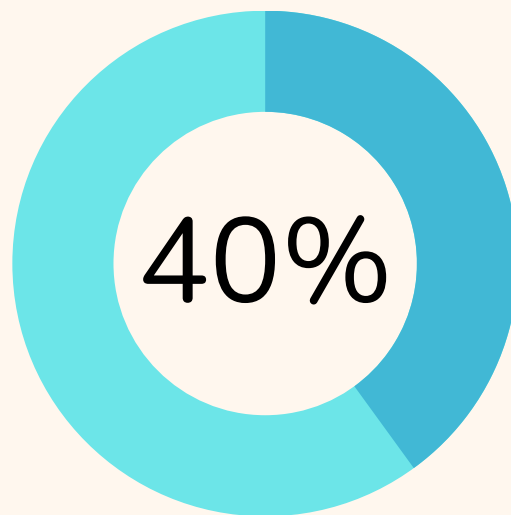
“  
"Every one of those houses that was Black owned... now you go up and down that road and you see how many was Black owned?"  
”

## Affordability

- The struggle for affordable housing in the community is evident, with **75%** of residents indicating a need for more affordable options.
- This scarcity of affordable housing, experienced by **57.7%**, often forces residents into substandard living conditions or pushes them out of their communities.
- The statistic that only **39.7%** have ever owned property highlights the barriers to homeownership, a critical factor in accumulating generational wealth and stability.



“housing is not affordable”



“I have had the opportunity to own property”

## Public Housing Reliance

- The reliance on public housing, as experienced by **37.7%** of the community, points towards the need for more accessible and affordable housing solutions.
- Public housing has become a vital yet insufficient safety net, reflecting broader systemic issues in the housing market.



# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES



## Homelessness as a Stark Reality

- A distressing 42.7% of respondents have experienced homelessness, underscoring the severity of the housing crisis.
- These figures represent numbers and stories of hardship, resilience, and the urgent need for action.

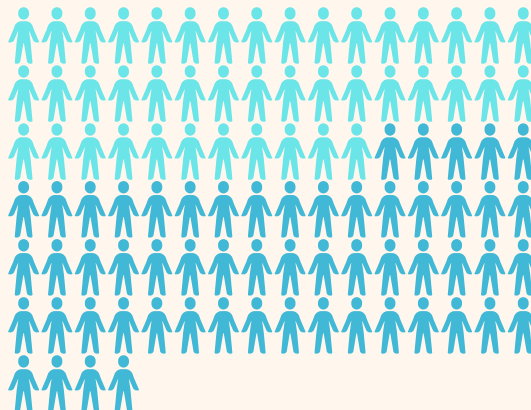
## Looking Towards the Future

- Despite the challenges, there's a resilient hope within the community for change.
- The emphasis is on community-driven solutions and equitable policies that cater to the needs of all residents.

*"I can't work or go to some places without people looking at me by being posted on TV, American-Mountain's most wanted. So yes, I am having a hard time, being as a black woman, being with my husband for 20 years in concrete business, they ruined that. They ruined our reputation, we can't work, we are homeless. So I feel that, you know, they do-they-it's more black. It's not-less black faces in the court system now than it is white from what I see."*

*Every one of those houses that was Black owned... now you go up and down that road and you see how many was Black owned?"*

*"There are two black homes we both own... Everybody else on that street is white, everybody's white. And it used to be all black."*



43 people out of every 100 reported experiencing homelessness due to the housing crisis in Asheville

*Once you see a person start moving ahead and they want to do things to improve the area... there's always been people there that will pull that individual or the group of individuals down."*

*I-26 was supposed to come through that street... everything has changed. A lot of businesses have closed and new businesses took over."*

## Conclusion

The housing landscape of Asheville, deeply influenced by its rich but complex history, highlights the urgent need for inclusive housing solutions. Reflecting on the evolving demographic shifts and the displacement of the Black community, it's clear that the path forward must involve a collaborative effort to address these challenges. This report aims to provide an insightful overview of the current housing situation, drawing attention to the necessity of equitable policies. The goal is to foster a sustainable future where all residents, irrespective of their background, can enjoy the stability and sense of belonging that comes with secure and affordable housing.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Recommendations for Transforming Housing

As we consider the future of housing in our community, the input of its residents is invaluable. The community has spoken, and their preferences offer a clear direction for policymakers and the reparations commission. Here are some key recommendations based on their feedback:

**1. Emphasize Affordable Housing and Homeownership Programs (51%):** Most participants have highlighted the need for affordable housing and homeownership programs. This indicates a strong desire for initiatives that provide immediate housing relief and empower residents through homeownership. Policymakers should focus on developing programs that reduce the financial barriers to buying homes, such as down payment assistance, low-interest mortgage options, and subsidies for first-time homeowners. These efforts can be pivotal in building generational wealth and stability within the community.

**2. Invest in Programming (41%):** A significant portion of the community believes in the power of programming to transform housing. This could include educational initiatives on financial literacy, home maintenance, and homeownership responsibilities. Additionally, community-based projects involving residents in local housing development and management can foster a sense of ownership and community pride. Investing in these programs addresses immediate needs and equips residents with the skills and knowledge to sustain their housing situations long-term.

**3. Advocate for Policy Change (22.5%):** Policy change is crucial in creating a lasting impact. Advocacy efforts should be directed toward policies that address systemic barriers to housing accessibility and affordability. This includes revising zoning laws to allow for more diverse housing options, implementing rent control measures in certain areas to protect residents from sudden rent hikes, and ensuring anti-discrimination laws in housing are strictly enforced. Engaging with local and state governments to address these policy issues is vital for creating a more equitable housing landscape.

**4. Provide Resources for Land and Home Acquisition (22.1%):** Access to resources that enable residents to afford land and homes is critical. This can include grants, low-interest loans, and subsidies specifically targeted towards marginalized communities. Developing partnerships with local banks and financial institutions to create favorable mortgage options for low-income families can make a significant difference. It's also essential to facilitate access to legal and financial counseling to help residents navigate the complexities of land and home acquisition.

These recommendations, drawn from the community's feedback, offer a roadmap for policymakers and the reparations commission. By focusing on affordable housing programs, community programming, policy advocacy, and land and home acquisition resources, we can work towards a future where every resident can access safe, affordable, and equitable housing. This holistic approach acknowledges the community's diverse needs and paves the way for sustainable change in the housing sector.





# IMPACT AREA: EDUCATION



## Understanding the Educational Landscape in Asheville

Asheville's Black community has voiced significant concerns about the local education system, painting a clear picture of the systemic and cultural barriers they face.

### Representation and Cultural Relevance

A crucial issue identified is the lack of Black history and culture in the school curriculum. A resident's statement, "We get taught about our heritage... once-28 days out of the year..." underscores this gap. The community seeks a curriculum that reflects their history and identity, emphasizing the importance of teaching Black history year-round.

### Barriers and Accessibility

Economic challenges pose a significant barrier to higher education. A mother of six shares her struggle, "it was very, very hard to push my kids through college," highlighting the financial difficulties faced by Black families in supporting their children's educational aspirations.

### Gentrification and Educational Outcome

The community has observed a correlation between the declining Black population in Asheville and worsening educational outcomes for Black students. This points to a need for targeted policies to support and improve academic performance among Black students.



Photo from our Eddington Center event, features a altar celebrating Black leaders in the community.





# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES



## Concerns About Education

**High Level of Concern:** 81.1% of respondents express a **high** level of concern (rating 5 on a scale of 1 to 5) about **education**.

## Barriers to Higher Education

**Lack of Resources:** 54.2% believe Black students in Buncombe County lack the resources for higher education.

**Causes of Inaccessibility:** 45.8% attribute this to institutional racism, while 26.9% cite inaccessible resources.

## Desired Educational Transformations

**Programming:** 31.7% of participants request more programming as part of educational transformation.

**Black Mentorship:** 24.9% emphasize the importance of Black mentorship.

**Culturally Appropriate Education:** 21.7% seek culturally appropriate education.

**Scholarships:** 28.5% call for more scholarship opportunities.

## Case Study: Overcoming Educational Barriers

**Background:** This case study revolves around a local family's experience, showcasing the impact of educational challenges in Buncombe County. Mrs. Johnson, a mother of four, shares her family's journey through the local education system.

### Mrs. Johnson's Story:

"I've lived in Buncombe County all my life, and I've seen how our education system has failed our Black children, including mine. My eldest, Marcus, was always a bright child. But I noticed he was falling behind by the time he was in third grade. It wasn't because he wasn't smart or hardworking. The system just wasn't built to support him. He would come home, feeling defeated, saying, 'Mom, why is it that what we learn in school doesn't reflect who we are?' This question struck me hard. Our children were learning in an environment where their history and culture were barely acknowledged.

Marcus faced more than just a cultural disconnect. He was labeled as a 'behavior problem' for merely expressing his frustration. This labeling is a common occurrence in our schools. As a single mother working two jobs, I couldn't always be there to advocate for him. The lack of support and understanding from the school was disheartening. By the time he reached high school, Marcus had lost interest in education. It was a painful thing to see.

Then there's my daughter, Sarah. She's in her senior year now and wants to go to college. But the financial barriers are overwhelming. We don't have the means, and the available resources are limited. I've applied for numerous scholarships and grants for her, but it's a competitive and exhaustive process. It's heartbreaking to tell your child, 'I'm not sure if we can afford to send you to college,' especially when she's worked so hard.

This is why I'm speaking out. Our stories aren't just isolated incidents; they're part of a larger narrative in Buncombe County. We need an education system that recognizes and nurtures the potential in every child, regardless of their background. A system that doesn't just see our children as statistics but as individuals with unique talents and needs."

**Conclusion:** Mrs. Johnson's story is a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges many families in our community face. It underscores the necessity for systemic change in our education system, emphasizing the need for policies and programs that address these disparities head-on. Her experience is a call to action for the community and policymakers to work together in creating a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape in Buncombe County.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Policy Recommendations and a Call for Transformative Change

### Revamping the Education System

To address these concerns and transform Asheville's education system into one that is inclusive and equitable, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Revise Curriculum:** Develop a curriculum that incorporates Black history and culture throughout the year, beyond Black History Month, to reflect the community's heritage and identity.
- 2. Increase Representation:** Focus on recruiting and retaining more Black educators in Buncombe County schools to provide role models and build trust within the Black student community.
- 3. Address Economic Barriers:** Create scholarship programs and financial support systems to make higher education more accessible for Black students, thus easing the economic strain on their families.
- 4. Implement Targeted Programming:** Develop educational programs that cater specifically to the needs of the Black community, including mentorship and culturally relevant education.
- 5. Community Engagement in Policy Making:** Involve the community in policy-making, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met in educational policies and initiatives.

### A Vision for the Future

This approach aims to create an educational environment where every student, regardless of their background, is recognized, nurtured, and provided with the opportunity to succeed. By implementing these changes, we can work towards an education system in Asheville that truly serves the needs and aspirations of the Black community.



Photo featuring communities members at Every Black Voice United Way education event.





# IMPACT AREA: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## Introduction to Economic Development and Its Impact on Asheville's Black Community

This part of the report closely examines Asheville's economic growth, especially how it affects the city's Black residents. Despite Asheville becoming a popular tourist spot and attracting new businesses, many in the Black community feel they're not benefiting from this economic boom. Their stories, shared by 239 individuals, reveal a significant gap between the city's prosperity and the everyday experiences of its Black population.

## Challenges in Achieving Economic Equality

As Asheville grows, the Black community faces obstacles in getting good jobs and starting their own businesses. This section discusses the difficulties Black residents encounter in participating equally in the city's economy. These include problems in finding jobs and issues in running and maintaining Black-owned businesses.

## Listening to the Community's Economic Experiences

Personal stories collected for this study highlight how the city's economic changes are not reaching everyone. These accounts, ranging from job discrimination to the struggles of maintaining Black-owned businesses, offer insight into the economic challenges faced by Asheville's Black community.

## Historical Roots of Economic Disparities

To fully understand these economic issues, looking at Asheville's past is important. This section examines historical practices like redlining and hiring discrimination that have led to the current economic situation. By exploring these historical factors, the report aims to provide a context for the economic challenges that Asheville's Black community is facing today and to consider ways to create a more inclusive and fair economic environment.



# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES



## Economic Participation and Perceived Exclusion in Asheville's Black Community

In the rapidly developing city of Asheville, many in the Black community feel left out of the economic progress. They often see the city's growth as not considering their needs, feeling marginalized and overlooked. This section of the report focuses on these feelings of exclusion and how they affect the Black residents' participation in the city's economy.

### The Importance of Networking for Economic Success

For many, making connections and networking is key to economic success. However, Asheville's Black residents frequently find themselves outside these influential networks. This lack of access to crucial social and professional networks makes it harder for them to find good job opportunities or support for their businesses. This part of the report examines how this exclusion from key networks impacts the economic mobility of the Black community in Asheville.

### Housing Costs and Living Expenses Impacting Economic Stability

The cost of housing and the general expenses of living in Asheville are rising, posing a significant challenge, especially for Black residents. Many in the community share stories of struggling to find affordable housing and managing daily expenses with limited income. This section highlights the economic difficulties faced by the community, emphasizing the need for policies that address these issues directly.

"You know, if you ain't up there close with the six-figure families, boy, you struggling!"

"It's been a time, you know? There's still areas that they don't want black folks."

"Our places are being taken away from us as far as housing. We're just being pushed out on the outskirts."

"You paying what, almost \$1,500 for a one, two-bedroom apartment. Like, that's just crazy."

"Is the jobs paying to where Black people can afford that? Or are they paying the minimum wage around here and that's what's pushing the Black peoples out of Asheville? Because they can't afford it."

"It don't portray that it is for a Black community to strive around here."



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Pushing for Inclusive Economic Growth in Asheville

This section of the report focuses on advocating for systemic changes to foster a fairer economic environment in Asheville. The goal is to develop a more inclusive economy by supporting Black entrepreneurship, ensuring fair hiring practices, and involving the Black community in economic decision-making. It outlines practical steps like providing financial support for Black-owned businesses and including their voices in economic planning.

## Tackling the Effects of Gentrification

Gentrification has reshaped Asheville, often at the expense of its Black residents. This part of the report suggests effective ways to lessen the negative impacts of gentrification. It emphasizes the need for policies that make housing more affordable and the creation of community land trusts. The idea is to make sure that the Black community can thrive and grow along with the city rather than being pushed out by its development.

## Looking Toward a Unified Future

The conclusion brings together all the insights and recommendations, stressing the need for collective action to address the economic disparities in Asheville. It calls for cooperation among policymakers, community leaders, and residents to create an economic environment that benefits everyone equally and celebrates the strength and potential of the Black community. The report emphasizes ongoing conversation and concerted efforts to make Asheville's economic growth inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of its diverse community.





# IMPACT AREA: CRIMINAL JUSTICE



## Understanding Asheville's Criminal Justice System Through Community Eyes

### Challenges in the Justice System:

Many in Asheville's Black community view the criminal justice system as unfair and biased. They feel that the system is not impartial and often discriminates based on race. This is captured in a local's words: "Justice here seems to see color, which makes it unfair."

### Police Interactions:

Interactions with the police are a major worry for the Black community. Numerous residents share stories of being profiled and treated unjustly because of their skin color. One person shares, "The moment they see you're Black, they treat you as if you're already guilty."

### Impact on Youth and the Broader Community:

The way the criminal justice system operates has a deep impact on Black youth and the wider community. This creates a cycle of fear and distrust towards the police. As a local explains, "Our children grow up fearing and distrusting the police, which only makes the divide larger."



# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES



## Case Study 1: Sarah's Experience with Law Enforcement

**Background:** Sarah, a Black mother living in Asheville, shares a story that illustrates the tension between the local Black community and law enforcement.

**The Incident:** One evening, Sarah was stopped by the police while driving home from work. The officer, citing a routine check, asked her several questions. Sarah cooperated fully but couldn't help feeling that the officer was unnecessarily hostile and suspicious.

**Impact:** This encounter left Sarah feeling scared and distrustful of the police. Her story is not unique in her community, where many share similar experiences. Sarah's experience brings to light the community's concerns about being unfairly targeted and the urgent need for change in police practices.

## Case Study 2: James' View on Policing

**Background:** James, a young Black man from Asheville, discusses his interactions with the police and his vision for improving community relations.

**His Experience with Police:** James remembers seeing police officers in his neighborhood acting confrontationally and intimidatingly. He contrasts this with his ideal of community policing, where officers would interact with residents in a friendly and approachable manner.

**Hope for Change:** James advocates for more accountability in law enforcement, better community engagement, and a cultural shift in policing that emphasizes mutual respect and understanding. His perspective mirrors a widespread desire in the Black community for a new approach to law enforcement that fosters genuine communication and collaboration.

## Community-Led Initiatives for Criminal Justice Reform in Asheville:

- 1. Dialogue-Driven Programs:** The community has actively established dialogue-driven programs to open communication channels between the police and residents. A striking **57.4%** of respondents believe community engagement is crucial for improving relations with law enforcement. Reflecting on this, a program coordinator says, "We organize town halls where police and community members can openly discuss concerns and find common ground."
- 2. Mentorship and Outreach Programs:** Mentorship programs like 'Cops and Kids' are pivotal in building trust and understanding, especially among youth. These initiatives, where law enforcement officers interact with youth in non-enforcement roles, are a response to the **81.1%** of community members who express significant concerns about the criminal justice system. A local organizer notes, "Our 'Cops and Kids' program helps break down barriers."
- 3. Educational Workshops:** These workshops aim to educate both the police and the community about cultural sensitivities, legal rights, and mutual respect. A community educator emphasizes, "Education is key to empathy and understanding." This approach aligns with the **18.5%** of the community advocating for improved police training, with a notable **43.4%** supporting the use of reparations funding for such educational purposes.
- 4. Advocacy for Improved Police Training and Equity Audits:** An important focus is on enhancing police training and conducting equity audits in law enforcement practices. These measures, supported by **18.5%** and **18.9%** of respondents respectively, aim to bridge the gap between the police and the community and ensure fairness in law enforcement practices. "Training can bridge the gap between the police and the community," a local advocate asserts, while a community leader stresses, "An equity audit can reveal biases and areas needing improvement."

In summary, these community-led initiatives, supported by clear statistical backing and direct quotes from community members, illustrate a comprehensive approach towards reforming Asheville's criminal justice system, fostering better relations and trust between law enforcement and the Black community.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Asheville's Criminal Justice Reform: Community Insights on Systemic Change

### 1. Bias Training for Law Enforcement:

The community calls for comprehensive training programs to address and reduce racial biases among law enforcement officers. This step, backed by 81.1% of respondents who express significant concern about criminal justice issues, is aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the Black community's history and struggles.

### 2. Community Oversight Committees:

The formation of oversight committees involving diverse community members is a key recommendation. These committees, crucial for ensuring police accountability, are supported by the fact that 57.4% of respondents see community engagement as vital for improving relations with law enforcement.

### 3. Policy Revision:

Revising discriminatory policies is a significant concern. The community's call to change laws that disproportionately impact Black residents reflects the sentiment of 18.9% of respondents who support equity audits in law enforcement practices. These audits aim to reveal biases and ensure fair treatment for all community members.



## Blueprint for Justice: Community-Driven Approaches to Reforming Asheville's Criminal Justice System

To foster a fair, transparent, and trusted justice system, the following steps are emphasized, reflecting community sentiments:

### 1. Enhanced Community Engagement:

Promoting initiatives that foster positive interactions between law enforcement and Black residents. "We need police to be part of our community events, not just showing up in times of trouble," suggests a youth leader.

### 2. Open Communication Channels:

Encouraging regular dialogues between police and community members to build trust and understanding. "When they talk to us, not at us, that's when real change begins," remarks a community activist.

### 3. Empowerment Through Representation:

Recruiting more Black officers and providing them with leadership roles to ensure representation within the force. "Seeing officers who look like us, who understand our struggles, makes a world of difference," a young professional points out.

### 4. Incorporating Community Feedback:

Community voices are integral to shaping these recommendations. Their direct quotes bring authenticity to the reform process and ensure that the changes made are rooted in the real experiences and needs of those most affected. As one resident poignantly states, "Our voices are the blueprint for a just system. Listen, and act accordingly."





# IMPACT AREA: HEALTHCARE



## Healthcare Challenges Faced by Asheville's Black Community

### Unequal Treatment and Accessibility

Many in the Black community feel they are not receiving the same level of care as their white counterparts. One resident sums it up: "I'd say equity in patient care, where you're not treated differently than a white person." Stories of misdiagnosis and neglect are familiar, especially for those without proper insurance. A telling comment from a local illustrates this: "If you don't have the proper insurance, you don't get seen." This sentiment reflects a broader perception that healthcare in Asheville often prioritizes profits over the needs of Black patients.

### The Importance of Representation in Healthcare

There's a strong call for more African-American doctors and healthcare professionals. This need stems from a desire for caregivers who can relate to and understand the Black community's specific health needs and cultural context. As one person notes, "Again, we need more doctors that are African American." Alongside this, there's a demand for healthcare advocates to ensure Black patients receive fair and equitable treatment.

### The Broader Impact and Need for Change

These healthcare disparities have led to a hesitancy among many in the Black community to seek medical help, often waiting until it's a dire necessity. High costs and inadequate insurance coverage add to this reluctance. The emotional toll of these challenges is evident in one individual's account: "I lost a daughter at five...and some of my doctors I go to, some of them act like they don't care, some of them do. That, yeah...but when you ain't got the insurance and all that, you get treated differently." To combat these issues, the community advocates for inclusive healthcare policies, expanding Medicaid and establishing community health clinics staffed by diverse professionals.

In summary, the Black community in Asheville faces significant healthcare challenges, marked by a sense of neglect and unequal treatment. These experiences underscore the need for systemic changes to create a healthcare system that is equitable and sensitive to the needs of all its members.



# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES



## Asheville's Black Community Speaks: Priorities for Healthcare Reforms

The voices of Asheville's Black community have provided clear insights into their healthcare preferences, shaping the path for meaningful reparations. Let's dive into what the community wants when it comes to healthcare reform based on our recent survey:

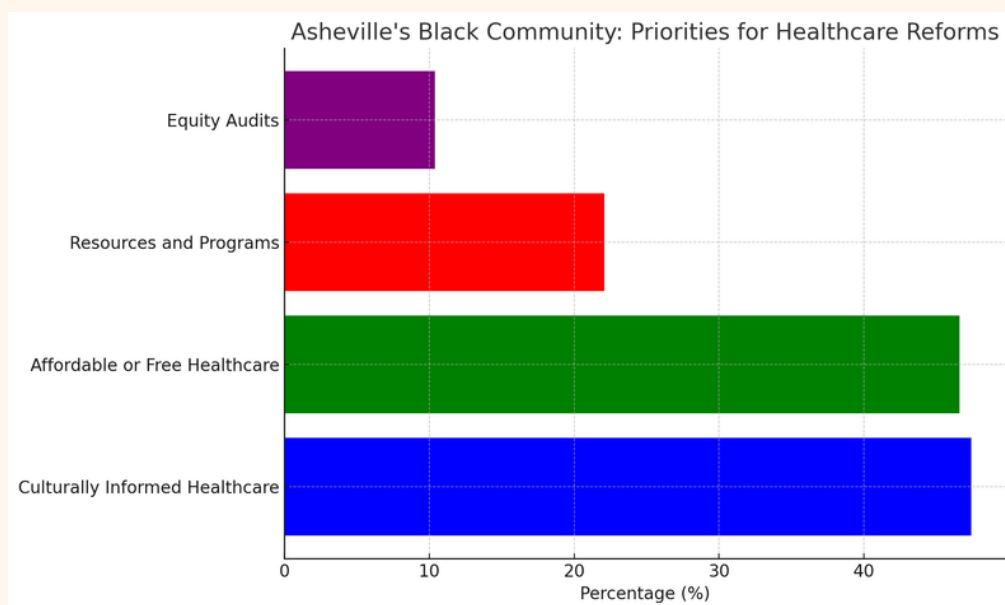
**1. Culturally Informed Healthcare (47.4%):** Almost half of the community members have expressed a strong need for healthcare that resonates with their cultural and historical background. They're asking for healthcare professionals who provide medical care and understand Black residents' unique experiences. This involves training for healthcare providers to be culturally sensitive, ensuring they approach patient care with empathy and a deeper understanding.

**2. Affordable or Free Healthcare (46.6%):** Just as crucial is the community's call for healthcare that doesn't break the bank. A significant number of residents are advocating for healthcare that is either low-cost or completely free. This preference is a direct response to the financial hurdles that many in the Black community face when seeking healthcare. Solutions might include policy reforms that lower healthcare costs or offer comprehensive coverage at no extra charge.

**3. Resources and Programs (22.1%):** More than just medical treatment, over a fifth of the respondents are asking for extra resources and programs. These might include health education, preventive care, and initiatives specially designed for the needs and challenges Black residents in Asheville face.

**4. Equity Audits (10.4%):** A smaller yet important group within the community is calling for equity audits. These are thorough checks on the current healthcare systems and policies to find and fix any unfairness or biases. These audits allow healthcare services to be improved to treat everyone fairly, regardless of their background.

In summary, Asheville's Black community is advocating for healthcare that is not only accessible and affordable but also culturally sensitive and equitable. These insights pave the way for policymakers to understand and act on the community's healthcare needs in a more targeted and effective manner.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Creating a Healthier Future for Asheville's Black Community

### Transformative Policy Recommendations

Asheville's commitment to equitable healthcare for its Black community is multifaceted. The following policy recommendations, deeply rooted in the community's needs and desires, aim to bridge existing gaps and foster a healthier future.

- 1. Culturally Competent Healthcare Services:** Emphasize training healthcare providers in cultural sensitivity and actively recruit African-American professionals. This will ensure that healthcare delivery is skilled, empathetic, and reflective of the community's diversity.
- 2. Affordable and Accessible Healthcare:** Healthcare policies need urgent reform to eliminate financial barriers. Solutions could include subsidizing health insurance premiums, expanding Medicaid eligibility, and setting up community health clinics with free services.
- 3. Resource Allocation and Program Development:** Focus on health education, preventive care, and wellness initiatives specifically for Black residents. Addressing nutrition, mental health, and chronic disease prevention will help reduce longstanding health disparities.
- 4. Conducting Regular Equity Audits:** Regular equity audits in healthcare facilities are vital to identify and rectify treatment and outcome disparities. These audits should inform the reform of practices and policies, ensuring fairness in healthcare.
- 5. Community Healthcare Advisory Board:** Establish a board that includes Black community members, healthcare professionals, and policy experts to oversee the implementation of these strategies. This board will ensure that the community's voice remains central to progress.
- 6. Enhanced Community Outreach and Education:** Educate the Black community about their healthcare rights and services. This includes effective navigation of the healthcare system and awareness campaigns.

### Tailoring Healthcare to Asheville's Demographics: A Cross Comparison with Asheville's Demographics

- **Elderly Population Focus:** Given the significant elderly demographic, prioritize geriatric care. This could involve mobile healthcare services and dedicated geriatric clinics.
- **Generational Health Programs:** Implement programs that cater to families with deep roots in Asheville. Focus on hereditary health risks and provide health education across life stages through community workshops and counseling.
- **Youth Engagement and Education:** Engage younger generations with school-based programs that focus on preventive health, mental wellness, and healthy habits.
- **Cultural Resonance in Healthcare Delivery:** Align healthcare services with the Black community's cultural practices. This means hiring professionals from the community and integrating traditional health practices.
- **Addressing Chronic Health Disparities:** Develop programs targeting prevalent chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. Offer screenings, management plans, and support groups.

### Conclusion

By implementing these tailored policies, Asheville's healthcare system will become more effective, empathetic, and culturally attuned to the needs of its Black community. This strategy addresses current healthcare needs and lays a foundation for a healthier future for coming generations.



## EMPOWERING VOICES: THEMES OF RESILIENCE AND UNITY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY



Following the detailed exploration of focus areas in the "Every Black Voice" report, we synthesize five overarching community themes that resonate deeply with the experiences and aspirations of Asheville's Black community: Community, Opportunity, Blackness, Safety, and Leadership. These themes encapsulate the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced and highlight the paths toward empowerment and constructive change.

**Community** emerges as a central theme, reflecting the strong sense of connection and mutual support among Black residents. This theme underscores the importance of nurturing communal bonds and creating spaces where Black voices are heard and valued. **Opportunity** highlights the community's desire for equitable access to resources, education, and economic advancement. It speaks to the need for systemic changes that open doors and break down barriers to success. **Blackness** is celebrated as a source of strength and identity, calling for more excellent representation and acknowledgment of Black culture and heritage in all aspects of society. **Safety** is a critical concern, encompassing not just physical safety but also the need for a just and unbiased criminal justice system where Black individuals feel protected and respected. Lastly, **Leadership** emphasizes the crucial role of Black leaders in driving change and shaping policies. This theme advocates for increased representation of Black individuals in decision-making roles and the empowerment of the community to lead initiatives that directly impact their lives.

Incorporating these themes into our approach to community engagement and policy-making is vital. By doing so, we honor and amplify the voices of Asheville's Black community, ensuring that their perspectives and experiences are at the forefront of the journey toward a more just and inclusive future. This holistic approach, grounded in these five themes, paves the way for a community-driven transformation, where empowerment and engagement are not just goals but the very means through which we achieve lasting change.



# THEME 1: COMMUNITY



“Community is our backbone. When we lose that, we lose ourselves. It's about preserving our space, our history.”

“Without our community, we are isolated in struggles. Together, we find strength and solutions.”

“Our neighborhood used to be a tapestry of stories and support. We need to bring that sense of community back.”

“We've lost so much to gentrification – not just homes, but our community spirit. We need to reclaim that.”

“It's more than just living side by side. It's about understanding each other, sharing hardships and joys.”

“Our elders hold the wisdom of our community. We need to bridge the gap between young and old to keep our community strong.”

“Unity in our community is our greatest weapon against injustice and inequality.”

“When one of us succeeds, it lifts us all. Our community's success is shared; it's a collective triumph.”

“In our community, every voice matters. When we listen to each other, we grow stronger and more resilient.”

“Every community event, every gathering is a step towards rebuilding what we've lost and strengthening our bonds”



# THEME 2: OPPORTUNITY

“opportunity for us means a fair chance at success, something we've been denied for too long”

“When our kids have the same opportunities as others, they can dream bigger and achieve more.”

“Opportunity isn't just about jobs; it's about being seen and heard in every aspect of our community life.”

“Real opportunity means breaking down the barriers that have held us back for generations.”

“Every time a Black business opens, it's not just a store, it's a door of opportunity swinging wide open.”

“Education is key, but it needs to be coupled with real opportunities that lead to tangible progress.”

“Opportunities for us are like pieces of a puzzle that complete the picture of our community's potential”

“We're not asking for handouts, just a level playing field where our talents and hard work can flourish.”

“Opportunity means having a voice in decisions that shape our lives, from healthcare to housing.”

“Creating more opportunities for our people is like planting seeds for a future where everyone thrives.”





# THEME 3: BLACKNESS



"Living as a Black person here means constantly navigating the tides of prejudice and misunderstanding."

"Blackness in our city often feels like walking a tightrope of stereotypes and societal expectations."

"Blackness in Asheville is a story of creativity, innovation, and enduring spirit."

"For us, being Black means a daily resilience against the invisible currents of systemic racism."

"Celebrating our heritage is like a dance of colors, vibrant and full of life."

"Our experience is often shadowed by the history of struggle and the ongoing fight for equality."

"In our community, Blackness means strength, unity, and a shared understanding of our journey."

"Being Black here is a journey through a landscape of contrasts, where progress and setbacks walk hand in hand."

"In our community, Blackness is a celebration of diversity, a mosaic of many faces and stories."

"In Asheville, Blackness can feel like a silent scream, often heard but seldom understood."

"Our Black heritage is a garden of diverse experiences, growing and flourishing in unity."

"Blackness is our collective voice, singing a chorus of hope and unity."

"Our skin color is often a narrative written by others, filled with misconceptions and biases."

"Our Blackness is our legacy, rich in tradition and wisdom passed down through generations."

"Blackness is a constant reminder of the past scars and present battles for recognition and respect."

"Our culture is a treasure chest of arts, wisdom, and laughter, a true testament to our resilience."

"Our Black culture is a tapestry of history, resilience, and joy that we proudly carry forward."

"Navigating Black identity in Asheville is like an art, balancing the beauty of our heritage with the reality of societal challenges."

"Being Black here is like a melody that resonates with the rhythms of our ancestors."

"In our lives, being Black is an echo of history, resonating with both pain and pride."



## THEME 4: SAFETY



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"As a Black woman, I carry this extra burden, this need to always be alert. It's exhausting, this never-ending need to be cautious."

”

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"I remember a time when we looked out for each other, where safety meant community. Now, it feels like we're more isolated, more vulnerable."

”

”

There's this unspoken tension, a kind of uncertainty that hangs in the air. Safety isn't a given; it's something we're constantly negotiating."

”

”

"I've seen how quickly situations can escalate when they involve our youth. It's like there's a different set of rules, a different kind of danger for them."

”

"Our community deserves to feel safe, not just in our homes but in our identities, in who we are. That's a right, not a privilege."

”

”

”

"I've had conversations with my children that no parent should have to have, all centered around how to stay safe in a world that often sees them as a threat."

”

"There's a history here, a context to our understanding of safety. It's tied to our experiences, to the stories passed down about how we navigate space as Black people."

”

”

”

"You step outside, and there's this constant feeling that you're being watched, judged. Safety isn't just physical; it's about feeling secure in your own neighborhood."

”

"My kids, they play outside, and I can't help but worry. It's not just about accidents; it's the fear of how they're seen, how they're treated."

”





# THEME 5: LEADERSHIP

"True leadership isn't just about guiding; it's about listening, really hearing what the community needs and responding to that"

"Our youth need leaders they can look up to, role models who show them that their dreams are valid and achievable"

"We need leaders who not only look like us but who have lived our experiences, who know what it's like to walk in our shoes"

"We've seen leaders come and go, but what stays is the impact they have, the changes they've made in people's lives."

"Leadership in the Black community has always been about resilience, about finding ways to thrive despite the challenges."

"Our leaders need to be connectors, bringing together different parts of the community to work towards common goals."

"Leadership is about more than decision-making; it's about inspiring trust and hope, especially in tough times."

"Leadership in our community isn't just a title; it's a responsibility, a commitment to uplift and stand up for our people."

"Our leaders should be bridges, connecting us to opportunities and paving the way for the next generation."

"To lead our community means to fight for it, to stand up against injustices and be the voice for those who are often silenced."



# RECAP OF KEY POINTS



## 1. Housing Disparities:

- Significant gentrification and displacement affecting 64.4% of residents.
- 57.3% have experienced discrimination in housing.
- 74.5% express the need for more affordable housing options.
- 42.7% have faced homelessness.

## 2. Educational Challenges:

- 81.1% are highly concerned about education.
- 54.2% believe Black students lack resources for higher education.
- A notable gap in representation and cultural relevance in education.

## 3. Economic Development Disparities:

- Perceived exclusion from Asheville's economic growth.
- Challenges in accessing equitable employment and business opportunities.
- Impact of housing costs and living expenses on economic stability.

## 4. Criminal Justice System:

- System perceived as biased and flawed against Black residents.
- Reports of profiling and unfair treatment by law enforcement.
- 81.1% express significant concern about criminal justice issues.

## 5. Healthcare Inequities:

- 47.4% advocate for culturally informed healthcare.
- 46.6% call for affordable or free healthcare.
- Concerns about unequal treatment and accessibility in healthcare services.

## 6. Community Themes:

- Emphasis on empowering Black voices and community engagement.
- Focus on themes of Community, Opportunity, Blackness, Safety, and Leadership.

## 7. Recommendations:

- Policies aimed at addressing disparities in housing, education, economic development, criminal justice, and healthcare.
- Emphasis on community involvement, equity, and systemic reform.

This summary captures the essence of the "Every Black Voice" report, highlighting the key challenges and aspirations of Asheville's Black community and underscoring the need for comprehensive, community-driven solutions.



# CONCLUSION



## CHARTING A COURSE TOWARDS EMPOWERED FUTURES

In conclusion, the "Every Black Voice" report stands as a testament to the resilience, aspirations, and collective strength of Asheville's Black community. Through this comprehensive study, we have journeyed deep into the heart of the community's experiences, uncovering the layers of systemic challenges and the unwavering spirit of hope that defines this vibrant group. From the historical roots of inequality in housing and education to the pressing issues in economic development, criminal justice, and healthcare, this report has illuminated the multifaceted nature of the struggles faced by Black residents in Asheville.

Our exploration has been guided by the powerful themes of Community, Opportunity, Blackness, Safety, and Leadership, each offering a unique lens through which we can understand and address the complexities of racial injustice. These themes are not merely abstract concepts; they are the lived realities of a community that has long been sidelined yet refuses to be silenced.

As we look ahead, this report serves as a clarion call for meaningful and sustained action. It is a call to policymakers, community leaders, and every resident of Asheville to recognize the urgency of these issues and to commit to a path of reparative justice and inclusive growth. The recommendations outlined in this report provide a roadmap for change, but the community's collective will and active participation will drive this change forward.

In embracing the voices and wisdom of the Black community, we open the door to a future where equity, respect, and mutual understanding are not just ideals but the foundation of our societal fabric. This journey towards an equitable Asheville is ongoing and requires the commitment and courage of all who call this city home.

The "Every Black Voice" report is more than a compilation of data and narratives; it is a living document of hope and a blueprint for a future where every voice is heard, cherished, and acted upon. Let this report be the beginning of a new chapter in Asheville's history, one marked by unity, justice, and a shared vision of a community where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.



# FINAL REMARKS

As we conclude this report, it's crucial to acknowledge the incredible power and resilience of the Black community. This journey through the voices and experiences of the community is more than just a collection of data and narratives; it's a testament to the enduring spirit of a people who have faced systemic challenges with unwavering strength and grace.

The power of voice, a central theme in this journey, is not merely about being heard; it's about being understood and acknowledged. Each story, each sentiment shared, contributes to a larger narrative of resilience, hope, and the relentless pursuit of justice. The Black community in Asheville has shown that even in the face of systemic racism, there is an unbreakable resolve to rise, speak out, and forge a path toward equity and inclusivity.

This report is a homage to that indomitable spirit. It's a recognition of the struggles endured and the victories achieved. The voices we've heard are not just echoing the past; they are shaping the future. They remind us that change, though often slow and fraught with obstacles, is possible when a community comes together, united in its diversity and steadfast in its goals.

As we move forward, let's carry with us the lessons learned from these stories of resilience. Let's remember the power of coming together as a community to transform systemic racism. It's not just the responsibility of those who have been marginalized to effect this change; it's a collective duty that calls for empathy, understanding, and action from all of us.

In paying tribute to the Black community of the Greater Asheville area, we look back at a history of adversity and look forward to a future of possibility. A future where every voice is not only heard but also valued. A future where the resilience of the Black community continues to be a driving force for positive transformation in Asheville and beyond.

Together, let's commit to this journey of change, propelled by the voices that have guided us through this report. Let's harness the power of community, the strength of resilience, and the hope for a future where equity and justice are realities for all.



# APPENDIX: VOLUNTEERS

## UNCA PROFESSOR REID CHAPMAN'S LA 478: CULTIVATING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP CLASS

Zejun Chen  
Zo Newton  
Aaron Goldfarb  
Hannah VanGorder  
Lorelei Dippy  
Anna McWhirter  
Micah McKenzie  
Martha Rankin  
Noah Burnette  
Naomi Todd  
Raign Biddix  
Kiru Scollon  
Thomas Tillman  
Sydney Naster  
LeAri Moore





# THANK YOU ✱



every  
black  
voice