

Data, Narrative, Action: The Black Equity Agenda in the Inland Empire

Draft memo to inform the work of the Black Equity Initiative

June 12, 2020

Narrative: If you want to understand Black California, you have to understand the Inland Empire region of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. “The IE” accounts for 15% of the statewide Black population, and 28% of Black residents of Southern California. African Americans have a rich history in the region that dates back to 1851, and they are essential to the fight for racial equity, economic justice, and environmental justice today.

African Americans in the IE came as early as 1851 with Mormon settlers; they helped build the Fort of San Bernardino and, soon after, the city bearing its name. Agriculture and wartime industry helped attract African Americans leaving the Jim Crow South, but they soon encountered racial discrimination in housing, lending, and education. The civil rights infrastructure in the region was built on fighting discrimination in K-12 education and housing in the 1960s, followed by resistance to police brutality, to now a more comprehensive set of efforts at criminal justice reform, public safety reform, education reform, economic justice, and youth empowerment.

Data points

Criminal Justice

- Blacks in both counties have the highest proportional rates of youth arrests
- Blacks have the highest annual average of civilians involved in law enforcement use of force incidents. For Blacks it’s 7.3 per 100,000 residents in Riv. Co. (3.8x higher than Latinos) and 9.3 in SB County (2.9x higher than Latinos).
- In both counties Blacks have the highest rates of incarceration. In Riverside County, about 15.5 Black residents per 1,000 people are incarcerated (3.5x rate for Latinos and 5x rate for Whites). Similar patterns in San Bernardino County with 13.6 Black residents per 1,000 incarcerated (3.8x rate for Latinos, 4.5x rate for Whites)

Education

- Blacks in both counties have the highest rates of suspended students by far. 10.9% of Black students were suspended in SB County vs. 4.1% of Whites. In Riv. Co. the rate for Black students is 8.9% vs. 3.1% for Whites.

Employment and Jobs

- Blacks in the Inland Empire (**7.9%**) had the highest unemployment rate when compared to other races or ethnicities in the region, even before the COVID recession.
- Black men between ages 18-25 have the highest unemployment rate in the I.E. at **15.8 percent**
- Blacks in the Inland Empire are more likely than White to be Frontline Employees. **57.4 percent** of the Black workforce in the I.E. are Frontline Employees. Additionally, Blacks in the I.E. are less likely to be employed as Managers, Professionals, and Office Workers.

- In both Riverside and San Bernardino County, Blacks have the lowest rates of business ownership per 1,000 people among all racial groups. San Bernardino County there are **2.4 Black business owners per 1,000 Black residents**. In comparison, that same data show 13 business owners for Whites, and 40.4 business owners for Asians per 1,000 residents.

Health

- Infant mortality 2x other racial groups (Riverside and San Bernardino)
- Blacks have the lowest life expectancy in both Riverside (77.3) and San Bernardino County (74.9).
- Blacks have the highest proportional preventable hospitalizations in both Riverside and San Bernardino County.
- Blacks have the highest percentage of low birth weights in both counties. 12.8% of Black babies in SB County vs. 6.8% of White babies. In Riverside Co. the disparity is similar with 12.3% of Black babies and 6.4% of White babies.

Homelessness

- 16% of homeless in Riverside County in 2019 (compared to 7% of residents), 19% in San Bernardino County (compared to 8% of residents).

Housing

- Blacks in both Riverside and San Bernardino County have the lowest rates of homeownership when compared to other races.
- In both counties, Blacks have higher rates of denied mortgage applications than Whites. In fact, Blacks have the highest rates when compared to all races, excluding Native Americans in Riverside County.

Poverty

- Blacks in Riverside Co. have a 22.2% poverty rate, compared to 10% for Whites in the same region. In SB County, Blacks have a poverty rate of 27.3%, compared to 12.6% for Whites in the same region. Black youth in the IE are also more likely to be in poverty.

Action steps

- 1) Black Equity Initiative is building on prior infrastructure, deep relationships and social capital among 20+ partners, with internal action items that include:
 - a) Re-engage partners
 - b) Connect/align with other Black-led and cross-racial collective efforts
 - i) Black-led: Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches, African American Education Collaborative, Rethink Public Safety
 - ii) Cross-racial equity efforts: IE RISE, Just San Bernardino
 - c) Establish backbone, governance, and partner accountability
 - d) Agree on key collective priorities, strategic action plan
 - e) Establish investment plan for backbone as well as partners

- i) Two FTE for the backbone: one for partner management, one for external affairs (including public relations and strategic communications)
 - ii) Stipends for partners based on contribution to collective as well as basic capacity needs
- 2) Pushing equity agenda in City and County government
- 3) Engaging with IE Funders Alliance, California funders
 - a) Goal: Raise \$1 million by December 2020; \$5 million by December 2022
- 4) Change the narrative through earned media coverage, protest actions, partnerships with academia