From Enforcement to #FundOurLives
Advancing Equity in Community Safety

In 2020, the murder of George Floyd amplified to the national and international spotlight the generations' long efforts of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to seek justice for the devastating impacts of racist policing and envision new social systems to keep our communities safe, healthy and thriving. We know that safety and stability come, not from a reliance on policing and punishment, but from meeting fundamental human needs, like housing, jobs and healthcare. At our **October 2020 Actualizing Equity event,** we heard from community organizers from different issue areas who are elevating and advocating for the priorities that advance healing, stability, dignity and community connectedness.

Speakers included

» Ebony Adedayo, City of Minneapolis Division of Race and Equity's ReCAST Program

» Isabel Chanslor, Midway Rise Up

» Jamie Kavanah, Jewish Community Action

» Nekessa Opoti, Black Immigrant Collective

» Cindy Vue, Our Streets MPLS

Systems of Harm

Controlling Black, brown and immigrant bodies

From their inception as slave catchers to Derek Chauvin's knee on the neck of George Floyd, police have done devastating harm to communities of color. Our systems of law enforcement are rooted in the legacy of slavery and have evolved in ways that continue to prioritize controlling Black and brown bodies to maintain the comfort and property of white people. This concept of control extends to our immigration system, in which people of color are criminalized and detained for civil infractions like overstaying visas or working without particular documentation.

In 2020, we've also seen even more clearly how police have actively retreated from communities of color and abdicated their stated mission to serve and protect, even in the face of white vigilantism.

Steps Toward Safety

Addressing embodied white supremacy in governments and public institutions

While government systems like policing cause external harm to the community, public institutions also inflict trauma internally. For staff of color in government settings the workplace makes it difficult to feel a sense of safety in one's own body. While they advocate for community power in practices and policies, internal leaders face unexamined white supremacy in relationship with their white peers.

Reckoning with the embodied aspects of white supremacy is critical to creating environments that eliminate daily trauma for staff and leaders of color. That means white staff and leadership taking seriously their personal responsibility to addressing and healing the ways white supremacy manifests within them to reduce harm to their colleagues and the community. It also means respecting boundaries and providing space and resources for staff of color to engage in self care to sustain their critical leadership.

RESOURCES and additional reading

» Over-Policed and Under-Protected: Public Safety in North Minneapolis

» Enough is Enough: An 150 Year Performance Review of the Minneapolis Police Department

» ReCAST Minneapolis: Addressing community trauma and resiliency

» Resmaa Menaken's book and trainings on racialized trauma and cultural somatics

» Cultural Wellness Directory

» Black Immigrant Collective

» Jewish Community Action's Decriminalizing Communities program

Systems of Harm

Displacement from homes and businesses

In many communities of color, development has been a catalyst for displacement. Generations of families have been traumatized by the loss of their homes or businesses as intentional policies and projects have prioritized the needs and profits of external companies and prospective residents. This ever-present assault on the housing stability of our families and the capacity of our businesses to build wealth is a critical barrier to cultivating community safety and wellness. Any "recovery" and redevelopment must break this cycle of violence.

Disconnection from land and community resources

Beginning with settler colonialism dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land, many of our communities have been deprived of the ability to live where we desire in connection to the land we inhabit. Because of environmental racism, our neighborhoods often bear the brunt of unhealthy pollution, while dangerously-designed streets and lack of transit make it difficult to access basic necessities. While connecting with neighbors and having access to the outdoors plays a key role in mental and physical health, over-policing often makes public spaces and gatherings feel unsafe.

Paternalism and prescribed input

As we collectively confront social inequities, institutional responses and supports cast our communities as incapable of managing our own lives, perpetuating a hierarchy where *others* know best. This doesn't just show up in programs and services but in community engagement that takes comments rather than direction from those most directed impacted.

Steps Toward Safety

Rooting and growing our families and businesses in our communities

The COVID-19 pandemic and uprisings following the murder of George Floyd have magnified the devastating gaps in our systems of basic care. In 2020, organizers have mobilized to keep families in their homes during a historic housing crisis and find ways to prevent the unprecedented loss of BIPOC-owned businesses. This has elevated the fundamental harm of evictions, and the essential role of BIPOC businesses in our communities. Connecting housing to public health and community wealth to wellbeing has seeded critical connections in our discussions about the key components of true safety.

Cultivating inclusive and culturally centered spaces and systems

From the memorial to George Floyd at 38th and Chicago to the historically BIPOC-owned businesses in the Midway Shopping Center, our communities need spaces to both process trauma, cultivate healing and simply feel safe from the constant strain of white supremacy, over-policing and/or deportation. This means creating public systems, like healthcare and education, that are culturally centered and supporting opportunities for true community ownership of the places that are sacred or essential to our wellbeing. It means our families feel free to come together to express our joy and creativity without fear of surveillance or control.

Dignity and personal agency

Our communities must be given the respect and autonomy to make choices for ourselves. We don't need assistance that comes with oversight; we need the resources owed to address generations of institutional racism and exclusion. To cultivate public safety, our communities must be an authentic co-creator of the policies and plans that shape our lives.

RESOURCES and additional reading

» Our Streets MPLS: "De-policing our Streets" and "Why We Don't Support Traffic Enforcement"

» Things Must Change: A Series to Reimagine Public Safety

» Minneapolis Truth and Reconciliation Process

» Northside Oral History Project

» Advancing Equity in Small Business and Economic Development

» West Side Community Organization: "Fund Our Lives to Create Public Safety"

» Neighbors United Funding Collaborative (St. Paul)

» Midway Rise Up (St. Paul)

» Housing Equity Now St. Paul

» Equity in Place Policy Agenda

Learn more and download resources from past events at **thealliancetc.org/actualizing-equity**