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STATE OF BLACK OHIO

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary assessment of the 2009 “State of Black Ohio.” The report assesses conditions in Ohio for African American communities. The report is based on quantitative and qualitative research, including a review of the critical indicators of health for Ohio and for its Black communities; a statewide opportunity mapping analysis; in-depth review of recent research on key issues; and, approximately 100 in-depth stakeholder interviews. The report closes with an overview of recommendations for improving access to opportunity for all Ohioans, including Ohio’s diverse African American communities.

Why a State of Black Ohio?

This report, just released after the election of President Obama, speaks to the continued progress of our nation towards opening the doors of opportunity to all. Ohio’s African American community has seen tremendous achievement in recent decades. Political development, educational and business success, as well as the emergence of a strong Black middle and upper class of Ohio’s Black community, highlight a few of these accomplishments. Consider 1970: only 1,400 Black elected officials (local, state and federal) existed in the entire nation. By 2001, Ohio alone had more than 300 local, state and federal Black elected officials.1 By 2009, four of the six largest cities in the State had African American mayors. In 1970, only 10% of Ohio’s Black population had attended college, and only 3.9% of Black Ohioans had attended college for four years. By 1990, 14% of Black Ohioans earned a college degree; by 2007, this figure increased to 21%.2 High school graduation rates for Ohio’s Black students increased from 62% in 1995 to 71% in 2006.3 Between 1992 and 2002, the number of Black owned businesses in Ohio increased by 57% and sales for Black owned businesses increased by 61% (in inflation-adjusted 2002 dollars).

Despite these tremendous achievements, pockets of isolated communities still face significant impediments in their attempts to access opportunity and advancement. For Ohio’s Black community, many urban, inner-city communities of color are highly marginalized. Residents in these communities face extreme barriers to opportunity, from failing schools and limited economic options, to unhealthy environments, disinvestment and unstable housing. Our analysis across the State of Ohio found nearly 3 out of 4 Black Ohioans were living in the State’s most disadvantaged neighborhoods (what we term “low opportunity neighborhoods”), compared to 1 in 2 Latinos and 1 in 4 Asians and Whites. Families living in these communities face daunting odds. Individuals who transcend these barriers must make tremendous efforts to escape cycles of poverty and marginalization, in addition to having to overcome lingering interpersonal racial biases. Unfortunately, these barriers prove insurmountable for too many, trapping many Black Ohioans in poverty and limiting the future for too many of our Black families and children. These structural and institutional barriers to opportunity must be removed if we hope for Ohio’s Black community to continue to flourish, succeed and contribute to Ohio’s future and vitality. Therefore, despite diminished interpersonal racial bias and the removal of legal tools of segregation, our nation and Ohio have still not entered a “post-racial” period as many hopeful commentators have speculated. African Americans (among other communities of color and poor whites) continue to face a number of systemic institutional and structural challenges which continue to marginalize entire communities. While we should celebrate the Civil Rights victories of the past and achievements for Ohio’s Black citizens at present, we must also not forget about the many who still continue facing tremendous barriers to opportunity.
What is “Black Ohio?”

This report is a call to all Ohioans – White, Black, Latino, Asian, Somali, young, old, rich, poor, lifelong resident, recent transplant – to have a stake in Black Ohio, knowing that Black Ohio is Our Ohio. But what, or who, is “Black Ohio?” We interviewed approximately one hundred stakeholders on the strengths, overall assessment, diversity and uniqueness of the African American experience in Ohio to probe its warp and weft. Perhaps we can begin with the recognition that there is not simply one Black Ohio; there are many diverse African American people, communities, trajectories, and perspectives across the State:

“That’s one of the challenges, sometimes the leadership of the African American community is asked to give the “African American perspective” and sometimes I have to stop and say I can speak on my behalf, but it’s inaccurate to think I could give insight on behalf of the community because we are so diverse: in religion, in where we grew up, in our political views. We are as diverse as other groups. In education, in economic status, it’s all across the board.”

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“How you came to Ohio, in terms of roots and history. In southern Ohio, people think there aren’t many African Americans there, but these communities were the entrance points for slaves, free or escaped; the Underground came through southeast Ohio…Another group are the mill workers. Another group came for education, especially to Columbus; the university has fueled black leadership in the city and the state. [There is a] diversity in terms of how one came to Ohio, their experience and pathways. The Tuskegee airmen stationed in Columbus brought talent…”

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“Immigrant populations also contribute to this diversity, such as the Somalis. Whether they see themselves as part of the African American community or whether they see themselves as part of a Diaspora community depends.”

While respondents were quick to point out the diversity of experiences and geography, including the wide range of places to live and work across Ohio – from a small, rural southern town to a northern industrial city – the majority of respondents expressed pride in Ohio’s history: in the role of African American’s place within it, in various African American achievements and opportunities, and in Ohio’s Midwestern culture.

“The history of the State, in the abolitionist movement and Underground Railroad, has bright spots certainly worth celebrating. There are unique aspects in terms of the history of communities: Yellow Springs, Oberlin, a long history of being more open and encouraging intellectual, artistic, and political expression by African American folk. From Paul L. Dunbar, Coretta Scott King, (to) Central State, Wilberforce University, (there are) wonderful chapters in the history of African American folks that have strong Ohio ties.”

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“Ohio was a retreat point for African Americans who were fleeing the South; this makes Ohio unique. Many people fled to Ohio from West Virginia, Indiana, and other places. African American communities also flourish in Ohio. So Ohio has been good for us.”

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“I think in Ohio there is tremendous opportunity for social, economic, and educational growth...I have friends in other places, Atlanta, etc., and they are amazed at the positions that African Americans hold in business and political arenas...this is very unique.”

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“There is more hope in Ohio than in some other places, basing this on my own experience. I have relatives that have moved, from the Carolinas, into Ohio or the Midwest, and have been able to have a better life.”

When asked about overall conditions for African Americans in Ohio, respondents often used similar metaphors, all of which spoke to a sense of divergence: (a) two worlds diverging across class and education lines; (b) a gap between potential and actual growth and improvement; (c) divergence across outcomes — in other words, progress in some areas, but not in others; and (d) being at a crossroads, in terms of timing, resources, and momentum required to make great strides; but also in terms of being threatened by economic uncertainty, statewide job loss, and by public health, education, and criminal justice inequalities.

“I believe the State is staring at the crossroads: one path has opportunities with advancement...and the other is more of the status quo, where folks are falling behind.”

All of these conditions – a divide between rich and poor, between potentiality and actuality, of uneven outcomes, and a sense of being poised for change – can resonate with all Ohioans and all Americans. If there are those in Ohio not able to reach their full potential, our state will not be as strong, sustainable, and attractive to residents and businesses as it could be. To succeed in the 21st century, we need to spur innovation, growth, and creativity. Ohio cannot afford to ignore the institutional and structural challenges which marginalize residents if it hopes to cultivate the skills of its most important asset for its future – its people. Removing any remaining institutional and structural barriers which marginalize communities of color will benefit all Ohioans and will lead us toward a path of prosperity, sustainability and vitality in the future.

Many respondents felt that a unified agenda could move all Ohioans forward:

“I don’t think we are aggressive enough about putting together long-term strategies ... at the end of the day, I feel motivated about the opportunity in front of us—I’ve always felt good and worked to change, but feel like right now leadership is so important, and we have that leader in D.C.—if he can encourage and be a leader for other leaders, on Wall street, our mayors, and around the world...if we all follow his model, it would improve the quality of life for everyone...”

The growth of a strong African American middle class and the development of locally and nationally recognized African American leaders – in business, non-profits, education, and political office – speak to Ohio’s successes in affirmatively embracing diversity and opportunity for all. However, there are significant challenges facing African-American Ohioans. As many interviewees commented, educational achievement, wellness, and economic advancement are not as robust as they could be for many African Americans across the State:

“Graduation rates and college matriculation are troublesome. The decline of the public school system is incredible. Because of this educational decline, individuals are experiencing a decreased earning and income potential; this then limits housing options.”

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“This is a sad situation...when you look at cancer incidence, African American men have the highest rates in any group studied, both in Ohio and the nation...for mortality, in Ohio and the nation, African American men and women lead the way. So we have a lot of work to do.”

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“We’re doing worse than five years ago because of the downturn of the Ohio economy—because Ohio is primarily manufacturing, a lot of the African Americans work in this sector, and so folks are worse off. Coupled with the meltdown of the housing market, folks in general are worse off because of a lack of income and subprime mortgages coming to bear.”

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“At one time, we had nineteen corporations where people would come from far away to work in the factories here, but in the last ten years, the corporations have closed or are in the process of closing or moving out.”

These observations and the data we have analyzed indicate that there are grave conditions for many African Americans which threaten to entrap families in generational poverty and imperil the State of Ohio’s future. Ohio, like many of its peer states in the Midwest, faces a tremendous economic reorganization, dislocation, and change. Rising unemployment, catastrophic foreclosures, stagnant job growth, municipal budget deficits and rising poverty rates have created great hardships throughout the Rust Belt. However, this devastation is uneven. The brunt of unemployment, layoffs, social service and education budget cuts, foreclosures, and bankruptcies will most likely be borne by groups already marginalized by the mainstream economy: people of color, women, manufacturing employees, rural residents, people with disabilities, among others. For example, United for a Fair Economy found that although the U.S. has been in a recession for more than a year, people of color have been in a recession for nearly five years, having entered a depression during the current economic crisis. Between 2000 and 2007, median black family incomes dropped 1.0% for all families -- the overall decline is the first in a business cycle of this length since WWII. To cite just a few Ohio statistics, poverty rates for Ohio’s Black community have increased from 26.5% in 2000 to 30.9% in 2007. HIV/AIDS rates for Black Ohioans have been increasing since 2002. In 2005, approximately two out of three homicide victims in Ohio were African American. Foreclosures are disproportionately devastating African American neighborhoods, a result of subprime and predatory lending practices.

Ohio leaders have a chance to mitigate the harm of the economic recession and rebuild from the neighborhood, bottom up. As we rebuild the economy, we have to do it in a way that is consistent with American values, open and fair to all populations. Policy makers must recognize that “universal” policies alone fail to acknowledge how people are differently situated. In fact, treating people who are situated differently as if they were able to access the benefits of “universal” policies equally can lead to greater inequities. In contrast to a universal approach, we advocate a “targeted universal” approach: the needs of the particular are uplifted with the recognition that we are all part of the same social fabric. Targeted universal policies are inclusive, yet sensitive to the reality that the labor market and other aspects of our lives are unevenly segmented. A targeted approach takes everyone’s situated unevenness into consideration, as well as the condition of the most marginalized.

What are the top priorities to improve opportunity for all Ohioans, including Ohio’s black residents, workers, students, parents, and children? The full report contains dozens of recommendations for improving conditions for Black Ohio and expanding opportunity for all of Ohio’s residents. These policy responses originate in various domains including education, housing, community development, public
health, safety, and criminal justice reform. The diversity in responses speaks to the need for a true systemic and multidisciplinary approach. We can no longer afford to think in silos, having piecemeal and uncoordinated efforts to address the challenges facing Ohio’s Black community. Complex systemic problems require strategic and comprehensive responses. We must affirmatively and deliberately craft policies and initiatives that are strategic, coordinated and supportive of the four principles below.

1. Provide access to neighborhoods of high opportunity for all Ohioans.
2. Ensure that all Ohioans have access to high-quality public services and opportunity structures, beginning with core strengthening services: education and health care.
3. Make all Ohioans and Ohio businesses competitive in the 21st century economy.
4. Define a common agenda and strategic plan for strengthening Black Ohio, along with a communications plan that shows why this strengthens Ohio for everyone.

The Road Map for This Report:

The following report provides an overview of interview findings, topical research (e.g. education), descriptive data and other indicators for Ohio’s African American Community.

SECTION II provides an overview of results from our stakeholder interviews conducted throughout the State. Approximately 100 interviews were held with stakeholders from various domains. The interviews provide a qualitative assessment of conditions for the African American community in Ohio.

SECTION III provides quantitative analysis of the health of Ohio’s Black community.

SECTIONS IV to SECTION X assess particular focus areas, including: economic empowerment, education, gender issues and disparities, immigration impacts, neighborhoods and housing, political empowerment and leadership, public health, and public safety and criminal justice issues. Each focus area concludes with policy recommendations.

SECTION XI concludes by providing recommendations on moving forward and developing a strategic response to the systemic challenges facing Ohio’s Black community.

Where Can I Find More Information?

To access the full report, please visit www.kirwaninstitute.org.
Section II

Interview Findings from Stakeholders
SECTION II: INTERVIEW FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

The following provides summary findings from close to 100 stakeholder interviews held with scholars, policymakers, community leaders, business leaders, advocates, non-profit and philanthropic leaders and other stakeholders with extensive experience working in or on issues pertinent to Ohio’s Black community. Each question is listed as it was asked in the interview.

Have you had a chance to review the letter describing the study? Do you have any questions? May we list you in the acknowledgements as an interviewee?

See list in appendix of interviewees.

How would you assess conditions for African Americans in Ohio (or the State of Black Ohio) today?

There was a general consensus among interviewees that although a number of individuals have achieved extraordinary successes, the current condition of many families in the community is bleak. As one person summed up the situation, “I believe the State is staring at a crossroads.” Interviewees pointed to the need to increase educational attainment, bring down high unemployment rates, and intercede into intergenerational poverty. Some respondents felt that continued discrimination in housing in some parts of the State contributed to continued segregation within and among some school districts, retreating levels of civic engagement, and disparity in health outcomes. Further, interviewees expressed deep concern for the cycle of crime and disproportionate incarceration rates represented among African American males. It was also noted that the economic recession is having a particularly exacerbating effect on African American communities:

“We’re clearly progressing, all things considered. A lot of things are better now than a decade (or three or four) ago. However, some of the things that are really bad are getting worse. So I’m not sure how you want to unpack all that.”

What’s getting worse?

The gap between upper/middle and lower classes is getting broader. The issues and circumstances cultivating the culture of poverty and the disfranchisement of those folks are getting worse. Some folks are intractably mired in that. That is both systemic and attitudinal, but it has gotten worse for that end of the socio-economic continuum; worse than even 20 years ago.

What has improved?

“There are greater numbers of African Americans making good incomes; we have more political and corporate African American leadership.”

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“Highly mixed—for middle income African Americans with skills outside the central city school districts, it’s probably about the same [as] for any other Ohioan; for those that live in isolated, distressed regions of the State, this is a very tough time. For all Ohioans that are unskilled, semi-skilled and illiterate, it’s a disaster. It is part economic, but also look at where the mortgage crisis is taking place...looking at the intersection of race and opportunity is where it lies...African Americans without skills and locked into isolated communities, is where it is toughest.”

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“It’s better than my parents’…But, is it the best it could be? No. Regarding health inequities: historically, you couldn’t be treated in certain institutions. Now you can, but this comes with biases and stereotypes which can impact outcomes because the diagnostic tools are not used equitably. I’m thinking of the cardiac cath[eter]. White women are more than three times as likely as African American women to get the cardiac cath. So this impacts outcomes. If life expectancy has changed for every ethnic group except Black America, if the majority of African Americans do not draw down their social security…this [health inequity] is a systemic, institutional component that affects economics.”
What are the strengths, assets, achievements and opportunities for the African American community in Ohio?

There are a number of strengths, assets, achievements and opportunities for African Americans in Ohio. One typical interviewee response described opportunities, assets and strengths in terms of private, public, and faith-based sectors, and noted the positions of African Americans in leadership throughout the State:

“Strengths: there are a lot of opportunities here -- employment opportunities and for housing in different neighborhoods; it’s not restricted, if you can afford different areas, then you can live there...Assets: the churches. When I first moved here, I was able to find a church home and network and meet people through my church family. There are various programs and services if someone wanted to start their own business, the Economic Development institute has programs to help MBEs pursue funding; a lot of people are helped. There are services that are available that aren’t readily available in other states. Achievements: I’m impressed with the number of leaders from the African American community (mayor, fire chief, boards, etc.) and several state positions.

“There are people who, because of experience and professional knowledge and skills, can sit at the table and make decisions that affect all...These are the people who are able to sit at the table and make decisions that affect policy decisions and philosophy.”

The Church and the resilient sense of family and community continue to be recognized as pillars of strength for African Americans in Ohio. The achievements made by middle-class African American families were considered noteworthy. Progressive health care programs and services, such as the Commission on Minority Health, and a steadily increasing number of Black-owned businesses were
described as reasons for hope. Social assets such as community centers were mentioned as strengths that can be leveraged.

The new White House administration is also widely thought to be an agent of positive change for the future of African Americans around the nation and within Ohio:

“One of the greatest assets is the election of Obama. What it says is that one man can empower us to change our own destiny, not that one man can do it alone. We now have a voice we haven’t had before. We now are empowered to take back our neighborhoods, create our own economic base, have political influence...The opportunity is there for us as African Americans in Ohio to take back our communities, eliminate the fear that has taken over our inner cities, especially when a president understands the social ills that affect our communities.”

Besides these more tangible assets, a rich cultural heritage of struggle, innovation, and creativity is thought to be a valuable source of encouragement, even in the toughest of times. As many interviewees noted:

“The African American community shows resiliency and a commitment to democracy throughout the history of the U.S. African Americans have institutions that are a great strength, especially faith communities and faith institutions.”

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“In terms of assets, we come from humble beginnings and we know how to survive, especially now, in these times, we have to draw on our history, we know how to make it, “we can make it off a humble meal”...We know that we’ve never had some of the things before that we now do, but we know how we’ve gotten them, drawing on our ancestral strength through this economic downturn.”

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“Family, faith, connectiveness in communities and culture and identity as African American...”
Several interviewees discussed strengths, assets, achievements and opportunities in terms of historical comparison with past Civil Rights successes. As one interviewee considered at length:

“Assets... the talent pool is a huge asset – a lot of talent, knowledge, intelligence, passion for moving the community forward. People out there are doing great things in their communities that you don’t really hear about...

“If you look back at the Civil Rights movement, they had a certain way of dealing with disparities and mobilizing that is really different from the way we do it. We’ve been somewhat stagnant doing it though, because people have been focusing on themselves as individuals. Look at other communities, the LGBT on gay marriage, they are focusing and gaining momentum across the country. The Hispanic community is mobilizing around opportunities and issues. The lack of large-scale mobilization has been an impediment for a long time and the older generation is maybe a little disappointed with the lack of connection. We’re working in little pockets here and there...if a police officer kills a black person we get involved. But the black-on-black violence, the crime and legal issues, that doesn’t resonate and cause us to march. We don’t act against brutality on our own...

“What is at the root of that? Are you saying people are too individualistic?”

“The Civil Rights movement was about economic parity with everyone else. The reason was clear. Once they got those things, we didn’t have to struggle to deal with the racism and prejudice that those folks dealt with. So we didn’t have the motivation they did because we were brought up more
selfishly: I have to get my house, my degree, my kids taken care of. Maybe we reach out locally, but we’re not really concerned with a street with thirty empty and redundant storefronts: barbershop, barbershop, liquor store, bar…”

“I read recently that Civil Rights activism got more difficult when the “visible target” (the Jim Crow south; legal discrimination) went away…”

“That’s right. We used to fight to sit at the counter. Now we can sit there, but do we have the economic success to pay that bill? We need to look at the economic growth and wealth of the black community…Economically, across the country, our buying power is tremendous as consumer base and we buy a lot of disposable goods. But we’re in the lower end of a lot of categories for sustainable wealth-building. So there is a huge opportunity for us to build wealth, put disposable income into wealth-generating activities that we haven’t done, because we don’t have the knowledge and information that other communities do.”

**What are the challenges or impediments to opportunity for the African American community in Ohio? How would you prioritize these challenges?**

The challenges of highest concern among interviewees were disparities in educational achievement and opportunity, pervasive poverty and unemployment, disparate health outcomes and access to health care, family stress, high incarceration and recidivism rates, and persistent, albeit “softened” racism. Respondents felt that significant efforts must also be made to improve the job skills of the African American labor force and open economic opportunities for African American youth.

“We have eight major cities in Ohio and the African Americans are the ones most suffering in each of them. Schools in Black neighborhoods are suffering... Many African Americans are disconnected from their communities, disenfranchised in terms of education and entrepreneurship, and they are discombobulated and disconnected.”

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“Because of the economy, there is a state-wide lack of opportunity. We see high numbers of unemployment in African American communities in particular, especially due to manufacturing job loss...A lack of quality in education limits the children going to college, and limits their access to quality jobs. Also, the effect of incarceration, especially for males, has had a devastating impact; the rates have gone up, leaves a gap in the neighborhood…”

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“Educational achievement is probably number one—I’m not saying attainment because there are people graduating with high school diplomas, but there is not much content in what they have learned. Family issues continue to be a challenge. HIV and sexual activity among the young...Disproportionate impact of the mortgage community wiping out the wealth of communities...Ohio being dominated by no- growth sprawl, abandonment of low-skilled and traditional African American neighborhoods...one of the great signs of success is the integration of African American professional class into mainstream society. But over the next ten years, I think we will see a tension in the African American church and cultural institutions, whether they follow the people with money or stay behind to help people with distressed situations.”
“Poor schooling, racial discrimination, lack of opportunity, lack of pathways to middle class...In addition there is the added burden of mass incarceration. One in three African American males spends at least one year in prison. Even more have a felony record, even more have an arrest record, and even more have had bad experiences with the police.”

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“Growing up in Ohio, myself, but having been to the South and lived in Texas, I think African Americans have not really acknowledged the discrimination and racism that exist [here] because it’s very subversive, it’s not overt...”

By far, education was of greatest concern to interviewees.

“Education is #1. When did it become such a dirty word? I sound like Bill Cosby. My son is considered the ‘whitest’ black kid because he doesn’t use slang, he says Yes Ma’am, No Ma’am, and he is very, very bright. I raised him that way for a reason. I said, you are a young, African American male. You are an endangered species. And education is your key. I gave it an urgency, a priority – since when is it dumb to be smart? Not fashionable? Both black and white kids say he is the ‘whitest black kid.’ These labels!”

Health and access to health care (health from a holistic standpoint – physical, community, psychological) were also identified as critical issues:

“Medical care – a huge challenge. Not just the children, but the old folks as well...serious issues even beyond the blood pressure and diabetes issues, but serious medical issues with acute pain and chronic illness.”

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“For healthcare...the big barriers are not being aware of what quality care looks like and then availing oneself of quality care. It gets back to, how do you educate a population to do so?”

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“If I must prioritize, I would say education and healthcare. These lead to the ability to generate and capitalize on economic opportunity—a three-legged stool so to speak.”

Many respondents indicated that there is not a strategic, united African American agenda with clear priorities. An additional concern is the growing class divide within the African American community. While some African Americans in Ohio have experienced success in education, employment, homeownership, and wealth-building, many remain impoverished in low-opportunity neighborhoods of rural and urban Ohio. The gap between those entering the middle-class and those entrenched in poverty is perceived to be part of the reason why the African American community is failing to unite around a common agenda.

The remaining challenges highlighted by interviewees included ongoing personal and structural racism, engaging the youth amidst such a discouraging economic and social environment, cuts in government resources, the deterioration in housing stock and public infrastructure resulting from years of disinvestment, and changes in family structure.

“Single women don’t have access to the same resources and opportunities that married women do; the lack of social support, and care activities for older individuals—particularly elderly black women who are exposed to greater institutionalization and often live alone.”
“We’re facing cuts in youth and social services programming. I’m really afraid that kids are going to get into things they wouldn’t even have been exposed to if they stayed in those programs. We need to figure out a way to keep those things going, partnering with the schools, working together on that. Our youth are already in big trouble.”

“Many of these challenges are connected, making it critical to identify the root causes of racial and socio-economic inequity in the State so that a cooperative approach and common agenda can be implemented. These structural problems require regional, state and federal solutions. Local programs can only do so much.”

“Isolation. [We’re] cut off from access to resources, education, housing, healthcare, and employment.”

“Access is a great challenge. If you lack access and points of connection, you can’t get your voice heard.”

(Note that this graph “Challenges to Black Ohioans” is a weighted representation of priorities. The weighted score method multiplies the total first-priority count by 4, the total second-priority count by 3, the total third-priority count by 2, and the total other priorities count by 1. This emphasizes the priority placed on certain issues by those who were interviewed.)
How would you describe the leadership in the African American community in Ohio? What are the strengths? What are the challenges? Is the next generation of leadership being developed?

The general sentiment around Ohio’s African American leadership development might best be described as hopeful, but yearning for more development of the next generation and a more strategic vision. For example:

“There is a lot of individual achievement of elected and appointed political leadership, but there is not a collective strategy to utilize these to benefit the community, and the whole State.”

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“We have a lot of African Americans in key strategic leadership areas; if they focused on a common agenda, I think we could do some very significant things.”

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“The challenge is the communication, as well as the lack of working together. I don’t feel a sense of unity in that respect.”

The most agreed-upon strength was that there are more leaders holding high political and public offices than ever. Across the State, there are Black mayors, city managers, judges, and legislators, providing an African American voice at the highest levels of policy-making. Black leadership also extends into business, community activism, church pulpits, and the education system, all of which represent decades of progress. Organizations such as the Urban League and the NAACP were praised as effective community leaders in Ohio. Growth in the Black middle and upper classes is seen by many as a potential source of leadership if the community can better organize in order to utilize these resources. Lastly, universities and colleges were recognized as strong sources of leadership, both in providing educational attainment to Black youth, and in the work of active administrators, educators, and researchers. The diversity in African American experience was reflected in leadership as well – reflected upon as sometimes healthily diverse, sometimes divergent, and sometimes successfully “straddling” several worlds:

“There are two types of leadership: One is the elected leadership: Judges...state representatives, mayors, state senators. The second are “leaders by action:” the grass-roots leaders like church leaders, community group leaders, professors. Hence the leadership is also as diverse as the State of Ohio itself and as diverse as the Black community itself. Yet there definitely is disagreement among the Black community as to who the representatives and the leaders are and who can speak on behalf of the community. A common mentality is “You can’t tell me who my leader is; I choose who I follow.”

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“Challenges lie in the fact that as people obtain certain levels of success with respect to money or power or position, it sometimes leads to intentionally or unintentionally a disconnect from others in the African American community. We are not growing in the same direction and so there is a division.”

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“Part of the job is to deal with the black community that is suffering. Some are doing this, but it’s far and few between.”
“The challenge is that you are constantly being watched and asked for answers you might not have. The Black community, although very supportive, are also very critical of people speaking on their behalf. If they don’t agree with you, the Black community can be particularly unforgiving and critical in their disagreement with your position. This can be depressing and alienating.”

“Strength: young black leaders are incredibly optimistic, and fully bi-cultural. The challenge is negotiating between a traditional base and a broader base, the dance that Congresswoman Jones was able to do…”

Additionally, some interviewees were concerned that there was a “generational gap” undermining leadership development and the transfer of leadership within the African American community. There was also a fear that good leaders could quickly become overwhelmed and discouraged. Others pointed out that there were fewer opportunities available once students leave high school, and that they tended to be more self-initiated business networks and social clubs. Most admit that despite the pockets of individuals being raised up into leadership, there must remain a stronger, more persistent effort to cultivate leaders in the African American community.

“A big question...it is as if there is a generation missing. We are seeing some emerging leadership with [people in their] thirties and forties, but the 40-60 year-old generation is missing...Almost as if the civil rights generation didn’t allow the next generation to emerge. How do we nurture the emerging leaders in their 30s and 40s?”

“The young leaders often feel disrespected because the older folks don’t share their knowledge with them...we need to create places and spaces where the information can be transferred, so that these young leaders, getting into positions is not just happenstance, but that older leaders can transfer their knowledge.”

“There are no deliberate efforts to engage and develop a new leadership that would think strategically for the Black communities’ problems. There is no deliberate effort to recruit and engage young African Americans to be active in the community or think strategically about how to work in the community.”

“There is a next generation of leadership coming from bottom and assuming leadership positions, yet they are not intentionally prepared by the more senior leadership.”

“I think there are a lot of fine young people with high potential...On the other hand, there is a substantial portion of African American young people that are alienated and outside the system -- almost like two different worlds.”
Well Represented in Politics

They Work Across Racial Boundaries

Resilient History of Adversity

Bring Different Perspectives

Good Ideas

Passionate

Churches / High Schools Prepare Youth for...

Demand People To Listen to Their Needs

Well Educated

Strengths of Leadership

Good Ideas

Passionate

Bring Different Perspectives

History of Adversity

Resilient

They Work Across Racial Boundaries

Well Represented in Politics

Challenges of Leadership

There is a Lack of Wealth to Empower Leaders

Not Innovative

Whites are Suspicious of Black Leaders

Lack Power

Don’t Help the Underclass Rise out of Poverty

Look Beyond One Leader

Lack Representation in the Suburban and Rural Areas

Leaders Lack Information that White Leaders Have

Young People Lack Opportunities

Young and Talented are Leaving Ohio

Young People Only Look Out for Themselves

There is a Lack of Interest and Motivation

Disconnect between the Leaders and the Community

Lack Education and Skills

There are Not Enough Leaders

Older Leaders Don’t Want to Let Go of their Influence

Disorganized / Don’t Mobilize

Connecting Young People with Mentors
**What responses are needed to address the challenges facing the African American community or to capitalize on the opportunities/strengths of the community?**

There are indeed many challenges, but interviewees tend to agree that these challenges need to be addressed strategically, and that there must be cooperation from top to bottom in order to make progress. The highest priorities were educational excellence, grassroots organizing and mentorship, workforce development, and addressing the criminal justice system, particularly disproportionate incarceration rates.

Nearly every person interviewed said that the public education system in Ohio needs to be improved. Many interviewees noted that the school funding system must be redesigned. Some also suggested merit pay for teachers, more year-round schooling options, breaking up larger schools to decrease the student/teacher ratio, more schools with specialized curriculum, increased funding for post-secondary and higher education, closing underperforming charter schools, and pooling the resources of Historically Black Colleges and other institutions that serve the African American community. There was a general sentiment that emphasis should be placed on educational investment in order to ease the need for investment in the correctional system. Respondents expressed a need for more active involvement of
the African American community in the educational system, from public schools to higher education. Interviewees noted the correlation between neighborhood impoverishment and racial isolation, and discouraging school performance:

“To me, there is no way around it...widespread use of vouchers or other ways to get children out of highly segregated school systems [are needed]. We must find a different way of changing education...If you have kids in a low-resource school system, and the street culture is the dominant culture, no matter how much money you put in, it’s not going to change.”

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“At the educational level we need better performing schools for African American students; we need to continue to deal with issues of residential—if not flat out redlining, at least the tendency of African American folks to be living in a narrow range of neighborhoods that correlate with poorer schools and limited access to other resources that can encourage leadership development.”

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“The biggest thing for me is education. Mayor Jackson started a program so that four hundred high school students who graduated from the public schools could go to Tri-C for free. That is a huge opportunity for those kids who otherwise may not have been able to afford school. In our country, the middle class is disappearing; there are haves and have-nots.”

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“Community and technical colleges need to prepare people for jobs that are available today.”

Grassroots Activism: Collaboration among grassroots efforts and policy making is said to be one of the most important responses to the challenges faced by the African American community. Interviewees mentioned a need for more organizing at the grassroots, political and institutional levels:

“Sit ins, marching in the streets. We can’t give up the agitation pieces of that...Policy does not concede without a demand. That needs to be part of our struggle in order for change to occur. “

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“It needs to be a collaborative effort. We don’t talk about collaboration a lot. But...we need to make a comprehensive and complete approach on how to deal with the issues. Gone are the days when the [organization] can operate by itself. The problems are too great to not go forth collectively. “Other agencies and community stakeholders need to collaborate...It starts with the stakeholders and trickles up to the agencies and government institutions.

“Mentorship: There is a need to tap the skills and resources of the retiring generation and to mobilize the community around common interests. There is a need for centralized information distribution for the African American community, ranging from social services to advocacy issues and business or educational opportunities. Information access programs should focus on information, knowledge and awareness; they should also be designed to meet the needs those who are not computer proficient and do a better job of marketing services to the community.

“Mentor, coach, big brother. When you’re out and you see young people acting a certain way, don’t be afraid to pull them aside and say “look, young man...young lady...that is not the proper behavior” – people used to feel free to do that. Get more involved in young people’s lives as a whole –socially, cognitively.”

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“There needs to be a process set in place to identify potential people for the next leadership positions. Mentorship programs, for instance, can be set in place. With these programs, the new developing leadership might have connection points when they come to leadership positions.”

Workforce and Minority Business Development: Interviewees mentioned the need to improve job access and provide greater economic opportunity:

“Give kids a chance to get a job and support them. There is not a stringent push for sticking with hiring minorities, or minority business...The whole green economy is an opportunity...in Cleveland there is a Green Academy -- talking about helping current contractors to be green, but they are focused on those businesses that have been on their books for years, not the newer minority businesses.”

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“I think the best thing that could happen to people is...a livable wage that allows them to make decisions for themselves and their families; to move “up and out”...A lot of jobs that African Americans traditionally had are no longer there or are diminished.”

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“In terms of economic development...I’d love to see a Minority Chamber of Commerce or a subsidiary or a comprehensive business incubator. So many African Americans have small businesses or are thinking of them but don’t have access, resources, don’t know what’s out there.

“Address the criminal justice system: Make sure the laws are fair for everybody. There’s a guy at the university who did a thing about “driving while black” showing blacks targeted for traffic violations...this is still happening...Two black guys and one white guy, all brought up on traffic violations, all three found with drugs, and the white guy got the lesser charge... The prosecutor has to make sure that laws are being fairly applied, and State Attorney General same thing.”

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“There are many youth entering into the job market without assets or resources since they come from the prison system. We need strong re-entry programs to reassemble families, neighborhoods, and communities. Many former inmates served 18-24 month sentences, and this has an effect on their families. Re-entry programs need to help reassemble these families.”

What state initiatives or programs would be helpful to the African American community?

Responses fall largely in line with the priorities identified in Question 6: suggestions include programs to improve educational opportunities, expand job opportunities, and intervene in the criminal justice disparities devastating communities of color. In this question, however, respondents prioritized increased access to health care as well. One respondent laid out the State role in expanding opportunity for all quite clearly:

“[Government has a] legitimate role in ensuring that this society provides maximum levels of opportunity for all...enabling people to start and sustain businesses, good performing schools, living wages and work development opportunities, public works/infrastructure as a way to address employment issues. [The State can] make a connection between those who need to work and the work that needs to be done—vacant houses rehab and such.”

Other respondents re-framed the question as programs that would be helpful to all Ohioans, including the Black community (rather than seeing it in “either-or” or exclusive terms):
“More than new strategies per se, the State continues to make investment—the Third Frontier, higher education; Black people must be connected with where the State is going. I’m not advocating a bunch of new strategies just for Black people, but an outreach to connect Ohioans with where the State is going. More so ensuring that the investments we make as a State, includes all Ohioans, which includes Black Ohioans, with where the State is going.”

**Public Initiatives that would help African Americans**

- Leadership Development
- Invest in Entrepreneurs and MBE
- Homeownership
- Address Incarceration Disparities; Ex-Offender...
- Healthcare
- Job Training and Creation
- Education and Youth Programs

**What kind of public initiatives would provide the greatest benefits to African Americans?**

*Education and Youth Programs* Once again, the need for improved educational outcomes topped the list of interviewee concerns. Interviewees called for a fundamental overhaul of Ohio’s education system, which included looking at new educational models and providing teachers the resources they need to succeed. Other suggestions included year-round schooling options and more comprehensive youth development programs; carrying the Head Start program through to elementary; policy changes in teacher compensation strategies (encourage merit pay and ensure that high quality teachers are working in urban schools); breaking up larger schools into smaller schools to decrease the student teacher ratios; developing more schools with specialized curricula; and a comprehensive assessment of charter school movement. Some respondents spoke to the need for more programs to prepare Black youth for college. For example, the STRIVE program in Cincinnati works with schools to provide resources, incentives, motivation and exposure to make sure students at all grade levels have the ability and willingness to go to, and succeed, in college.

“I would think that the number one initiative would be to really invest in the young people, supporting the improvement in the public schools, but also supporting structures and programs...to help young people who may not have the adult support in their lives that they need -- mentoring can be a part of this; youth development opportunities for young people after school; civic engagement; to have positive social opportunities...and open their perspectives of the world.”  

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“The issue of affordability of higher education must be confronted.”  

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“Initiatives that provide access to funding for higher education for African American students are a key issue in the State. How we do school funding in the State is not helpful to low income folks, including low income African American children. We could do better with a variety of initiatives that encourage children and youth to dream and chart a course to achieve their aspirations.”

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“The Governor started a program recently to close the achievement gap for young African American boys; that is an initiative that has the ability to be excellent. More could be done to ramp it up, and to carry it on past ninth grade.”

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“The quality of education should allow for 85% of graduating seniors to enroll in Big 10 Schools such as Ohio State and succeed there.”

Job training and creation Respondents spoke to the need to equip African American youth with employable skills for the new economy. Adult literacy and job training are critical needs, especially in emerging industries. Job creation strategies must be a priority and tied to educational development for the community. Interviewees suggested supporting industries that pay living wages, supporting small business development (start up), and using public works/infrastructure and community development improvements to employ in economically marginalized communities.

“For adults, in an economic downturn, it’s really a problem. In a normal economy it’s bad enough, but in a downturn with fewer jobs, how are those on the margin to get jobs? Probably some sort of public works program, to aid in future jobs too, providing people with skills that can be used later.”

Health Care Interviewees suggested building upon the Commission on Minority health work, and other health care initiatives, while making Medicaid more accessible to Ohioans. Health issues of particular note were hypertension and diabetes. Several respondents noted that issues of neighborhood health, education, jobs and health care were connected.

What are the health-related challenges or impediments to opportunity for the African American community in Ohio? How would you prioritize these challenges?

“That’s a really tough question. I don’t know if I can prioritize, since they are intertwined. Suburban sprawl/residential segregation first; improving educational obtainment white-black gap second; economic downturn protection third.”

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“I would like to see health become “community redevelopment” issue rather than a medically based issue…A natural pairing with urban planners...”
What local initiatives would you like to see implemented, expanded upon or scaled up?

Respondents were often able to point to various local programs that were working well in their communities and had ideas on how to replicate, expand, or improve them. For example:

“We have an effort here from about 10 years ago called Community Oriented Policing (COP). The police and the community engaged with each other on a personal level. They created this relationship to buffer any future hostilities. If any incident happened, this relationship acted as a buffer. A relationship-building program such as this could be expanded to the court system and community officials to break down beliefs of the system being unfair. The system is very much misunderstood. Something can be done about this. There is also an internship program that gives the African American youth the opportunity to do their internship in corporations which lack significant numbers of African Americans in their ranks.”

Interviewees emphasized the need for more local programs to support small business development, increased housing opportunity, more youth programming and mentorship, community organization, increased civic engagement, better public meeting space, dialogue sessions about race, and investments in the arts. Many respondents mentioned youth-oriented programming, including after-school programs that are culturally competent. As mentioned earlier, many respondents wanted to see a broader effort to institutionalize more mentoring programs. One idea was a program to challenge middle class and affluent African Americans to “adopt” and mentor youth in the community: “each one, reach one, teach one.” Another respondent mentioned the need to expand Kinship Care programs, to keep more African American children out of the foster care system. Others wanted to see programs to encourage family planning, parenting education and social support for single mothers and children.

In terms of housing and neighborhood development, respondents mentioned the need for more programs (or funding for programs) like Columbus Mayor Coleman’s Home Again initiative, which explicitly targets housing redevelopment in distressed neighborhoods. Others mentioned the need for affordable housing CDCs that promoted renter equity programming, and more anti-discrimination housing programming.

With respect to economic development, interviewees suggested that more local wealth-building initiatives and more local set-aside programs for MBEs and small business would expand economic opportunity. Interviewees suggested more programs to connect ex-offenders with jobs and job training. (ex.: The Franklin County Career Center runs a program with 3-C Body Shop to train and employ ex-offenders.) Others mentioned a need for more programs which educate the private sector about the societal and economic costs of not employing ex-offenders. The Legal Aid Society also has programs which seek to assist ex-offenders; more programs like these throughout the State were thought to be needed.

One interviewee added a note of caution to over-emphasizing local action:

“A lot of these problems are structural problems, so what the locals do can only somewhat improve things. This is where regionalism can potentially be helpful. There really aren’t very many grassroots type movements (at least not visible to me). This is one of the problems in the Civil Rights and fair housing arenas. A powerful movement leads to a response by government and the courts -- whether it is radical or mainstream, masses of people organizing and demanding things.”
Are there state, local or grass roots capacities/assets that are underutilized, which could be helpful in expanding opportunities for the African American community?

Interviewees listed a variety of facilities, programs, organizations, information, and systems as underutilized. However, there was an overwhelming sentiment that funding was scarce because of public budget constraints. Too many resources are overburdened and tapped out because of the funding crisis; respondents felt there were not enough volunteers or money. Grass roots and local initiatives face challenges because of the significant fiscal stress facing local governments and local school districts. Local governments are facing budget shortages and must prioritize funds toward police, fire and public works, leaving short funding for community programming.

The Urban League and church communities were thought to be critical organizations already serving the Black community that could further expand opportunities. For example:

“When you have organizations such as the Urban League and the NAACP throughout Ohio, covering major urban centers where the majority of African Americans live, we need to think of how we utilize those organizations that already exist to carry out the work that needs to be done. I don’t think there needs to be an expansion exactly of grassroots organizations, but using what already exists.”

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“I think that there are good programs and good organizations in every community that have the expertise and track record, but don’t have the dollars to serve as many individuals as they could possibly serve. The Urban League is such an organization, [with] over sixty years of service; they have the expertise and capacity, but funding plays a great role in how many people they can hire to serve the community.”

Community members, volunteer networks, young people, and retirees were mentioned as underutilized people in neighborhoods. Interviewees mentioned underutilized facilities like school buildings, community centers, and churches. Schools could hold more community programs, like evening programs targeted to families and adults. Respondents also mentioned programs that could be expanded like adult literacy courses, financial workshops, GRE attainment programs, and job training courses that link high school students to career paths in emerging employment sectors, especially in the health care sector. For example, adult literacy and financial workshops are occurring, but these efforts are fragmented and do not have enough marketing or exposure -- many in the community do not know about them. Finally, some interviewees suggested that more community and business information be made available to African Americans so that they can have better access to opportunities within the mainstream service delivery system.
Is there internal diversity within Ohio’s African American community? If so, how would you describe this diversity?

Interview respondents asserted that every culture and race is diverse and dynamic; and that Ohio’s African American community is not monolithic, and is in fact very diverse. Ohio’s African American community is diverse with respect to class, education, nativity, religion, geography, skin color, and sexual orientation, for example.

“That’s one of the challenges, sometimes the leadership of the African American community is asked to give the “African American perspective” and sometimes I have to stop and say, I can speak on my behalf, but it’s inaccurate to think I could give insight on behalf of the community, because we are so diverse: in religion, in where we grew up, in our political views. We are as diverse as other groups: in education, in economic status -- it’s all across the board.”

Interviewees most often mentioned a troubling class divide within the African American community. The class division was understood to be the largest (and fastest growing) division within the community. A class divide was articulated as a divide along education and skills, income and geography:

“Socioeconomic strata covers a bunch of stuff -- family background, money in the household, worldviews, and all those things play out.

“Within our culture, there is a sense of -- a class diversity, that is unseen and unspoken but we all know.
“There are two totally different scenarios: First there are professionals in the Black community, like physicians, lawyers, etc., who are going somewhere. Then there are also a huge number of Black youth heading nowhere...”

Or as another respondent put it,

“There’s another Who’s Who in Black Columbus. They’re not putting all of the truth in that book. There is another side to that coin.

“Interviewees mentioned that some well-educated, middle class African Americans are moving to the suburbs for opportunity, but those left behind are finding themselves more isolated in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. The class and geography divide impacts African American youth; issues facing middle class Black students in the suburbs can be quite different from those facing low-income Black youth in the city.”

Respondents also observed that Ohio’s African American community varies with geography and associated history, politics and culture, from the southern-northern differences within the State to the urban – suburban – rural differences across metro areas.

“There is a diversity of background, between African American folks who have their family roots here in the State versus those who are more recent coming into central Ohio with strong ties to Appalachia or Deep South; a number of folks who are now permanent residents, but whose roots are in the Caribbean or Africa; lots of cultural diversity; diversity in terms of religious practice and perspective.”

Interviewees also mentioned a growing diversity with respect to global geographies as well, noting more recent African and Caribbean immigrants. There was a difference of opinion regarding whether or not recent African immigrants were considered “African American”:

**What about the Somali community? Are they included in “Black Ohio”?**

“I’m not well versed in that community. They live in a separate part of town, they have their own Chamber of Commerce; they have their own ethnic inter-separations/conflict from back home...I think there has been resentment from African Americans towards not just Somalis but other ethnic groups. “I’ve been trying to start a store for so long...and they got one right away.” They don’t realize that maybe that Mexican neighborhood, their families have pooled their money, they have a different concept of how those businesses work. The Somalis have a fairly-well developed community from what I understand. But I don’t know very many Somali individuals.”

Other respondents noted:

“I appreciate the reference to the Somali[s]... but I don’t think we think of them as African-American.

“Whether they see themselves as part of the African American community or whether they see themselves as part of a Diaspora community depends. I think after generations they become more and more Americanized.

“There is a growing disconnect and resentment between the groups, particularly in regards to African American attitudes towards African immigrants. African Americans see African immigrants as transitioning to mainstream culture and society easier, which leads to resentment”

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“We have “true” Africans here, and a lot of Jamaicans, and I guess they pretty much stay within their culture; I don’t really see us weaving together.”

In response, some interviewees suggested that more dialogue and interaction between the African American community and African Immigrant community was needed:

“There are ‘shared’ things, such as race; in some cases a common history, but others not in terms of immigrants (i.e. Somali) and understanding that because we share a skin color, we are not the same. [In regards to African immigrants] there is a lot of tension based on misunderstanding and misinformation...but [you] must recognize that it is the culture that is the difference. Africans coming to the States have a culture of entrepreneurship, and they help each other and support each other – they are very family-and community-connected ... Dress and religion is different and differing codes of conduct can result in tensions.”

In order to deal with this problem, The Columbus Chapter of NAACP started some initiatives. For instance, during the Presidential campaign last year, we invited African Americans to a series of political forums in the Somali community, including a candidate meet-and-greet session.

Religious diversity was also an important distinction noted by interviewees; this denominational diversity influences services provision and community involvement. Interviewees also perceived a growing multi-racial population, which sometimes invoked skin color discrimination, and differing perceptions of beauty. As one interviewee said,

“In Ohio there is a latent ‘color’ thing, a cultural racism within our own ranks."

Interviewees also mentioned diversity of sexual orientation. Some respondents felt that the non-heterosexual Black community is not included in many dialogues. One person noted:

“GLBT issues are only discussed in terms of disease and other negative aspects.”

Is there anything unique about the African American experience in Ohio?

The most common answer to this question revolved around Ohio’s historical significance in American history as a free state:

“Ohio has a rich history with African Americans (Oberlin, Antioch College, Wilberforce)...We have an extensive history of the presence of African Americans. Virginia was a slave state, so some African Americans sought to enter the southeast corner of Ohio in order to obtain their freedom. The Underground Railroad went through Ohio; Ohio was seen as a state of freedom. Slaves from the South often stopped in Ohio.”

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“The history of the state in the abolitionist movement and Underground Railroad are bright spots certainly worth celebrating. Unique aspects in terms of history of communities: Yellow Springs, Oberlin -- a long history of being more open and encouraging intellectual and artistic, political expression by African American folks—from Paul L. Dunbar, Coretta Scott King, Central State, Wilberforce University—wonderful chapters in the history of African American folks that have strong Ohio ties.”

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“The folks who were really involved in the freedom movement were in Ohio or older established cities.”
“Ohio has a better beginning history for Blacks than most states. Because of fugitive slave laws, Blacks got a sense of freedom when they crossed the Ohio River. Oberlin College in 1833 accepted Black students.”

“Ohio was a retreat point for African Americans who were fleeing the South; this makes Ohio unique. Many people fled to Ohio from West Virginia, Indiana, and other places.”

The southern part of the State was singled out as having particular challenges given its history as a gateway to the South:

“In Cincinnati, I could look across the river into what was a slave state...I think that has some residual bearing on how people interact with each other.”

Cincinnati, a gateway to [the] South... was the place where you had to switch to the back of the bus...

“Blacks in Southwest Ohio...have never been broken through to the post-Civil Rights era. The Ohio River was a dividing line between slave and non-slave states; this fed racist notions in the Cincinnati area... There is second class citizenship for Blacks in Cincinnati in terms of education, economic, police brutality vis-à-vis the community.”

“I went to O.U. [Ohio University in Athens, Ohio] for two years...the campus was very segregated, we’d have our own parties, and once the Klan came to visit us. And I kept asking myself, “I’m in Ohio? I’m in Ohio?”

“Whites benefited financially from sending blacks back down south. This created a mindset in southern Ohio that hasn’t been overcome yet...The Black folks came to the north of Ohio River, but they better keep going. That’s the sense they get from the White attitude.”

Interviewees noted that Ohio’s remarkable diversity (urban manufacturing vs. rural farming; northern history, culture and industry vs. southern) is unique and creates political complexity. Opportunities and experiences differ depending on where you live and how you came to Ohio:

“The different pathways -- free slaves from the South; universities making it possible for African Americans to move forward, the big cities drawing the people from the south to come and work in the factories...In ’43, Truman desegregated the defense plants, so that the big employers here in Ohio, like Wright Patterson, could hire African Americans—a big pull for African American workers -- better employment, to better housing, kids to go to college. A lot of pent up talent before World War II from Jim Crow...”

“You can go some places where it is cosmopolitan, and in a few hours you can be somewhere rural.”
“Depends on what part of Ohio you’re in – in some parts African Americans have had more opportunities at an earlier stage in State’s history, and still there are areas of the State that are really segregated and have serious problems with where people live and how they are treated.”

Politically, Ohio’s rural community has a very strong voice, relative to Ohio’s urban nature, and some felt that this has skewed State politics to the rural interests. Another observation was that the large number of urban areas has resulted in a large degree of African American political success across the State; in other words, African Americans are not isolated in one metropolitan area in the State.

“In Arizona, the black population is 3%. So the diversity in the Black community in Ohio is substantial.”

Several respondents said that Ohio’s African American community is very Midwestern, culturally and economically. One person described Ohio’s African Americans as “hard working, family-oriented and predominately blue collar,” with a heritage of migration for manufacturing jobs. Several respondents picked up on the theme of the manufacturing downturn, noting that economic restructuring will have significant negative impacts on the African American community.

One respondent described Ohio’s opportunities for African Americans as a “national secret.” There were quite a few hopeful and positive contrasts with other places:

“There are so many African Americans doing great things at grassroots level as well, people who really want to see change and take hours out of their lives to seek out change...There is more opportunity here than for folks who live in the deep South or Baltimore or parts of Cleveland or Chicago where they are locked on their block and don’t see anything outside that three-four block area. They have more opportunity to see positive role models here.”

“I think Ohio is unique because there is more parity, at least from my experience... there isn’t the same level of racism that there may be on the East coast, kind of the Midwest values...Ohio exemplifies that. Folks in Ohio are very comfortable... Ohio is pretty even-keeled in terms of comfort level between whites and blacks...I also think the values; people want to work hard to be successful, and people often come back because it is an easy place to live...to raise the family, the ease of diversity...”

“There is more hope in Ohio than in some other places, basing this on my own experience. I have relatives that have moved, from the Carolinas, into Ohio or the Midwest, and have been able to have a better life. I think that is because of the shift from industry to government jobs. The pace in Ohio is more gentle than in other places. I lived in California for awhile and even though there were great opportunities, the pace was not as forgiving.”

“We have a fair job market overall for someone who is educated; a thriving and growing African American community that is open to a lot of new ideas, but it is still relatively low key, under the radar, compared to like a DC, or Atlanta... a lot of African Americans don’t see the ...opportunities to be had in Ohio, until you get here; other places are more broadcast...Ohio is low key, not much attention.”
“I think in Ohio there is tremendous opportunity for social, economic, and educational growth...I have friends in other places, Atlanta, etc., and they are amazed at the positions that African Americans hold in business and political arenas...”

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“Tremendous cultural heritage from the ‘50s and ‘60s...We have more black businesses than before, more black entertainment, more opportunities for diversity than before...The Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame gave a lot of recognition to African Americans for their contributions. Seeing more evidence of recognition, more art galleries opening up in recognition; even if small, a step in the right direction...”

However, some noted negative contrasts with other places they had lived, and several remarked on the “soft” racism they experienced:

“Yeah, in Ohio the discrimination and the racist behavior is kind of soft [sic]. They don’t express discrimination so openly that it thwarts you from moving up. You can still achieve. It is comforting that the majority of White population did not feel threatened by the African American migration into Ohio. As a whole, Ohio is more comfortable – African Americans have learned to “adapt and comply.” But this also shows that there will be no radical leaders in Ohio. We adapt.”

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“I think the experience has lulled people into a false sense of security. Growing up in Ohio, myself, but having been to the South and lived in Texas, I think African Americans have not really acknowledged the discrimination and racism that exists there because it’s very subversive. It’s not overt, so there is a sense (and maybe more with the older people, but the younger people raised in the suburbs too) that they don’t have a response to the subliminal racism...You think you had pretty much any opportunity here, and I think that’s not true. Everything is subliminal to me. If you are too assertive, aggressive, that is not looked on favorably.”

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“I did notice a difference here, after moving. I don’t see the camaraderie here that I saw in New York, where people bond together and work for the good of the community. Here everybody is out for their own... Maybe because I wasn’t born here, that’s why I feel like an outsider, but regardless, I’ve been here almost ten years, and I should feel like a part of the community, but I don’t.”

Are there additional comments or observations that you would like to add?

Comments were of course wide and varied, but several themes emerged. These included a rebuttal of the idea that the United States is a “color-blind” society; an underscoring of the diversity of experiences under the rubric “Black Ohio,” and the mention that some lines of difference (gender, age, sexuality, rural isolation) are not considered as fully as they should be. Respondents also emphasized the idea that we were all in the same boat – as go our cities, our urban institutions, our public education system – so goes our State. Lastly, respondents hoped that the report would be used to motivate action – including institutional collaboration and benchmarking progress.

We are not in a color-blind society or era:

“We’re at a very interesting point in our history. The election of President Obama is not going to change what happens in cities and states as much as people think. We’ve been lulled into this false sense of security more than ever.”
“Certainly African Americans as a whole are doing better than they were 20 or 30 years ago; that does not mean that enough African Americans are doing well enough...There is still institutional racism; Americans don’t see how policies and processes have evolved. Some of these serve to hurt the African American community and help the white community, and because it is institutionalized...we have come to accept that this is just the way things are done. We need to ferret out those things that cause African Americans harm, and change them so there is a level playing field.”

***

“I have a trepidation that because we now have an African American president, there are those who say we have solved the race issue in this country, and we haven’t even touched the tip of the iceberg...it’s always, “we dealt with that in the 1950s,” etc. it’s always going to be an issue, and we need to talk about it, in positive terms, in a solution-driven way to help fix the problems, because of past inequities.”

***

“People do not have what it takes to talk about politics regarding race. Things that are written on paper, and what is practiced, are two different things. This makes people angry; we need thoughtful and honest talk... All we have to do is look at healthcare, education, and criminal justice. A Black person breaks a window and goes to jail, while somebody can steal billions of dollars from a corporation and does not go to jail. Look at crack versus cocaine charges. The evidence is clear; the justice system makes racial distinctions. We’ve got to talk about that.

***

“I sit on a non-profit board...I’m one of two black women on the board and there are no other people of color on the board, except one doctor of Asian descent...We had this retreat and we went to this spa with our spouses and etc...Most of the spouses were wives. My boyfriend, who was black and came from work in his suit, he came in and everyone stopped talking, like what is this Black man doing here? Like Eddie Murphy walking into the bar in 48 Hours. These...wives were almost trembling when he walked in ... the presenter was nervous, people in the audience were nervous...I’m using this example because this is not a violent racial profiling, but this is stuff that happens a zillion times a day. And he was cool about it, but a lot of people would have walked away with anger. That’s where we haven’t come a long way.”

Diversity of Black experience (gender, age, geography, etc.) should be reflected in advocacy:

“Black women are holding up a lot of the family structure [in] Ohio; it’s almost a given ...There is an African American Male Initiative, in full support, but there needs to be a recognition that the children that are the recipients of these programs are being led by women, and they need a lot of support to get the children raised to successful adulthood.”

***

“Clearly race should not be lost in the way that we examine all these different issues, but also you can’t separate it from class, sexual orientation, etc. There are all these different ways that these things are connected.”

***
“It is important to understand the problems of the elderly, which are the result of life-long deficits among the Black population, i.e.: economic deficits, healthcare -- earlier investments can help save government money -- [other] disparities.”

***

“We often don’t recognize how geography affects our experience ... we need to understand...what the rural folks are dealing with...How do we get a coalition of urban and rural people?”

***

“When looking at making changes in education, criminal justice system, or initiating economic reforms, the people who will be directly impacted need to be at the table.”

**Ohioans face similar needs & challenges:**

“It’s important for all people to accept the fact that we are more alike than different, that we all want the same things in life, and it’s important to invest in people, not just buildings.”

***

“The challenges facing the Black community which are twofold namely, (a) How do we survive the tough economic times and (b) How do we secure a bright future for our children?”

***

“It will be difficult for our State to embrace a global perspective if we don’t resolve the lack of inclusion in our own State. We must embrace Ohio and where it is in terms of ethnic, racial and religious differences and move into a more enlightened place, because globalization is going to be difficult if we don’t start at home first.”

***

“The health of society is indicated by the health of our children, and this is where we should put our energy and resources. We could turn a lot of the negative around by focusing on the needs of children: prevention early would mitigate those negative consequences later in life.”

***

“There is a lack of emphasis on higher education, and a concern over whether or not educational resources will be there for the younger generations.”

***

“I see a lot of people who are very poor who want better. And I think a lot of whites are afraid to go into poor neighborhoods, because they think it’s all crime. People generally are very warm and nice people, and they want a better life and they don’t have a lot of opportunity.”

The SOBO report should be used to start collaborations, and to benchmark progress:

“The report should be worked on with the Urban League of the Ohio, so it can be as comprehensive as possible, and in the future look to making connections with other African American institutions as collaborators.”

***
“[We should be] using the report to benchmark and track our progress on indicators, among our cities in Ohio, and hopefully as a state among other states, so we push each other and ourselves to do better; measuring our performance and progress.”

***

“Every two years there should be a document that chronicles how we are doing and what we need to do for the future.”

***

“I would like to collaborate with [Kirwan] to initiate studies that will enhance the mission of both organizations.”

***

“But the request I would make is, how do we boil [this report] down into the state of Black Toledo, of Black Cleveland, etc…. How do we have a document that leads local leaders to change? It really has to start in our communities, in order to make changes within the State.”

***

“We don’t need another study …to identify what we know are challenges. What I hope with this project is that it lets us turn the corner from identifying what the challenges are to move towards a set of solutions. When the African American community can turn the corner from identifying challenges to solving them, then we can capitalize on our strengths. We are all smart enough to know what the challenges are, but can we galvanize the leadership and community to take action, we need to mobilize. OSU has a unique ability to call action, so I think that this project, if presented the right way, can change the direction of the ship throughout Ohio, I think we are sitting on an opportunity here.”
Section III: Data Findings - Indicators for Ohio’s African American Community

The following provides an overview of a number of indicators of socio-economic conditions and health for Ohio’s Black community and other racial populations. The assessment focuses primarily on trends for these indicators – probing whether conditions are improving or growing worse for Ohio’s African American community. In addition, we indicate how Ohio’s African American community compares to African American communities across the nation.

Socio-Economic Conditions

Data indicates worsening socioeconomic conditions in income and economic health for the Black community in Ohio. These figures suggest that the economic crisis is reversing gains in income and reductions in poverty made in the 1990s by Ohio’s black residents. Compared to national figures, Ohio’s Black community is experiencing rates of poverty and unemployment which are growing faster than rates experienced by Blacks nationwide. This trend suggests that Ohio’s poor economic climate has directly impacted Black residents. Black poverty rates in Ohio declined from 32.3% in 1990 to 26.5% in 2000, but since 2000, rates have steadily risen. Poverty rates in 2007 for Black Ohioans are at 30.9% (compared to a national Black poverty rate of 24.7%) (Figure 1).

Other Ohio racial groups have also experienced an increase in poverty during this time (except the Asian population), although increases in poverty have been more rapid for Black and Latino populations (Figure 2). Currently, Black poverty rates (30.9%) are more than double the poverty rate for all Ohioans (of 13.1%) in 2007.

Median household income for African Americans in Ohio was approximately $29K, compared to $47K for the State as a whole. After adjusting for inflation, median household income for Black Ohioans has declined from $32K in 2000. This rate of decline was mirrored by declining income in the White and Latino community (Figure 3). National figures for Black median household income also declined during this time (Figure 4).

Unemployment rates for Ohio’s Black community have increased from 7.6% in 2000 to 11.6% in 2007, reversing the sharp increase in employment for Black Ohioans which occurred in the 1990s. Ohio’s Black unemployment rate was on par with national rates of Black unemployment in 1990 and 2000, but has diverged since 2000, increasing faster than national rates of Black unemployment (Figure 5). Both White and Latino unemployment rates in Ohio are also rising since 2000 (Figure 6).
Figure 1: Poverty Rates for African Americans, Ohio and Nation, 1990 to 2007

African Americans Below Poverty Line, 1990 - 2007 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blacks (US)</th>
<th>Blacks (OH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2: Poverty Rates by Race in Ohio, 1990 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>10.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>26.5%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Median Household Income by Race in Ohio (Inflation Adjusted to 2007 dollars)

- **White**
  - 2000: $51,653.68
  - 2005: $49,376.70
  - 2006: $48,861.13
  - 2007: $49,949.00

- **Black**
  - 2000: $32,051.32
  - 2005: $27,639.23
  - 2006: $27,913.01
  - 2007: $28,517.00

- **Asian**
  - 2000: $59,320.04
  - 2005: $58,081.24
  - 2006: $55,859.95
  - 2007: $60,778.00

- **Hispanic**
  - 2000: $39,894.67
  - 2005: $33,134.38
  - 2006: $38,505.34
  - 2007: $34,208.00

**Source:** Census 2000, American Community Survey 2005, 2006, 2007

Figure 4: Median Household Income for African Americans (Inflation Adjusted to 2007 dollars)

- **Blacks (US)**
  - 2000: $35,013.37
  - 2005: $32,485.95
  - 2006: $33,343.16
  - 2007: $34,001.00

- **Blacks (OH)**
  - 2000: $31,676.61
  - 2005: $27,335.70
  - 2006: $27,954.20
  - 2007: $28,517.00

**Source:** Census 2000, American Community Survey 2005, 2006, 2007
Figure 5: Unemployment Rates for African Americans (US and Ohio) Charts 5 and 6 to be replaced

Figure 6: Unemployment Rates by Race in Ohio

**Education**

Although disparities in educational outcomes persist in Ohio’s Black community, conditions have improved in recent years.
Educational attainment in the African American community (with 21% of adults holding an associate’s degree or higher in 2007) has improved substantially since 1990 when this rate was 14%, following a national trend of growing Black educational attainment. Ohio Black educational attainment rates (associate’s degree or higher) were slightly lower than the Black national rate (24.6%) (Figure 7). Black college educational attainment rates are lower than the rate of 31% for all Ohioans. College educational attainment rates are highest for Asians in the State, with 64% of Asian households having earned an associate’s degree or higher (Figure 8).

High school graduation rates have increased steadily for Ohio’s Black students since 1999. Graduation rates increased from 56.8% in 1999 to 71% in 2006. Although a racial gap exists in graduation rates for Black students compared to other races, this gap has narrowed since 1999 (Figure 9).

Substantial disparities exist in proficiency test outcomes for Black students in Ohio. In 2006, the reading proficiency rate for Black students was 57%, compared to 78% for all Ohio students. Similar gaps are found in math proficiency rates for Black students (45%) when compared to rates for all Ohio students (72%).

![Figure 7: Educational Attainment for African Americans over Age 25 in Ohio and the US](image-url)

Figure 8: Educational Attainment for Ohioans over Age 25 by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Graduation Rates by Race in Ohio; Source: The Ohio Department of Education Data Warehouse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>91.8%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>93.6%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Health

Data on public health conditions reflect troubling increases and disparities in indicators of health risk for Black Ohioans, although not all indicators have been on the increase (such as cancer mortality). Obesity rates in the African American community (42% in 2007) are slightly higher than rates for Blacks nationwide (36%). Obesity rates for African Americans have increased from a low of 21% in 1997; this increase has been mirrored by growing national obesity rates (Figure 10). Limited data exists recording obesity rates for other races, but the disparity between White and Black obesity rates has grown since 1997 (Figure 11).

Diabetes rates for Black Ohioans have been increasing since 2003 and have seen a general increase since the late 1990s. In 2007, diabetes rates were 14% for Black Ohioans, a figure which is slightly higher than the national Black diabetes rate of 12.6%. The increase in Black diabetes in Ohio (from 5.8% in 1996) has been mirrored by a national increase in Black diabetes rates (Figure 12). Limited data is available for diabetes rates in other racial groups in Ohio; White diabetes rates remain lower than Black diabetes rates in 2007 (at 8.1%), but have also generally been on the rise since the 1990s (Figure 13). Black cancer mortality rates were 250 per 100,000 persons; this rate has steadily declined since 1990 when it was 295.3 per 100,000 persons. Cancer mortality rates in Ohio for Blacks remain higher than rates for Blacks nationally (224.1). National Black cancer mortality rates have also been on the decline since 1990 (Figure 14).

HIV/AIDS rates for Black Ohioans have been increasing since 2002 (from 404 persons per 100,000 people to 471 persons per 100,000 people). In 2007, HIV/AIDS infection rates were nearly 500% higher than rates in the White and Asian community and almost double rates found in the Latino community (Figure 15). While Black, White and Asian HIV rates have been on the increase since 2001, Latino HIV infection rates have declined. White and Black HIV rates have increased at a similar rate (+16% for Black Ohioans and +14% for White Ohioans) since 2002.

The proportion of mothers not receiving prenatal care in the Black community was 6% in 2006. This figure had declined to less than 2% from 2002 to 2005, but increased substantially in 2006 (Figure 16). The rate for mothers who did not receive prenatal care increased for all racial groups in the State between 2005 and 2006. In 2006, more than 14% of African American births were low birth weight births, nearly double the rate for White, Latino and Asian populations in Ohio (Figure 17). Rates of low birth weight births for Black Ohioans are parallel with rates nationally for Blacks (Figure 18). African American infant mortality rates in 2006 (at 16.7 per 1000 births) were more than 270% higher than all other racial groups in Ohio (Figure 19). Rates for Black Ohioans were also higher than Black national infant mortality rates (Figure 20).

In 2007, only 5% of Ohio’s medical school graduates were African American (while African Americans make up 13% of the total State’s population). Black Ohioans have slightly better access to health insurance than Blacks nationally. In 2007, 17% of Black Ohioans lacked health insurance, compared to 21% of Blacks nationally. In total, 12% of all Ohioans lacked health insurance, a rate which is slightly lower than the Black uninsured rate of 17%. Latinos had the highest uninsured rate in the State, with 34% of Latinos uninsured in 20079.
Figure 10: African American Obesity Rate (Ohio and US); Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Prevalence and Trends Data, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Figure 11: Obesity Rates by Race in Ohio; Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Prevalence and Trends Data, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Figure 12: Diabetes Prevalence for African American Adults in Ohio and the US; Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Prevalence and Trends Data, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Figure 13: Diabetes Prevalence by Race in Ohio; Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Prevalence and Trends Data, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Figure 14: Cancer Mortality Rates for African Americans (Ohio and the US); Source: National Cancer Institute, state profiles, SEER Data

Figure 15: HIV/AIDS Incidence by Race in Ohio; Source: Minority Health Profile and the Ohio Department of Health
Figure 16: Percentage of Mothers not Receiving Prenatal Care by Race in Ohio; Source: Ohio Department of Health Information Warehouse

Figure 17: Low Birth Weight Births in Ohio by Race; Source: Ohio Department of Health Information Warehouse
Figure 18: Low Birth Weight Births for African Americans in Ohio and the US

Figure 19: African American Infant Mortality Rates for OH and the US
Neighborhood Conditions: Access to Communities of Opportunity

Neighborhood and community conditions have a profound impact on access to opportunity structures needed to excel and thrive. School conditions, safe communities, health resources, health risks and neighborhood stability have a significant influence on educational, health and socioeconomic outcomes for community members. Racial and economic segregation in housing, schools and neighborhoods often limits access to opportunity rich communities for low income populations and racial populations. To understand neighborhood conditions facing Black Ohio, we created an index of various neighborhood indicators for communities across the State, grouping neighborhoods into categories and analyzing racial populations within each category. Our analysis measured the relative “opportunity” in neighborhoods, by measuring twenty-eight indicators of neighborhood health/resources, economic opportunity and educational opportunity. Neighborhoods were given a final “opportunity index” score based on their performance in relation to these indicators. Opportunity scores were then used to divide neighborhoods into quintiles, representing very low, low, moderate, high and very high opportunity neighborhoods. Thus, the bottom scoring 20% of census tracts in the State were “very low” opportunity areas and the top scoring 20% of census tracts in the region were “very high” opportunity areas. (Detailed information explaining the indicators and methods for measuring neighborhood opportunity for the State’s “opportunity mapping” analysis are provided in the appendix of the full report).

After constructing neighborhood “opportunity maps” for the State, we analyzed the distribution of racial and economic groups within the various neighborhoods across the State. Our analysis finds disproportionate concentrations of Black Ohioans concentrated into the State’s lowest opportunity
neighborhoods. Nearly 3 out of 4 Black Ohioans, 1 in 2 Latino Ohioans and 1 in 4 Asian and White Ohioans were found in the State’s very low and low opportunity neighborhoods (which represent 2/5s of the State’s total census tracts). In short, 3 in 4 Black Ohioans were living in the lowest opportunity neighborhoods in the State (Figure 21). The maps seen in figures 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 provide samples of opportunity maps for Ohio’s largest metropolitan counties (all maps are provided in the full report). The maps also illustrate the geographic concentration of Black Ohioans into the State’s low opportunity neighborhoods.

When looking both at race and class within Ohio’s geography of opportunity, significant concentrations of Black Ohioans (of all income groups) are found within low and very low opportunity neighborhoods (Figure 22). More than 80% of low income Black households lived in low opportunity areas (areas representing just 2/5s of the State’s census tracts). For low income Whites, only 38% lived in low opportunity areas; for low income Latino and Asian households, these figures were 52% and 29% respectively. Higher incomes for many Black households did not necessarily translate to living in high opportunity areas at rates similar to other racial groups. More than 2 out of 3 middle income Black households and more than 1 in 2 high income Black households lived in low opportunity neighborhoods. Comparative figures for Whites indicate that less than 1 in 3 middle income White households and less than 1 in 5 high income White households live in low opportunity neighborhoods.

This geographic analysis indicates that Black Ohioans are disproportionately isolated in lower opportunity neighborhoods in Ohio, at rates greater than all other racial groups. This isolation speaks to the need for both fair housing improvements in the State of Ohio to open access to more moderate and high opportunity neighborhoods for Black Ohioans and the need for extensive investment in community development in low opportunity neighborhoods in the State that are often racially segregated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Opportunity Rank</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low and Very Low Opportunity</td>
<td>26.66%</td>
<td>73.64%</td>
<td>48.37%</td>
<td>22.67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate Opportunity</td>
<td>22.60%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>19.06%</td>
<td>13.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High and Very Opportunity</td>
<td>50.74%</td>
<td>15.82%</td>
<td>32.56%</td>
<td>64.02%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Opportunity Rank</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low Opportunity</td>
<td>8.14%</td>
<td>50.56%</td>
<td>27.28%</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Opportunity</td>
<td>18.52%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Opportunity</td>
<td>22.60%</td>
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<td>19.06%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Opportunity</td>
<td>24.51%</td>
<td>8.53%</td>
<td>15.93%</td>
<td>19.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very High Opportunity</td>
<td>26.23%</td>
<td>7.29%</td>
<td>16.63%</td>
<td>44.90%</td>
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<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21: Proportion of total State population by race, within each neighborhood type (based on neighborhood opportunity analysis)
### Low Income Households (Earning Less than $30K in 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Type</th>
<th>White</th>
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<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low and Very Low Opportunity</td>
<td>37.92%</td>
<td>82.78%</td>
<td>51.75%</td>
<td>28.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Opportunity</td>
<td>24.20%</td>
<td>8.42%</td>
<td>18.29%</td>
<td>14.38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High and Very Opportunity</td>
<td>37.88%</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>29.96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Middle Income Households (Earning $30K to $60K in 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Type</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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### High Income Households (Earning $60K or More in 2000)

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<td>High and Very Opportunity</td>
<td>65.27%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22: Proportion of the State’s total racial population (subcategorized by household income), within each neighborhood type (based on neighborhood opportunity analysis)
Map E: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with African American Population overlay

CINCINNATI

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, Housing & Neighborhood, Public Health and Public Safety & Criminal Justice indicators.

Sources: US Census 2000; HUD; CDRC; ODE; USDA(Rural Dev.); State Library of Ohio; ESRI Data Feb. 13, 2009

Figure 23: Comprehensive Opportunity Map for Hamilton County (Cincinnati) with Overlay of 2000 African American Population Distribution
Map C: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with African American Population overlay

CUYAHOGA COUNTY

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, Housing & Neighborhood, Public Health and Public Safety & Criminal Justice indicators.

Source: US Census 2000; HUD; ODRC; ODE; USDA(Rural Dev.); State Library of Ohio; ESRI Date: Feb. 13, 2009

Figure 24: Comprehensive Opportunity Map for Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) with Overlay of 2000 African American Population Distribution
Map B: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with African American Population overlay

FRANKLIN COUNTY

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, Housing & Neighborhood, Public Health and Public Safety & Criminal Justice Indicators.

Sources: US Census 2000; HUD; CERC; CDE; USDA/Rural Dev.; State Library of Ohio; ESRI Date: Feb. 13, 2009

Figure 25: Comprehensive Opportunity Map for Franklin County (Columbus) with Overlay of 2000 African American Population Distribution
Map F: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with African American Population overlay

SUMMIT COUNTY

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, Housing & Neighborhood, Public Health and Public Safety & Criminal Justice indicators.


Figure 26: Comprehensive Opportunity Map for Summit County (Akron) with Overlay of 2000 African American Population Distribution
Map G: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with African American Population overlay

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, Housing & Neighborhood, Public Health and Public Safety & Criminal Justice indicators.

Source: US Census 2000, HUD; CDRC; OOE; USDA(Rural Devp.); State Library of Ohio; ESRI Data: Feb. 13, 2009

Figure 27: Comprehensive Opportunity Map for Montgomery County (Dayton) with Overlay of 2000 African American Population Distribution
Figure 28: Comprehensive Opportunity Map for Lucas County (Toledo) with Overlay of 2000 African American Population Distribution
Measuring Ohio’s Metropolitan Areas: Where are African Americans Doing Best?

Ohio has a tremendous degree of geographic diversity among its various communities, counties and metropolitan regions. The following depicts how the African American population fared in Ohio’s larger metropolitan regions, when compared to regions nationally and regions throughout the Great Lakes states. Our analysis created an index of 19 indicators of socio-economic health and measured those indicators for African Americans across the 21 metropolitan areas with the largest Black populations in the US and the 21 largest metropolitan areas in the Great Lakes states. All data used in the assessment was gathered for 2005. While only Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus are found in the 21 largest metropolitan regions, the Great Lakes index contains other smaller metropolitan areas in the State. The results of this analysis can be found in Figure 25, where regions are ranked in order of performance among indicators for the African American population (with 1 being best and 21 being worst). (Please see Figure 29). Among the 21 largest metropolitan regions for African Americans, Ohio’s metropolitan areas performed well. With Washington DC topping the list, Ohio’s three largest metropolitan areas ranked 4th (Columbus MSA), 11th (Cincinnati MSA) and 15th (Cleveland MSA). The Oakland MSA, New York MSA and Milwaukee MSA made up the bottom of the rankings at numbers 19, 20 and 21 respectively. Among peer regions in the Great Lakes states, many smaller Ohio regions also performed well. The Akron MSA ranked 2nd, followed by Columbus (3rd), Dayton (5th), Toledo (7th), Cincinnati (10th) and Cleveland at 15th. Although many of Ohio’s metropolitan areas performed well, much of the data used in this index was from 2005 or earlier, therefore the extent of the current economic crisis is not reflected in these figures. Given the disproportionate impact of the economic recession and housing crisis in Ohio, these rankings for many of our regions may have slipped in recent years. Future analysis by the Kirwan Institute will rebuild and track these indices with more updated data as it becomes available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Philadelphia, PA-NJ PMSA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA-NJ PMSA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Columbus, OH MSA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore, MD PMSA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indianapolis, IN MSA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus, OH MSA</td>
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<td>Dayton-Springfield, OH MSA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis, TN-AR-MS MSA</td>
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<td>Nassau-Suffolk, NY PMSA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville, FL MSA</td>
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<td>Toledo, OH MSA</td>
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<td>Indianapolis, IN MSA</td>
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<td>Grand Rapids-Muskegon-Holland, MI MSA</td>
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<td>St. Louis, MO-IL MSA</td>
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<td>St. Louis, MO-IL MSA</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria, OH PMSA</td>
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<td>Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria, OH PMSA</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA MSA</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh, PA MSA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Chicago, IL PMSA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL PMSA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI MSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Orleans, LA MSA</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Chicago, IL PMSA</td>
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<td>Oakland, CA PMSA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY MSA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY PMSA</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>New York, NY PMSA</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI PMSA</td>
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<td>Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI PMSA</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 29: Metropolitan Rankings 19 indicator performance index for the African American community (see full report for index methodology and indicators utilized)
Section IV

Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Businesses
Section IV: Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Businesses

The neighborhood is where economic, educational, and housing opportunities coalesce to affect one’s life chances. Poor neighborhood conditions and housing inequities were frequently cited challenges facing the African American community in interviews for this report. Unfortunately, a pattern of neighborhood-based racial segregation persists today; redlining, historically discriminatory urban renewal policies, housing discrimination, and urban decline have placed many African American communities at a great disadvantage.

The following section reviews how neighborhood conditions shape life experiences, identifying critical challenges—especially the impact of the subprime and foreclosure crises—and solutions needed to expand neighborhoods of opportunity and improve housing choices for all Ohioans.

Neighborhoods: Gateways or Impediments to Opportunity?

In 1968, the Kerner Commission Report, in response to the 1960’s urban uprisings, noted that “the single overriding cause of rioting in the cities was not any one thing commonly adduced — unemployment, lack of education, poverty, exploitation — ... it was all of those things and more...” The description of the systematic challenges facing distressed communities was repeated nearly 40 years later in a study of concentrated poverty released by the U.S. Federal Reserve and The Brookings Institution. The report authors noted that “[e]ach of the headline issues examined in this chapter — schools and skills, housing, lack of mainstream investment, and limited community capacity — plays a role in perpetuating the disadvantage confronting these high-poverty urban and rural areas today.”

It is in neighborhoods that most of us are educated, acquire our first jobs, learn about businesses, find friends, and get involved in civic associations. The powerful effects of neighborhood conditions on life outcomes for residents are well-documented in over forty years’ worth of research. Housing mobility programs which moved people into lower poverty neighborhoods have shown the improvements along a number of socioeconomic indicators for low-income families when they can leave neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. For example, research on the results of the Gautreaux program provided evidence of improvements in both educational and earnings outcomes. Results from the Moving to Opportunity program revealed improvements in health and well-being. Living in a neighborhood of concentrated disadvantage and poverty can severely inhibit life outcomes, especially for young children. New studies are showing that living in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood is equivalent to missing an entire year of school.

As stated in the findings of the bipartisan Congressional Millennial Housing Commission in 2002,

“Neighborhood quality plays an important role in positive outcomes for families. Stable housing in an unstable neighborhood does not necessarily allow for positive employment and child education outcomes.”

Access to high-quality neighborhoods is highly racialized in our society, with people of color being disproportionately concentrated in neighborhoods of disadvantage. In 2000, nearly 3 out of 4 residents in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty were Black or Latino; in our nation’s largest metropolitan areas the likelihood of living in a high-poverty neighborhood for African Americans was 1 in 10, but only 1 in 100 for Whites. In the U.S., poor communities of color are more likely to be in prolonged poverty and to suffer the cumulative effects of prolonged exposure: poor health, lack of labor market experience, and inadequate education, to name a few.

This research illustrates the systemic disadvantages facing high-poverty, marginalized urban communities of color. Increasing the economic viability of our communities, cities and regions will
require stable, healthy and economically vibrant neighborhoods as well as “well-trained, creative, and flexible work forces.” How can communities achieve this goal? This requires a new approach to building community through holistic human and community development—an approach that involves more than just keeping incomes above poverty, but also a sustained commitment to aligning people with the opportunities and tools needed to excel and succeed in our society. Safe neighborhoods, healthy communities, health care, sustainable employment, stable housing, outlets for democratic participation, and a high quality education are the critical building blocks to achieving successful life outcomes, vibrant communities, and a just society. Meeting these goals will require moving our policies away from merely providing social welfare and toward providing pathways to opportunity.

Often, our traditional models of community economic development are not sufficient to meet this holistic and systemic approach to supporting human development. The traditional community development emphasis on affordable housing production in distressed communities provided stable housing, but when built in large numbers, reinforced concentrated poverty. Many housing mobility programs have succeeded at dispersing concentrated poverty, but few housing mobility programs have affirmatively connected people to opportunity in their new neighborhood by offering supportive social services.

The need for more comprehensive, inclusive community development was cited by many of the people we interviewed for this report:

“There has to be better engagement with families, a value of place, so people feel like they have an investment in their community. There has to be more place-based work. Communities can begin to define what it is they need. But there are a number of issues across the board. We don’t do enough community planning with the communities, to work on the issues they identify.”

***

“Capital investment in neighborhoods. Quality of life issues, having grocery stores with fresh fruit and not paying $4 for a gallon of milk. Getting people out of the box of hiring people like them, but hiring a diverse workforce. There’s no reason why, in a great country like this, we should have 4th and 5th generational poverty. There is something wrong with the system if that is happening.”

***

“There are a lot of CDCs that exist, serving African American communities, trying to rebuild communities, but part of the CDC concept had a community organizing component to it, not just building and rehab, but engaging the stakeholders...I don’t see this. There is underutilization in achieving this engagement, locally we are trying to address this...there are some good CDCs out there that work hard to engage community and community capacity as well. ... I think a lot of the struggle goes back to, right now people are scrapping for survival...dictating an agenda that may not always be community-based and community-focused.”

In an increasingly global and interconnected world, with complex and systemic challenges, we must adopt an opportunity-based approach that underscores the importance of interconnectivity, diversity, and racial and social equity in the 21st century economy. We need to leverage, supplement and complement existing policy and development while assuring communities are positioned to develop the assets needed to excel. Respondents noted the global context within which our neighborhoods now operate, with one remarking:
“...there are kids who have never been out of their neighborhood or out of the State of Ohio. And we’re in a global economy now and in some urban environments the kids have never been out of their neighborhood! How can we compete in a global market?”

Data for Ohio’s African American community offers clear evidence of racialized isolation into high-poverty and opportunity-deprived communities. Ohio’s African American communities are still more likely to be neighborhoods of racial and economic isolation, which are also more likely to be unsafe, unstable and isolated from jobs or other critical opportunities.

In 2000, the neighborhood poverty rate for the average African American household in Ohio’s largest metropolitan areas was double to triple the neighborhood poverty rate found in the average White household’s neighborhood. Similar disparities can be found in the rates of vacant property in Black neighborhoods in Ohio’s largest metropolitan areas. For example, in 2000, the average Black household in the Columbus MSA lived in a neighborhood with a 9.6% vacancy rate and a 45.5% homeownership rate; comparable figures for White households were 5.7% and 65.4%, respectively. The disparities in the Cleveland MSA were even starker, with the average Black household living in a neighborhood with an 11.0% vacancy rate and a 49.3% homeownership rate in 2000, compared to a 5.1% vacancy rate and 73.3% homeownership rate for White households. African American children in these metropolitan areas were also more likely to be found in poor schools, with the average Black student’s school having a poverty rate that was approximately two to three times the rate found in the average White student’s school.

Even for neighborhoods where segregation has slightly improved, a report released by the Mumford Center reveals alarmingly high rates of school segregation, suggesting the failure of policies to effectively desegregate schools. For example, while the Dissimilarity Index for the Cleveland MSA decreased from 84.3 in 1989-1990, to 75.3 in 1999-2000, the school segregation index increased from 38.1 in 1989-1990 to 71.2 in 1999-2000. Similar trends—decreasing neighborhood segregation and increasing school segregation—were found for the Cincinnati MSA and the Columbus MSA. These trends represent continued isolation of African American children from opportunities that accrue from educational integration. Students who learn in integrated environments fare better than their segregated peers. Attending a desegregated school also translates into higher goals for future educational attainment and occupational choices, and improved social networks. Intergenerational gains also ensue when students of color attend desegregated schools. Importantly, diverse educational settings contribute to all students’ ability to participate in a democratic society. Blacks and whites who attend desegregated schools are more likely to attend a desegregated college, live in a desegregated neighborhood, work in a desegregated environment, and possess high career aspirations.

African Americans are also more likely to be isolated from employment opportunities in Ohio’s major regions. According to research by the Brookings Institution, Cleveland and Cincinnati ranked 6th and 8th out of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas with the highest rate of spatial segregation between African Americans and jobs in the US.

As noted in our neighborhood “opportunity analysis” earlier in this report, African Americans are disproportionately isolated into Ohio’s lowest-opportunity neighborhoods. While 1 in 2 Latinos and 1 in 4 Asians and Whites lived in the State’s lowest opportunity neighborhoods, nearly 3 out 4 African Americans were living in these stressed communities. More than 80% of low-income Black households lived in low opportunity areas. For low-income Whites, only 38% lived in low opportunity
areas. Higher incomes for many Black households did not necessarily translate into living in high opportunity areas at rates similar to other racial groups. More than 2 out of 3 middle-income Black households and more than 1 in 2 high-income Black households lived in low opportunity neighborhoods. Comparative figures for Whites indicate that less than 1 in 3 middle-income White households and less than 1 in 5 high-income White households lived in low opportunity neighborhoods. These data illustrate the opportunity isolation facing many of Ohio’s African American neighborhoods, a fact that inhibits the life outcomes for many in the community, driving many of Ohio’s racial disparities in education, health, employment and economic status. The deprivation of opportunity was cited by many Ohio stakeholders, especially how deprivation across multiple domains impacts outcomes in other domains.

“[We need to] create housing opportunities for lower income families in resource-affluent areas, particularly areas with good education systems. Create opportunities for people to have more options to branch out.”

***

“Graduation rates and college matriculation are troublesome. The decline of the public school system is incredible. Because of this educational decline, individuals are experiencing a decreased earning and income potential; this then limits housing options.”

***

“At the educational level we need better performing schools for African American students; we need to continue to deal with issues of residential—if not flat out redlining, at least the tendency of African American folks to be living in a narrow range of neighborhoods that correlate with poorer schools and limited access to other resources...”

**Housing Challenges for the African American Community**

A number of long-term housing challenges face Ohio’s African American community. The lack of access to stable and quality housing manifests in several ways, including a lack of affordable housing and the concentration of affordable housing into distressed neighborhoods; housing discrimination in the private real estate market; lower homeownership rates; and discriminatory or predatory lending practices. The combination of these phenomena has challenged the African American community for decades. For example, statewide, clear disparities can be found in who is burdened by housing problems in Ohio. Data from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development CHAS database show 38% of Black households to be suffering housing problems, compared to 22% of White households.37 Research by the Kirwan Institute found that in the early part of this decade, 9 out of 10 of the new single-family, owner-occupied housing inventory built for Franklin County Ohio was unaffordable to 70% of Black households.38 Much of the housing affordability gap is due to income and wealth disparities between the African American community and the white community. Nationally, African Americans earned approximately two-thirds as much as whites, with wealth holdings only one-tenth that of whites.39 In 2002, the median net worth of Black households was only 6.8% that of white households’ net worth.40

The concentration of affordable housing can also preclude access to opportunity. Subsidized housing opportunities in most of Ohio’s metropolitan areas are more likely to be found in African American neighborhoods. Not only are subsidized housing sites more likely to be concentrated in Black neighborhoods, they are also more likely to be segregated into areas of high poverty and isolated from areas of projected job growth. Our “opportunity analysis” of HUD’s 2000 subsidized housing inventory finds the majority of HUD-subsidized housing concentrated in low-opportunity communities across the
State. Approximately two-thirds of subsidized housing was concentrated in the low opportunity neighborhoods, which represent just two-fifths of neighborhoods in the State (Figure 30).

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Figure 30: Distribution of HUD subsidized housing in 2000 (does not include non-site based Section VIII vouchers) by neighborhood opportunity areas

These disparities are troubling because housing is critical to economic and social health. As mentioned earlier, housing is the primary vehicle for providing access to stable or high quality neighborhoods. Housing is one of the largest expenses incurred by households in the US; high housing costs indicate significant economic pressure placed on family incomes. Further, homeownership is also critical to developing assets and wealth (through home equity). As one respondent noted,

“In concentrated African American communities, those homes are not worth as much as those homes in the white community. The inheritance I leave to my children is less than a white counterpart because they live in a more affluent [neighborhood].”

Home equity represents approximately two-thirds of African American household wealth, compared to just one-third of white household wealth, even though property values tend to be lower in non-white neighborhoods.41

Although overt discrimination in the housing market is illegal, informal methods of segregation such as steering effectively isolate African Americans, and perpetuate the uneven landscape of opportunity. For example, in the North East region of Ohio, there was an increase in complaints based on discrimination in housing, from an annual average of 74.8 complaints for the period 1998-2002, to an annual average of 140.2 for the period 2003-2007; 34.5% of these complaints were based on race.42 Between 1990 and 2007, 112.6 complaints, 41.9% of which were based on racial discrimination, were filed each year for the region; three-quarters of the complaints were filed in Cuyahoga County alone.43

Indexes such as the Dissimilarity Index44 (DI) also illuminate the prevalence of segregation. While the numbers have improved somewhat over 1990 levels, the DI rankings in 2000 signal that high segregation continues. For example, in 1990, Cleveland’s DI was 0.824; in 2000, it was 0.768, making Cleveland the 6th most segregated large metropolitan area in the nation.45 Likewise, slight improvements in the DI can be found for the Columbus metropolitan area: in 1990, the DI was 0.684, and in 2000, the DI was 0.631.46 Similarly disappointing DI metropolitan rates in 2000 were found for Cincinnati OH-KY-IN (0.748), Dayton-Springfield (0.720), Youngstown-Warren (0.728), and Toledo (0.691).47 Rates above
0.60 are considered highly segregated. The performance of Ohio’s metropolitan areas on the Dissimilarity Index complements our findings that African Americans are disproportionately concentrated into low-opportunity areas, and face high rates of racial isolation. Figures 23-28 provide a visual representation of this racialized concentration in every major Ohio metropolitan area. Formal policies, such as exclusionary zoning and other land use policies, also preserve and perpetuate segregation. Restrictions or bans on apartment development, and low-density zoning limit the opportunities for low-income families or people of color to move to the suburbs, for both renters and owners. For example, a Brookings report estimated that about half of the municipalities in the Cleveland region have low-density zoning regulations in place, and 30% of the cities and villages would ban the study’s hypothetical apartment developments. In the Columbus region, the study found that about 55% of the region’s municipalities have low-density zoning, and 34% ban the hypothetical apartment development. In general, these policies increase the costs of development, and therefore the price of housing in suburbs. These findings may help explain the continued concentration of African American families into low-opportunity areas, and why higher incomes for African Americans have not, by and large, translated into moves into higher opportunity areas.

As troubling as these statistics are, the most critical issue facing African American communities, and communities in general, in Ohio today is the subprime and foreclosure crisis. Predatory and other unsustainable loan products were offered in disproportionate numbers in many urban communities of color. Nationally, half of all subprime loans were given to Black borrowers, and reports estimate that between one-third and one-half of subprime borrowers qualified for a prime loan. Similarly disparate outcomes can be seen in Black communities in Ohio. In places like neighborhoods on the East Side of Cleveland, nearly 2 out of 3 loans were subprime. Statewide in 2007, nearly 60% of home purchase loans and 56% of refinance loans given to Black borrowers were high cost loan products. Given the unstable and unsustainable nature of these loans, many of these neighborhoods have seen a surge in foreclosures (See Figure 31).
The subprime and foreclosure crisis is the most critical housing and neighborhood issue facing African American communities in Ohio today. Historically legal racial housing discrimination and the lack of access to credit set the stage for predatory lending in credit-starved neighborhoods. This historic lack of access in combination with the deregulation of financial markets, encouraged the subprime boom, which depleted many African Americans’ home equity and further destabilized African American neighborhoods.

The foreclosure crisis in Ohio is highly racialized. For example, a recent study of Cuyahoga County found that African Americans make up 74% of the population in the quartile with the highest rates of foreclosure (representing 119 census tracts), compared to only 3% of the population in the quartile with the lowest rates.55 Furthermore, half of Cuyahoga County’s African American population lives in census tracts in the quartile with the highest rates of foreclosures, with 34% of the African American population living in the tracts of the quartile with the second highest rate of foreclosure.56 While these tracts contain almost 40% of foreclosure filings, they house only 19% of the county’s total population.57 Thus, foreclosures are disproportionately found in tracts with lower shares of the general population, but with the highest shares of the African American population.
Study after study has revealed the racial disparities in lending for similarly-situated persons. A CRL report found that, even when controlling for risk factors, African Americans were more than 30% more likely to receive higher-rate loans than white borrowers. Ohio is no exception. An analysis in 2008 of mortgage lending in Ohio revealed that upper-income Blacks were denied home purchase loans 31.56% of the time, compared to 10.56% for upper-income white borrowers. Even more disturbing is the finding that upper-income Blacks were denied more than low-income whites, with low-income whites facing denial rates of 27.37%. The fact that upper-income Blacks also received high-cost home purchase loans 52.28% of the time, compared to 27.63% of low-income whites, further suggests discrimination. The report found that at every income level, and in every Ohio metropolitan area, African American borrowers received higher-cost loans than white borrowers.

The Cleveland metropolitan region exhibits some of the most racially disparate lending in the State. The region had denial rates on home purchase loans for upper-income Black borrowers at 37.52% compared to a 24.46% denial rate for low-income white borrowers. Cleveland also exhibits the highest disparity in high-cost home purchase lending, with upper-income Blacks receiving these loans 63.3% of the time, compared to 14.5% for upper-income whites, and 37.35% for low-income whites. Even cities with the lowest incidence of racial disparities still report disappointing figures. The lowest incidence of disparities in high-cost home purchase loans for Blacks was in the Toledo MSA, with 40.9% of loans high-cost. The lowest incidence of high-cost refinancing loans for Blacks was in Cincinnati, with 50.38% of loans high-cost.

Research elsewhere documents that higher-income Black borrowers have similar rates of foreclosure as their white counterparts when the loans were prime, but if the loans were subprime, even upper-income Black borrowers had higher rates of foreclosure. While high-cost, subprime loans increase the risk of default for all borrowers, as demonstrated above, upper-income Blacks are more likely than lower-income whites to receive these loans. And as reported, Blacks of all income levels are more likely to receive these subprime loans than white borrowers. Again, the characteristic of the loan appears to be the dominant factor. These figures further signal the lack of access to sustainable credit for even the most qualified of African American borrowers.

Why the racial disparities in subprime lending and foreclosure?
What accounts for these disparities? The disproportionate incidence of subprime lending in African American communities stems in large part from the prevalence of independent mortgage companies targeting these loans to areas historically underserved by credit markets. The financial regulations established under the New Deal in the 1930s successfully expanded homeownership for many moderate-income families: homeownership rose from 44% in the late 1930s to 64% by the mid-1960s. Unfortunately, these practices were not fairly extended to people and communities of color. The expansion of homeownership was limited largely to white families through explicit criteria that encouraged all-white neighborhoods in suburban, new housing stock, and devalued or refused to insure integrated, minority, or old housing stock neighborhoods.

Layered on top of this uneven landscape of opportunity came waves of financial deregulation, essentially creating a two-tiered delivery system—one prime, one subprime. The legacy of discrimination in lending left low-income and minority communities starved for credit for decades. Deregulation has resulted in a proliferation of high-cost and predatory lending practices targeted to meet the demand for credit within these communities, including payday lending, check cashing stores, and subprime loans. The legacy of redlining has resulted in a situation where the biggest home
mortgage lenders are independent mortgage companies, existing outside the scope of CRA regulations, and typically, these institutions only offer sub-prime loans, and not the traditional array of loan options offered by federally-regulated banks. In the mid-1990s, subprime lending was virtually non-existent. By the end of 2006, over $1 trillion in mortgage loans were subprime, representing 13% of outstanding mortgages nationally.

What about the CRA?
The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), passed in 1977, was enacted to counteract the legacy of discrimination in lending (i.e., redlining) for low- and moderate-income (LMI) and minority neighborhoods. Under the CRA, federally insured banks applying to merge or to offer new financial services are measured along several indicators of performance in meeting the needs of LMI and minority neighborhoods. These indicators range from the amount and number of loans made to residents, to quality and flexibility of financial services in meeting resident needs, to meeting the needs of community development and retailers within these communities. If the bank passes these tests, the merger or new product is permitted. Several studies have highlighted the positive impact the CRA has had on low-to-moderate income and minority communities, increasing access to home mortgage credit during the 1990s. In the past two years alone, banks have reported making over $120 billion in community development loans. Studies by the Federal Reserve have further found that loans made in low-income communities by CRA-covered institutions have been profitable for banks, performing similarly to other types of lending.

Recently, the CRA has come under fire as providing the incentive for high-risk lending. While CRA-covered institutions are in fact allowed to make subprime loans, these criticisms miss one critical caveat: the standard of safe and sound lending. The subprime lending that has resulted in the storm of defaults and foreclosures we are now witnessing has not abided by these tried and true principles of safety and soundness. CRA-covered subprime loans represent a small share of the subprime market nationally; over 20% of high-cost loans were made in low-income areas or to low-income borrowers by independent mortgage companies, compared to only 6% of all high-cost loans extended by CRA-covered institutions. Similar results were found in a study of the Federal Reserve Fourth District lending patterns and performance. Almost half of all high-cost loans originated in both Franklin and Cuyahoga counties were by independent mortgage companies, not CRA-covered institutions, and about 40% of all high-cost loans for the entire Fourth District were from these institutions. In Cuyahoga County, 33% of the high-cost loans by independent mortgage companies went to LMI neighborhoods or borrowers. Conversely, only about 20% of high-cost loans made in Cuyahoga were originated by CRA-covered institutions and about 30% in Franklin County and the Fourth District as a whole. These independent mortgage companies originated five times as many high-cost loans to LMI neighborhoods and borrowers in Cuyahoga County, and three times as many in Franklin County. While the arguments for modernizing the CRA are valid, those proposing to do away with the CRA risk dismantling a successful source of credit for those communities that need it most, our low-income and minority communities. The effects of the subprime and foreclosure crisis have been devastating in Ohio, and especially in Ohio’s African American communities. While it is appealing to believe that these troubles began with the current economic recession, and so will (hopefully) end with the recovery, this is not true. In fact, the subprime and predatory loans markets were the tipping points for the economic conditions we face today. In Ohio, foreclosures were a pressing issue well before they became a national epidemic. Foreclosure filings have increased every year since 1995, with the average Ohio County realizing a 400% increase in filings. As of June 2009, there was one foreclosure in Ohio for every 449 houses, and Ohio ranked 8th in the nation in foreclosure activity.
Impacts of Foreclosure and Vacancy

The growing foreclosure crisis has been exacerbated by a declining housing market and tightened lending environment which has severely limited refinancing options for people trapped in unsustainable loans, or now facing sudden economic hardship because of the economic downturn. The concentration of foreclosures in Black communities is a significant challenge because of the wealth loss, housing instability, and surge in vacant property produced by the foreclosure epidemic. The impacts, both primary impacts, such as the loss of one’s home, and the potential secondary effects (i.e., spillover effects) are significant and substantial. These secondary effects may include property deterioration and blight, declining property values, crime, population turnover, and government fiscal distress as services demanded increase and revenues decrease.85

In sum, the lack of access—both historic and current—to sustainable credit for African American borrowers has resulted in depletion of community development investments, homeownership and wealth, and neighborhood stability for Ohio African American communities. Because homeownership constitutes about two-thirds of African American wealth, the staggering loss of wealth to be experienced by the African American community is estimated at between $164 billion and $213 billion from subprime loans.86

The impact of the foreclosure crisis on all Ohioans is significant and requires a strong and robust response. Alan Mallach, senior fellow of the National Housing Institute writes, “The state must see this crisis in its full dimensions—not only as a disaster to the struggling families that are losing their homes, but as a force that is undermining the social and economic vitality of the State and its communities, from which it may take decades to recover.”87

Policy Responses

Communities of Opportunity  To truly promote human development in our communities, we must adopt strategies to open up access to the “levers” or structures of opportunity for marginalized individuals, families and communities that propel people to their full potential. The Kirwan Institute calls this approach a “Community of Opportunity” model, which is an opportunity-oriented, spatial model of intervention, designed to open the pathways of opportunity to more people. The model advocates that increased opportunity for all should be a measure of the health of the entire region. The Community of Opportunity approach combines the various elements to open pathways to opportunity via three areas of focus: people, places, and linkages.

Supporting people is achieved through investments in human capital so that everyone has the opportunity to reach their creative potential. This can be advanced through wealth creation, educational attainment, sustained employment, and political empowerment. Examples include affordable homeownership programs, leadership and job training, community organizing and assisted housing where needed. Supporting places is achieved through support of community development initiatives and growth management practices that support and empower neighborhoods. This can be generated through neighborhood redevelopment, support of neighborhood anchors, increasing living wage employment opportunities, and equal provision of local services, including high-performing schools. Examples include Brownfield and vacant property development, minority and small business development, improved school conditions, and housing and infrastructure investments. Anti-gentrification strategies such as rent control are also necessary. Supporting linkages is achieved through providing the connections between people and places. This concept revolves around the mobility and degree of access for people to high opportunity areas. Examples through which this can be achieved
include fair share and inclusionary (or opportunity-based) housing, public transportation, and school integration. Several strategies can be implemented towards the end of providing access to high opportunity neighborhoods for all Ohioans.

**Opportunity-based Housing**

The following principles guide an opportunity-based housing model:

- **Preserve the supply of existing affordable housing and expand the supply of decent housing for low- to moderate-income families in opportunity-rich neighborhoods across the metropolitan area.**
- **Ensure that all residents can buy or rent homes in the neighborhoods of their choice that are racially and economically integrated, and that feature a rich set of social, economic, and educational opportunities.**
- **Increase wealth opportunities through homeownership for all families in neighborhoods where homes’ values are rising rather than falling.**
- **Plan for the development of affordable housing on a regional scale that intentionally connects housing to quality schools, plentiful employment opportunities, and an accessible transportation infrastructure.**
- **Promote a more balanced type of metropolitan growth that promotes the health of the region as a whole and connects all communities to opportunity.**

**Foreclosure Response Strategies**

Given the devastating impacts of the subprime lending and foreclosure crisis on many Ohio communities, responding to this challenge must be a priority. The following broad principles should inform efforts to provide a comprehensive solution to address the impact of the foreclosure crisis.

**Stop the Bleeding**

Ohio’s foreclosure trends are only expected to worsen. Due to the economic downturn, job losses are forcing more Ohioans into foreclosure. More than 400,000 Ohio homeowners are “underwater” or facing negative home equity (owing more than the home is worth, due to loan terms or depreciation). With more than 80,000 foreclosures statewide in 2008, and another 291,000 expected in the next four years, Ohio must act quickly to stop the escalation of foreclosures—and the devastating impact on communities—in the State.

Alan Mallach, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, has prepared an in-depth document for Greater Ohio, “Addressing Ohio’s Foreclosure Crisis: Taking the next steps.” In this document, Mallach calls on the State government to develop a new way of thinking about the foreclosure crisis, in recognition of the “inextricable relationship between individual foreclosures and their neighborhood effects.” To this end, he lays out seven priority objectives that should be included in the State’s response. Mallach describes specific strategies for each objective, which include getting borrowers information about (and access to) other options; creating a fair foreclosure process; preventing fraudulent ‘rescue’ scams; breaking the nexus between foreclosure and vacancy/abandonment; and coordinating foreclosure prevention with neighborhood stabilization activities.

Importantly, Mallach explicitly draws attention to the impact on communities, recognizing that any economic recovery for the State of Ohio will depend upon the health of its communities. This theme has been echoed throughout this report. We urge the legislature to not only focus on individual impacts and foreclosure mitigation, but to also recognize the impact on communities, that is, the “spillover effects,” and incorporate such acknowledgement in legislation designed to benefit and stabilize both individuals and communities. We recommend that the Ohio legislature utilize this in-depth and specific set of
recommendations written expressly for Ohio legislators on the foreclosure crisis.

We should note that the proposed HB 3, as well as other State initiatives such as the “Save the Dream” program, incorporate some of these recommendations, but as Mallach notes, more can and must be done to stem the tide and provide a full, robust recovery for Ohio.

Ensure Sustainable Credit Ohio must lend its political muscle to the call for federal fair credit, banking and housing reforms. Ohio must also affirmatively promote alternatives to predatory lending across the State -- not just subprime home loans, but payday lending, rent-to-own, and other subprime credit practices.

Neighborhood Revitalization Principles and Strategies Housing mobility alone will not address the challenges facing marginalized populations. In order to grow neighborhoods of opportunity, deliberate efforts must also be made to direct resources and cultivate opportunities in distressed neighborhoods or communities. A balance between in-place strategies (neighborhood and community revitalization) and mobility-based strategies (opportunity-based housing) is needed to make a transformative impact. Neighborhood and community revitalization is an important but challenging goal. Revitalization is a complex, dynamic and long-term challenge. Successfully intervening to bring positive and transformative change to distressed areas requires a long-term commitment, extensive collaboration, in-depth community engagement, a multi-faceted approach and the ability to leverage initiatives with public policy and private dollars. The following strategies should spur and support neighborhood and community revitalization.

Define success before intervening A shared vision of a successful neighborhood or community is needed to convene and effectively engage the various stakeholders. The goal should be focused on promoting sustainable community revitalization, not gentrification, which would displace existing residents. Neighborhoods should be communities of choice and opportunity, accessible to a wide spectrum of residents, and contain the critical opportunities to be livable, healthy and safe. The exact measures for this broad goal will vary by community and should be guided by local residents and stakeholders.

Make equity, “fairness” and inclusion explicit goals Equity, fairness and inclusion must be explicit goals for neighborhood and community revitalization. Without explicitly planning for and maintaining a focus on inclusion in revitalization activities, existing residents could be excluded from the benefits. Revitalization must seek to produce mixed income communities and infuse neighborhoods with a variety of housing options. Efforts should also reinforce existing social networks and organizations in the community, while attempting to connect marginalized and impoverished residents to opportunities.

Adopt a long-term approach Neighborhood distress did not occur quickly in marginalized communities, but represents decades of disinvestment, segregation and decline. Therefore, successful community revitalization will require a long-term approach and strategy. Interventions must give initiatives time to mature. (Grant cycles and planning should recognize this need.)

Adopt a multi-faceted approach A number of impediments and challenges converge to systematically disadvantage urban neighborhoods or neglected rural communities. Efforts to mitigate these challenges must be multi-faceted to address this reality, targeting critical intervention points. For example, targeted revitalization may require intervention and simultaneous support for education, housing and economic development initiatives.
Engage critical stakeholders  Universities, urban hospitals and major employers have tremendous resources, influence and linkages to nearby communities. The investment of these partners (and the ability to leverage their considerable assets) can significantly increase the likelihood of successful revitalization effort.

Focus on “turning point” neighborhoods or communities  Many communities have resources and attributes which give them great potential for revitalization, where strategically placed investments can effectively spur revitalization. Initiatives to promote revitalization must first target communities who are “on the brink” of revitalizing.

Bring small success to scale  Revitalization strategies should seek out small-scale, successful initiatives and bring these initiatives to scale. Many small-scale interventions have proven locally effective, but are not producing significant results because of their limited scale or scope. An assessment of which potential small-scale models are working within the Foundation’s service area would be useful. Revitalization will require seeking out these potential model initiatives that have the best potential to be brought to scale.

Address specific macro-level issues  Supporting initiatives to address systemic problems in marginalized communities can also aid both targeted “turning point” communities and communities who are least likely to redevelop. For example, addressing macro-level issues, such as discriminatory public investment policies, will produce benefits for many communities.

Support establishment of anchor institutions  Successful revitalization initiatives often involve anchor developments in the community. Highly visible and targeted investments can spur nearby private investment and provide a positive physical sign of reinvestment to encourage the private sector. Revitalization efforts must seek out these potential highly visible, targeted investments for distressed communities.

Make catalytic investments  It is necessary to align actions with public policy, public agencies, non-profits investment and private capital. Community revitalization requires significant capital investment -- public sector or non-profit funds alone will not be sufficient to spur revitalization. Activities must seek out projects and investments that have the potential to attract private investment, be coordinated with large-scale public investments and policy or encourage nearby private investment. The best strategy to promote catalytic investments is to geographically target investments.

Neighborhoods and Economic Empowerment

The past two decades have seen some progress in the overall economic conditions of African Americans in Ohio. The poverty rate in 2007 was slightly less than it was in 1990, and homeownership among Ohio’s African Americans increased 23 percent between 1990 and 2007. The nearly 20 percent increase in African American college graduates, as well as the nearly 60 percent increase in the number of African American-owned businesses, represent obvious successes. While these figures do not signal the end of discrimination or marginalization, they are indicators of improved access to opportunity over time and must continue to be built upon in order to further economic empowerment in Ohio.

However, in spite of these significant steps forward, the poverty rate among Black Ohioans actually increased recently, from 26.5 percent in 2000 to 30.5 percent in 2007. This is compounded by the
The fact that African American households in Ohio continue to be concentrated in neighborhoods of low opportunity (see Figures 23-28). Endemic and concentrated poverty poses a major obstacle to business development and wealth-building because of reduced property values and the anemic customer base for goods and services. Such an environment also makes credit and business capital difficult to obtain, exacerbating the challenges faced by neighborhood economies. Concentrated poverty neighborhoods often house underperforming schools, making it difficult for students to prepare for the job market, much less become entrepreneurial leaders in the community. Reforming the way that schools are funded, student progress is tracked, and teachers are placed is critical to improving the economic prospects not just for black Ohioans, but for all Ohioans.

Further, the current recession has had a particularly devastating effect on communities of color throughout the State. As detailed in the section on housing, subprime lending and the foreclosure crisis have had a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Nationwide, the recession has eliminated nine percent of the jobs held by Black male workers immediately prior to the recession. Public service cuts as a result of government revenue being spread thin will potentially disproportionately hurt low-income Black communities as well, making economic empowerment as important as ever for the State of Ohio.

There must now be a renewed emphasis on economic recovery, particularly within marginalized communities. Access to fair housing and good neighborhoods is at the heart of the pernicious cycle of underinvestment and undercapitalization in Ohio’s African-American communities. Generational property ownership is key to wealth-building, and blacks have been systematically denied those opportunities throughout American history. For example, African American veterans were specifically excluded from the homeownership opportunities that resulted from the G.I. Bill after World War II due to racially restrictive FHA guidelines. In addition, the history of redlining practices contributed to the difficulty African Americans faced in obtaining good loans with which to purchase homes or start businesses. The current foreclosure crisis stems from a continuation of these principles. African Americans were 30 percent more likely to be steered towards high-cost loan products than their white counterparts, even when controlling for risk factors. African American communities need better access to sustainable and conventional forms of credit and lending so that they can buy homes, have better educational opportunity, build equity and wealth, and experience economic development.

Challenges to Economic Empowerment

Unemployment and Underemployment Despite gains made during the 1990s, unemployment rates among Black Ohioans increased from 7.5 percent to 11.7 percent between 2000 and 2007.97 Unemployment at these rates limits upward mobility and entrepreneurship in local economies. Much of the unemployment being experienced by Black Ohioans can be attributed to a lack of healthy educational and workforce development systems, which are necessary for economic growth and prosperity. One interviewee stated the challenge as such:

“It all seems to come back to jobs: the health of the neighborhood, the community, strengthening the center city. A lot of concentrations of African American population are in cities and need to connect to suburbs and the rest of the region. Getting our neighborhoods healthier and providing sound jobs and strengthening the schools is vital. Making sure the services are available to everybody.”
Place, Work, and Home  Much research has focused on the geographic difference in metropolitan regions between where jobs are being created and where African American communities are located, known as “spatial mismatch.” Recent research indicates that among metro areas over 500,000, Cleveland and Cincinnati ranked 6th and 8th highest in terms of urban sprawl and spatial mismatch, and all the other major metro areas except Akron (Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown) had a higher degree of spatial mismatch than either city, although overall urban sprawl was lower in the latter cities.98 This “spatial mismatch” increases the costs for African Americans in their job search efforts, whether in terms of gasoline for those with cars, or in terms of bus fares and travel time for those without – and at least one study indicated that, even in a car-dependent region like Los Angeles, more than half of low-income blacks lack access to an automobile.99 In the current fiscal environment, transit authorities across Ohio and across the country are facing service cuts that will limit the already sporadic access to areas where entry-level jobs are available.

Research has also shown that in some cities, although there are in fact jobs in close proximity to where many African Americans live, these jobs are typically the most-competed for jobs and require a college degree or better, whereas nearby African Americans overwhelmingly have a high school degree, GED, or less education.100

Youth Unemployment  Overall participation in the labor force for youth aged 16 to 24 has declined by a third since 1989, the peak year for youth employment according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the rate of decline has accelerated since 2000.101 Black youth employment nationwide is only 20.9 percent, compared to 35.9 percent for white youth, both of which represent 28 percent declines from the year 2000, when the rate for Black youth was 28.9 percent and for white, 49.1 percent.102 According to the Center for Labor Market Studies, high rates of unemployment for low-income youth decrease the capacity to transition into the labor market in the late teens and early twenties, reducing future wages and earnings potential. Research has also found that employed youth are less likely to drop out of school, get pregnant, or enter the criminal justice system.103

One study found that differences in job search methods account for the majority of the difference in employment rates for Black and White youth and virtually all of the difference in the probability of finding a job.104 Black youth are more likely to put in unsolicited applications without a referral, whereas White youth are more likely to be referred to jobs by friends or relatives. It stands to reason that this is a reflection of differences in job opportunity in the broader labor market; since Black youth are much more concentrated in areas with low job opportunity, they are probably much less likely to interact with people who have access to job opportunities than are White youth.

Education and Preparing for the ‘New Economy’  Educational disparities in our urban communities are limiting the development of Ohio’s workforce to be able to participate in the new economy. The chapter on education in this report thoroughly documents disparities in access to high-quality teachers and schools. High-poverty, low-performance schools experience higher turnover among teachers,105 and are more likely to have teachers who are not certified in the subject that they are teaching. For example, one study found that one in three Black and Hispanic students were taught by a math teacher who lacked a college major or certification in the subject.106 The No Child Left Behind law required states to have highly-qualified teachers in all core academic subjects by 2006, but allowed states to set their own standards for what “highly qualified” means. Ohio’s standard does not include those with a Master’s degree, a major with 30 or more hours in the content area or those who qualify through the State’s own HOUSS (High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) metric!107 Health and
environmental factors also impinge on the success of African American children. Some interviewees worried that the current budget crisis would only exacerbate these educational disparities:

“The horrible condition of the inner city schools is failing to prepare the kids to succeed in a competitive work environment. State funding has dropped, and remedial programs that offset the ‘deficiencies’ of incoming students are cut.”

The difference in access results in a lower quality of education, which has a direct negative impact on graduation rates in the black community. The black graduation rate in Ohio is 55 percent, compared to 83 percent for white Ohioans.108 This means that a given African American birth cohort is much less prepared to enter the workforce, not only because they lack the credential of a diploma, but because they lag behind in critical skills. The federal education department released statistics this year that indicate a persistent achievement gap between black and white Ohio eighth graders: a 33-point gap in math scores and a 27-point gap in reading scores, differences that are virtually unchanged from 1990.109 Without even basic skills, it is difficult for black Ohioans in high-poverty, low-quality schools to gain the skills to participate in the information economy and earn wages that can support families and support wealth-building. One interviewee commented:

“The federal government is going to spend half a trillion on infrastructure. How beneficial will this be to employment in the black community? How many of our men or women are in apprentice programs so they can participate? How many black people in road construction? We need job training and apprenticeship programs in order for communities to take advantage.”

**Workforce Development**

As blue-collar manufacturing jobs have dwindled in the face of a technology-based transition, many African Americans do not have access to the opportunities to step into emerging professions and industry sectors. Research done on workforce development services in Columbus found that service recipients generally found services to be unhelpful110 and that service providers believed they lacked sufficient resources to provide adequate support to targeted populations.111 The occupations experiencing the most growth over the next decade are information technology and services, healthcare, and social services,112 and job-training programs are increasingly oriented toward these fields. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that those entering the workforce at entry-level positions in the current recession, who are disproportionately African Americans and other minorities, are losing their jobs at faster rates than the white population.113 As a result, the income gains that some studies indicate result from job training have disappeared for many in low- to moderate-income communities. In addition, because the labor market is slack, employers are less likely to hire applicants who are viewed as having barriers such as being welfare recipients or ex-offenders, or who are viewed as having low attachment to the labor force, as many participants in job training programs are.114 Therefore, low- to moderate-income African Americans have a difficult time acquiring the job experience and necessary skills to participate in the New Economy.

**Social Capital and the Informal Job Market**

Research suggests that forty to fifty percent of all jobs are found through friends and relatives.115 The spatial mismatch between African Americans and jobs means that not only are they disconnected from jobs by spatial barriers, but they also are less likely to come into contact with people who can connect them to those jobs. In addition, the jobs that they are connected to tend to be lower-skilled, entry-level jobs similar to the ones that people in their social networks have, which reinforces their socioeconomic status. This type of social structure may leave them less aware of the variety of opportunities available to them. For example, a young woman may be made aware of the opportunity to take a year-long program to become a medical assistant by friends
with that position, a job which yields a salary of approximately $30,000 per year on average, but be unaware of the opportunity to take a similar 18-month program to secure a bachelor’s degree in nursing which would gain earnings potential as high as $70,000 per year.117

**Prisoner Re-entry** Despite the availability of cost-free fidelity bonding (insurance against employee theft and dishonesty) for businesses that hire ex-offenders, research indicates that businesses are more resistant to hiring ex-offenders than any other disadvantaged group.118 This has a disproportionate impact on the African American community because African American men in Ohio are eight times as likely to be incarcerated as white men,119 and black men are the majority of incarcerated fathers in the Ohio correctional system.120 According to at least one study, the persistent lack of economic opportunity for ex-offenders is a key contributor to recidivism, at least for older workers, and therefore places the communities they return to at higher risk for criminal activity.121 Since ex-offenders are less likely to be employed, their families experience more economic insecurity, which is a major indicator for low educational achievement among children,122 meaning that it is a contributing factor to children growing up unprepared to enter the job market.

**African American Business Development**

**Growth and Opportunity** The amount of African American-owned businesses in Ohio grew dramatically between 1992 and 2002, from 22,690 to 35,658, a rate more than double the growth rate of all businesses in Ohio during the same period; however, gross receipts for African American-owned businesses declined 8.8 percent between 1997 and 2002, while receipts for all firms increased 12.4 percent (see Figure 1). Firms with employees (as opposed to those that only employ the owner) accounted for about 1 in 10 Black-owned firms (compared to roughly 1 in 4 of all firms) and employed approximately 30,000 people in 2002, although this represented a slight decline from 1997. About a quarter of those firms were in health care and social services, while only 2.4 percent were in education and one percent was in information technology (see Figure 2). Recall that information technology and health care have been identified as the fastest growing sectors of the economy.

Overall, African Americans are underrepresented as business owners in every sector of the economy except for health care and social services, where the proportion of business owned by African-Americans is nearly the same as their proportion in the population (see Figure 2). Since African Americans in Ohio are overwhelmingly urban, lack of representation in forestry, mining and agriculture is not an unexpected result. However, they are also most severely underrepresented as owners in manufacturing, construction, and wholesale trade, where they comprise less than two percent of business owners (see Figure 2). These capital-intensive industries present a high hurdle because of the lack of wealth in the African American community, caused by factors described earlier.

Nationwide, African Americans are fifty percent more likely to try to start a business than whites, and the gap in likelihood increases as African Americans become more educated: those with graduate training are twice as likely as whites with similar training to be involved in starting a business.123 As one interviewee noted:

“A lot of African Americans are interested in entrepreneurship, in building enhanced, larger businesses. And the African American community supports each other—you want the best lawyer, but if you can find an African American one, even better. Wealth generation within can help us and the state economy as a whole...We need more bookstores, eye doctors, dentists, in our communities. We need access to capital, information, funds. Neighborhoods are full of people who want to
contribute and see things happen, who have business savvy. They just need help taking an idea through the implementation phase.”

Thus, it is not desire or motivation that hinders African American business ownership. Other factors have to be considered and are discussed subsequently in this section.

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Figure 1: Total numbers of all firms and Black firms in Ohio, 1992-2002
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<th>AA business as % of industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forestry, fishing, hunting and agricultural support</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>5469</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
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<td>4020</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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<td>Utilities</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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<td>1.5%</td>
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<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
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<td>9099</td>
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<td>31479</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real estate rental and leasing</td>
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<td>76424</td>
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<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific, and technical services</td>
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<td>9.0%</td>
<td>104354</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of companies and enterprises</td>
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<td>1378</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services</td>
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<td>57259</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
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<td>15002</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
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<td>Health care and social assistance</td>
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<td>70619</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, entertainment and recreation</td>
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<td>4.4%</td>
<td>32038</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and food services</td>
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<td>2.5%</td>
<td>23746</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services (except public administration)</td>
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<td>15.8%</td>
<td>88649</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
<td>820860</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Distribution of Black firms and all firms in Ohio by industry sector.

**Networking and Regional Economy**  Research suggests that African Americans are less likely to have a parent or relative who is self-employed. Since patterns of residential and school segregation also limit African American access to white business owners, a reasonable inference is that this lack of access to models of entrepreneurship diminishes the amount of information they have about how to run successful businesses, as well as critical mentorship relationships and information about the business climate in general. According to a report on minority business development in the Cleveland area, there are “natural opportunities” for non-minorities to form mentor-protégé relationships with older generation business owners within their families and among family friends. Such relationships expose entrepreneurs to knowledge of how to manage every aspect of running a business, and eases access to venture capitalists, bankers, and others who can support their business development. As a result of all these contributing factors, despite the fact that African Americans are 12.2 percent of Ohio’s population, only 4.3 percent of all firms are black-owned, and they account for only 0.4 percent
of sales and receipts for all firms. The numbers are even bleaker for businesses with employees, where African Americans account for only 1.5 percent of all firms and 0.3 percent of sales and receipts (see Figure 1).

Technical assistance organizations are intended to step into this gap, but one interviewee noted that these organizations do not seem to be effective:

"We have to give real technical assistance to minority businesses. Right now at a minority business center, someone helps you write a “business plan.” Great. It’s something on paper, you take it to the bank, and get the money, and then you don’t know what the hell to do. How do you set up a cash register, what documentation do you keep every day? Most small minority business owners I know literally have a shoe-box of receipts that they take to the tax person at the end of the year. They have a hand-written register. They don’t have a machine register with a memory. They don’t have a computer. They don’t have those tools and it puts them at a disadvantage for growth."

Similarly, a report on minority business in Cleveland indicated that these organizations are inconsistent, unaccountable, and stretch themselves beyond technical capacity due to “turf wars.”128

Credit and Business Investment Another factor limiting the growth and success of African American business is that the average African American household has one-tenth the wealth of the average white household.129 This means that black entrepreneurs not only have fewer indigenous assets with which they can launch a business, they have fewer assets to present as collateral when interacting with the formal banking sector.

In the Caribbean, West Africa, and Asia, rotating credit and savings institutions known as susus (Ghana, Nigeria, the Caribbean), tontines (Cameroon, Senegal), and bishi (India) provide capital by pooling resources among community members and distributing large sums at regular intervals to individuals that they can use for business, education, or other purposes.130 The African American community had similar structures, known as mutual aid societies, during the nineteenth century,131 which later evolved into insurance companies that declined after the end of Jim Crow.132 The resulting lack of community financing – necessitating the use of white-owned institutions – thus becomes a major barrier to entrepreneurship.

Research has identified persistent systemic racism in the financial sector, with Black and Hispanic applicants facing significantly higher loan denial rates than white men or women.133 When they do receive loans, they pay more for credit than other groups even when differences in firm and personal characteristics are taken into account.134 This results in a much slower growth curve for African American businesses: for example, a study of minority business development in Cleveland showed that minority business enterprises take at least two-and-a-half years longer to reach the ten-employee level than businesses overall.135 This is a challenge that African Americans have faced for generations, and it continues to prevent sustainable economic development in Black communities throughout the State. In order to foster economic growth in these communities, Black business owners must be connected to more venture capital and other business financing opportunities.

Government Contracting and Procurement According to a March article in The Columbus Dispatch, the State of Ohio has been extremely deficient in meeting its procurement goals for minority business contracting. Since 1980, the State has had a goal of setting aside 15 percent of its contracts for bidding by minority businesses, yet only 3 percent of State business was with minority businesses by 2008.136
The State also established the EDGE program to purchase 5 percent of its goods and services from disadvantaged businesses, but only 2 percent of purchases went to these types of businesses. Research indicates that minority set-aside programs may have had a positive effect on the growth of black self-employment in sectors that are the focus of set-aside programs, but that they have a mixed record on the long-term survival of these companies. More problematically, research indicates that young MBEs that primarily rely on government contracts have a higher rate of failure than comparable white-owned firms, possibly due to larger black companies serving as “fronts” for white businesses and smaller black businesses being given contracts they lack the capacity to handle.

**Recommendations and Opportunities for Continued Economic Empowerment**

Although African American communities throughout Ohio share uniquely difficult and multi-layered challenges to accessing opportunity, there are strengths that can be leveraged, even in the midst of a recession. The Kirwan Institute offers the following recommendations in order to spur economic growth and stability among all segments of Ohio’s African American population.

- **Capitalize on the investment potential of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.**
- Empower the statewide stimulus “czar,” Ronald B. Richard of the Cleveland Foundation, to track existing (formula-based) spending, advocate for sustainable investments in undercapitalized communities and people, liaise among state, local and advocacy groups, and require data on minority business enterprises in contracting.
- Revamp the statewide transparency and accountability website (http://recovery.ohio.gov/) so that publicly accessible reporting on the Ohio stimulus spending has a particular emphasis on tracking minority and disadvantaged business procurement.
- Connect stimulus investment and job creation to local workforce development programs and encourage local hiring.
- Get underserved populations “in the pipeline” for construction jobs, a huge initial proportion of stimulus job creation, by targeting a proportion of new workforce/job training funds to neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, align training activities with economic growth sectors or job opportunities supported by stimulus policies and other state policies.
- Capitalize on and connect minority businesses throughout the state.
- The State of Ohio is not reaching minority business procurement goals, with a recent 2009 evaluation finding that just 3 percent of State contracts went to minority businesses, significantly lower than the 15 percent goal set forth by the State. The State must expand its efforts to procure to minority firms, including proactive marketing to minority firms and provide incentives for contractors to subcontract to minority firms.
- Sponsor MBE partnerships with Ohio’s business schools and community colleges.
- Increase low-cost business loan funds to ease minority businesses through the “credit crunch” brought on by recession (through existing loan and bond programs via the MCBACs).
- Provide subsidies or tax incentives for private companies who consistently work with MBE suppliers.
- Recognize outstanding private companies through an awards luncheon to market the program.
- Work with Chambers of Commerce to increase networking opportunities for minority business owners through awards dinners and social events, formal mentoring programs that match established business owners with minority business owners, and workshops and trade fairs.
- Connect workers and minority businesses to growing areas in the economy & foster inclusive and equitable regional economic development.
- Offer increased scholarship funding to minority students who major in STEM and healthcare fields.
- Host a business fair designed to showcase emerging sectors and bring together businesses and suppliers in those fields. This event(s) can be used to help minority businesses network and learn about bid projects/contracts.
- Incentivize minority businesses to explore economic opportunities in emerging sectors and public policy efforts.
- Sponsor education and training to MBEs in Ohio’s emerging sectors and industries in which minorities are underrepresented (i.e., ramp up existing Minority Business Development Organization capacity). Partner with local universities, colleges, and businesses to provide the content knowledge.
- Provide equity capital for minority firms in emerging sectors and industries, including infrastructure, education, green energy, and science and technology (i.e., encourage minority venture capital for, or suppliers to, firms in polymers; biotechnology; agricultural engineering; aviation; etc.).

Many African Americans in Ohio now have a greater access to opportunity than previous generations, and many have achieved new levels of economic success. Yet, there is still a need to continue improving our social and economic systems and the access to opportunity for marginalized communities. Recent setbacks in the economy have brought these needs into focus once more, and the implementation of the above recommendations will help all of Ohio’s communities continue to move forward. Improving access to economic opportunity for African Americans will increase Ohio’s gross state product, which will improve Ohio’s budget outlook over the long term and make it a more attractive place to do business overall.
SECTION V

EDUCATION DISPARITIES IN OHIO’S AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY
SECTION V: EDUCATION DISPARITIES IN OHIO’S AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Overview of Education Disparities in Ohio’s African American Community

When considering how to improve the life outcomes for African Americans in Ohio, education is one of the most salient public policy arenas. The quality of education a child receives has life-long implications, as education gives us the opportunity and mechanisms to lead productive, rewarding and fulfilling lives. Overall, the State of Ohio is faring well in regards to education; Quality Counts 2009 ranked Ohio’s education system as first in the Midwest and sixth nationally. Furthermore, there have been a number of gains for African Americans in Ohio across recent years from improvements in graduation rates, to a narrowing of the achievement gap. Despite these gains however, far too many African Americans still attend schools that are under-funded and segregated, with fewer qualified teachers and less rigorous curriculums.

Education is an arena that has been under close scrutiny for decades, with experts and policy makers generating a constant stream of reforms that get moved in and out of schools before they are given an adequate chance to be effective. Current Ohio Governor Ted Strickland is working to address this by focusing on changes that can be institutionalized, and thus sustainable. He is working to implement a number of interventions aimed at raising the performance of all students including an extended school year, more comprehensive graduation requirements, and a plan designed to make school funding more equitable. These factors present a unique opportunity of forward momentum in achieving a more equitable education system.

Instinctually, we look to schools for the source of the achievement gap and make modifications there, but we also need to examine the entire system; a child’s education is not the product of a school alone – it is impacted by all the social institutions he or she is situated within. Thus, education reform must be a holistic endeavor, one that we pursue relentlessly. In order to be truly effective, educational interventions must encompass housing, healthcare, and economic policies. Further, in order to achieve sustainable reform, we also must be mindful of how we implement these remedies. The vast majority of educational reform has been narrow in scope, limited in duration, lacked long term support, and does not pay attention to local particularities. If we are to take seriously the goal of creating a comprehensive, sustainable system of education for all of Ohio’s children, the policies must not only be relevant, but the implementation seamless. The first step in this process is establishing the State of Black Ohio in education. The following are specific arenas both internal and external to education where reform can have a substantial impact. Included as well are recommendations for implementation. Our ultimate goal is to not only improve the life outcomes for African Americans in Ohio, but to strengthen the State as a whole, which can be achieved only when all students are reaching their full academic potential.

Environmental Concerns Educational inequities are particularly intractable due to the multitude of factors outside the space of the school that influence students’ academic outcomes. Reviewing the laundry list of factors can be overwhelming; however, efforts to reform education must target these factors specifically in order to achieve sustainable change within our schools.

Impact of Family The family has long been understood to be a central contributor to a child’s academic potential. A parent’s SES, education level, and whether they are a one or two parent household, have
demonstrable impacts on their child’s academic performance including: standardized test scores, grade point averages, levels of educational attainment, school absences, and teacher behavioral ratings.142 Wealth has also demonstrated a positive relationship between both academic achievement and standardized test scores, and several researchers have argued that it can account for much of the racial achievement gap.143

Due to the historic pattern of inequities, (residential segregation and isolation from opportunity), African American families are particularly at risk. In Ohio in 2007, African American children constituted only 15 percent of the population, yet 44 percent of black children were in poverty, while 64 percent of non-Hispanic black children (ages 0-4) lived in a single parent household, and 57 percent of black children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment.144 It is not necessarily the case that undereducated guardians, lower income families, or single parent households are detrimental to their children’s academic potential, but the host of related factors these conditions are associated with can be. They correlate with unstable housing which results in frequent school transfers, increased parental stress, decreased parental involvement, and a lack of parental skills to support the child in his or her educational endeavors. Thus, efforts to address educational inequities must extend into the family. Programs that teach parents how to mentor and tutor their children have demonstrated a tremendous impact on a student’s academic performance, and programs that provide families with stable housing will accomplish far more than just raising the student’s grades: they can raise the life opportunities for the family and entire community.145

**Neighborhood Factors** Intuitively, we know that a child’s neighborhood impacts his or her academic performance; the research supports this as well. In fact, living in a disadvantaged neighborhood is equivalent to missing a full year of school, and these effects continue on even after a family has moved.146 In many ways this is due to correlates such as decreased social capital and lower levels of parental involvement, but neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are also limited in terms of supplemental educational resources. The infrastructure and programmatic resources of a community directly impacts education; the presence of school facilities, libraries, and after-school and tutoring programs have a positive impact on a student’s academic achievement.147 Thus, any educational interventions must take into consideration the conditions in which a school’s population resides. Housing policy is school policy and until we address it as such our school reform efforts will continue to come up short. Those interested in narrowing the achievement gap, increasing the number of African Americans in college, and interrupting the pernicious cycle of poverty must consider interventions that deliberately link housing and school policy. For example, by providing safe and stable housing, one Texas study suggests that up to 14 percent of the black-white achievement gap could be closed.148 Linking housing and education policy could be achieved by connecting No Child Left Behind to Low Income Housing Tax Credits. This could ensure families are given the opportunity to live in neighborhoods that provide them with immediate access to opportunity, and their children benefit as well through the access to high performing schools.

**Children’s Health** As discussed in Chapter 10 of this report, African Americans face a vast array of health disparities in the quality and availability of healthcare, which has strong educational implications. African American children are particularly vulnerable, beginning at birth. Nationally, African American women are twice as likely as white women to receive late or no prenatal care, resulting in lower birth weight babies.149 In Ohio, in 2004, African American women were twice as likely (14 percent) to have a low birth weight baby than white women (7 percent).150 Lower birth weight babies go on to suffer from
long-term disabilities, impaired physical and cognitive development, and decreased health overall throughout childhood, revealing a great significance in this disparity.151 Those living in lower income neighborhoods are subjected to a wide variety of additional environmental factors that depress health outcomes: the presence of lead and the prevalence of environmental pollutants in older homes; the general inaccessibility of preventative health care (including dental and vision); the lack of exercise and increased mental stress children suffer from living in unsafe neighborhoods; and overall poorer nutrition. These factors contribute to a cycle of academic underperformance as, not surprisingly, student achievement is closely related to mental and physical health. One recent calculation estimates that health disparities account for as much as 25 percent of the black-white achievement gap.152 Clearly, education policy alone cannot solve this problem. Education and health policy decisions need to be made in tandem, as all children must have mental and physical health needs met in order to achieve full academic potential. Health insurance must be expanded to cover all children and preventative health care must be readily available. Full-service health clinics in schools could provide the much needed medical services, and low-income schools should have a full-time nurse on staff.

Early Childhood Education One educational policy that has long been on the radar of policy makers in Ohio is early childhood education, and with good reason. The first three years of a child’s life are critical in laying the foundation for lifelong academic success. During this time, children acquire skills such as the ability to think, speak, learn and reason, and by the age of 5, 90 percent of a child’s brain is developed.153 Far too many African American children are at risk of suffering from the debilitating effects of living in concentrated poverty; in Ohio, non-Hispanic African American children ages 0-4 constitute 31 percent of those living below the poverty level, although only 14 percent of the young child population in the State is black.154

By the time low-income children reach preschool they are already being outperformed by their middle-class counterparts;155 thus, in order to close the achievement gap, it is critical that African American children are provided with a high quality early childhood education. Ohio has made great strides in providing high quality preschool to every child. With $270 million budgeted for early care and education for FY 08-09, nearly 8,000 more children will be given access to high-quality pre-kindergarten.156 Ohio can expect a high return on this long-term investment; a study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland found that every $1 spent on preschool programs would net $1.62. Another report demonstrates how providing two years of high quality preschool to 57 percent of three year olds (as opposed to the 27 percent served in 2004) would result in a net gain of $372 million for the State by reducing the number of children in special education, increasing the number of those prepared for the workforce, and eventually keeping them out of the criminal justice system. 157 There is still work to be done in the field of early childhood education in areas such as access (Ohio was ranked 35th out of the 50 states for access for 4 year olds) and in designing a more comprehensive system of support.158 Early childhood education programs that have had tremendous success include the Perry School Program and the Abecedarian project; both have provided additional ancillary services such as family support, home visits and group meetings. 159

K-12 School Issues Perhaps the most easily accessible policy solutions for closing the achievement gap and creating a more just system of education reside within the school. A tremendous body of research exists within each of the categories below, discussing why they matter, particularly for African Americans, as well as programs and interventions that have demonstrated success. A brief summary
follows, discussing how each is experienced in Ohio, as well as some examples of policy solutions that could create a more just and equitable system of education.

**Graduation Rates** The disparities in graduation rates are stark, particularly for African American males. In Ohio, one study based on the 2003 cohort reports that while 84 percent of the white high school population is graduating on time, only 57 percent of African Americans are. Another study focusing on the 2005/2006 cohort finds that only 49 percent of African American males in Ohio are graduating. As with early childhood education, addressing graduation rates would have a tremendous impact on Ohio’s economic vitality. By 2020, $2.6 billion would be added to Ohio’s economy just by raising the African American graduation rate to that of white students.

In order to raise the graduation rate for African Americans, specifically African American males, intervention programs focusing on retention must be put into place. Partnerships between schools and community organizations can provide academic and emotional support to at-risk students through tutoring and mentoring programs. Finally, schools should examine other arenas that are highly correlated with drop-out rates such as discipline practices, and design a comprehensive intervention program to curb student attrition.

**Discipline** African Americans are also disproportionately represented in discipline statistics; they are not only more frequently disciplined, but also experience more severe punishments than other non-black students, even after controlling for behavior or transgression. This phenomenon has long been documented across the country, and Ohio is no exception. In 2002, African Americans represented 36 percent of all suspensions, although they only constitute 16 percent of the total K-12 population. It is particularly important to note the gendered aspect of this; African American males are most frequently targeted for severe disciplinary policies. In 2004-2005, 20 percent of Ohio’s Black male students had been subjected to an out-of-school suspension, and three times as many black male students as white students were expelled, although there are four times as many white students in Ohio.

Suspension and expulsion not only have profound effects on the students’ academic performance and achievement, but also have long-term deleterious impact on the viability and stability of the State. Not surprisingly, a strong connection has been demonstrated between school discipline and the criminal justice system. Termed the “school to prison pipeline,” this linkage has far-reaching effects from decreasing the pool of skilled workers to destabilizing the family and community.

Certainly, schools must maintain a climate of safety and order, and discipline is a critical component of this. Although zero tolerance policies are the norm in most school districts across the State, researchers have discovered that they are not necessarily the most effective. Removing the student from the classroom or school interrupts their education, and ultimately does little to curb disruptive behavior. Violence prevention experts have identified a number of alternative approaches to school discipline that are more effective in decreasing negative behaviors, limiting out of classroom punishments, and promoting a more cohesive and safe school environment. Discipline reform, when done in conjunction with cultural competency and behavior management training for teachers, can make great strides in promoting a safer school environment, more stable communities and a more economically viable state.

**Academic Performance** Academic performance (and the associated achievement gap) reflects pervasive inequalities in our education system. The good news about the achievement gap is that it is narrowing; on average, across the past ten years, African American students have made gains at faster rates than white students and these trends are occurring across most subjects and grade levels.
performance of Black fourth graders, for example, has increased at an annual rate of 13 percent across the past 9 years, while the average student’s performance only increased by 6 percent. The bad news for achievement gaps, however, is that they are large and as such they are not closing quickly enough. Furthermore, the gap exists across both racial and economic lines. The gap between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students is stark, but so too is the gap between African Americans and Whites, regardless of economic status. In fact, economically disadvantaged whites in Ohio actually outperformed African Americans who were not economically disadvantaged. This gap is evident not only in measuring proficiency, but also when comparing students performing beyond the basic level. For example, disaggregated data for math achievement at the fourth grade level in 2006 shows 67 percent of African Americans in Ohio performed at grade level, while 93 percent of whites did. The difference is even more apparent in comparing those ranked ‘proficient’ or ‘advanced’. While 53 percent of whites performed at the proficient or advanced level, only 18 percent of African Americans did.

Like any educational intervention, closing the achievement gap is not simple or straightforward; there are multitudes of intersecting factors that contribute to it. Thus, any efforts to close the gap must be multifaceted and carefully constructed. While many programs have had success in closing the gap by addressing a singular issue (such as teacher quality) longitudinal research suggests that these changes are often not sustainable as they are dependent on a single champion within the district to energize the reform and carry it forward. If we are to take seriously the charge of closing the achievement gap, there are a number of contributing factors that must be addressed specifically such as teacher quality and the segregation of academic under-performers, and the overall approach must be multifaceted, dynamic, and flexible. Certainly it is challenging, but as many schools have shown us across the nation, and even within the borders of our own State, it is possible.

**Tracking/Ability Grouping: AP courses & Special Education**  Tracking, or ability grouping, is a significant issue for African American students because it not only acts as a segregating mechanism within schools, it also depresses academic and life-long opportunity for those relegated to lower tracks. African Americans’ under-representation in advanced placement courses, and overrepresentation in special education, indicates a broken system and calls for immediate attention and intervention to ensure that all children are receiving a high quality, appropriate education.

**Advanced Placement**  Much like the achievement gap, there is both good and bad news regarding African Americans’ participation rates in advanced placement courses. On one hand, across the past three years, more African Americans in Ohio have enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and taken the associated year-end exams. For example, in Ohio, in 2002, only 681 African American students took at least one AP exam, while in 2007, five years later, 1,312 completed at least one. While this is a significant stride, there is still significant ground to be gained. In 2007, while Blacks constituted 11.7 percent of the high school population, only 6.5 percent completed an AP exam. Of that percentage, only 2.6 percent scored a grade 3 or higher. African American students should be fully represented (and succeeding) in these advanced courses as they serve as primers for higher education and are strongly predictive of college readiness, acceptance, and persistence.

**Special Education**  At the other end of the ability grouping spectrum is special education, and as we might expect given their relative absence in advanced placement tracks, African Americans are overrepresented. In 2005 in Ohio, 9.2 percent of all African American students age 5-15 reported a mental disability, compared to only 5.9 percent of white students. During the 2004/2005 school
year, 4.79 percent of black male students were classified as having mental retardation, twice as many proportionally as white students.172 Particularly enlightening is the research that demonstrates African Americans’ overrepresentation in “high-incidence” categories—those with a more subjective diagnosis (as opposed to hearing/visual impairments which require a physician for diagnosis.) This indicates a distinct bias in the cultural construction of “disability” and requires us to pay close attention to frequency and source of referrals. 173 Finally, African Americans experience special education differently; once diagnosed they are often excluded from “mainstreaming” (being educated within the general education classroom) at rates higher than their white peers.174 In order to address these issues of over- and under-representation in special education and advanced placement tracks respectively, detailed statistics need to be collected at the school level focusing on admittance into specific tracks, and in the case of advanced placement, persistence. These statistics should also track referrals in order to identify any high referral rates from a specific teacher or counselor. Schools and districts must adopt early intervention or pre-referral policies that go beyond the current “wait to fail” approach. Tracking on both ends of the performance spectrum is harmful in many ways; it contributes to in-school segregation, limits the life outcomes of students of color, and undermines the economic viability of the State.

**Teacher Quality & Retention** A tremendous body of research exists demonstrating the impact of teacher quality on student performance. Some have suggested teachers have more influence on student achievement than any other characteristic of the school. One study finds that a high quality teacher can overcome some of the familial factors contributing to the achievement gap.175 On average, African American students and low-income students have higher rates of teacher turnover, lower quality teachers with fewer years of teaching experience, and more teachers who are teaching outside their field of expertise.176 In Ohio in 2005, for example, 1 in 8 teachers in high-minority elementary schools were not highly qualified, compared to 1 in 50 in low-minority schools.177

Teacher turnover also carries with it a number of substantial risks; students are negatively affected by teachers moving in and out of the classroom, and districts suffer as well. As teachers leave the district, schools face a multitude of costs required to replace him or her such as advertising, training, mentoring, and professional development. Researchers estimate that in Ohio, high rates of teacher turnover are costing up to $206 million dollars a year.178 This is particularly troubling given that lower-income urban districts experience higher rates of teacher turnover. In Ohio, approximately 20 percent of teachers in urban, low-income schools left their positions as compared to only 11 percent on average in public schools.179

In order to address these issues, the State must continue working to ensure high-poverty, low-performing schools have high quality teachers. The Ohio Teacher Incentive Fund (OTIF), in year three of five, has been implemented in select schools and districts in Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, and Cincinnati in order to meet this goal. While more information is needed to determine whether this program would be feasible and successful on a state-wide scale, it is a critical first step in working towards ensuring that high-need students have access to high quality teachers. The Kirwan Institute recommends conducting ongoing research on the Ohio Teacher Incentive Fund, and replicating successful components in a state-wide expansion.

Teacher quality and attrition go hand in hand, as do the policy interventions to address these issues. The primary reason teachers cite for leaving their school is stressful working conditions, even above salary.180 Teachers are often overwhelmed by the challenges they encounter in a low-income urban
district including student discipline issues, lack of resources and a lack of administrator support. Thus, programs such as OTIF may not have a far enough reach to retain high quality teachers. Teachers’ education programs and continuing education opportunities need to focus specifically on the unique challenges of teaching in a low-income urban district. Furthermore, new teachers must be mentored and guided through the early years of teaching.181 This process, called induction, designed explicitly to support and retain new teachers, has demonstrated notable success.182 Providing academic and emotional support to teachers in order to attract and retain high quality teachers to urban districts is a critical intervention that can have a profound effect on students of color.

There are also a number of housing assistance programs in place across the nation that are designed explicitly to attract and retain high quality teachers to high-need districts. California offers teachers a 3-7 percent down payment loan with interest forgiveness for a three year commitment to a high priority school, and Connecticut offers down payment assistance in conjunction with low interest mortgages to teachers in a priority or transitional school district.183 Ohio must continue to make deliberate efforts such as the above to assess which teachers truly are effective, attract them to high-need districts, and provide incentives for them to stay at high poverty, low performing schools where they are needed most.

The Ohio Department of Education recognizes this as a critical issue, and is currently working to ensure all students in Ohio receive high quality instruction from a highly qualified teacher. As part of this effort we recommend implementing a teacher retention research project in high-need schools and districts. Schools with high levels of teacher turnover should be identified, and extensively studied to determine the causes of teacher attrition. Relevant, targeted initiatives could then be implemented in order to address the conditions causing teacher/staff/administrator attrition. Through the comprehensive identification of contributing factors to teacher turnover, relevant, targeted best practices could be crafted that successfully provide students of color the opportunities to receive high-quality instruction from qualified teachers.

**District/Statewide Issues**

**Racial/Economic Segregation** Of all of the in-school factors, researchers agree that none have the long-term deleterious academic, economic, psychological, and social impacts as the pervasive racial and economic segregation present in Ohio’s public schools.184 In fact, the concentration of low income students within a given school building is one of the strongest predictors of academic success, second only to familial influences.185 In Ohio’s six largest metropolitan regions, over half of all poor students are segregated into high poverty schools and of these, 94.4 percent are classified in the three lowest achievement categories.186 As we might expect, there is a strong racialized component to economic segregation. African American students attend schools that are 2 to 3 times more impoverished than those of their White counterparts, with the average African American student attending schools with a poverty rate of 61 to 78 percent.187 What’s worse, Ohio is leading the nation in the increase of African American hyper-segregation in education. A report conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center found that from 1993/1994 to 2005/2006, the percent of black students in nearly all minority schools (<5 percent white) increased 18 percentile points, to 28 percent. This is a larger increase than any other state in the US experienced.188

If we are to take seriously the goal of creating a more equitable system of education, remedying the persistent and pernicious racial and economic segregation must be at the forefront of our efforts.
school districts across the country such as Wake County Public Schools System have demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap by limiting the number of low-income students and students performing below grade level within each building. Many consider Wake County to be an anomaly however, as they have a somewhat unique county-wide school system. Nebraska, however, is moving beyond the limitations of regional fragmentation with the establishment of “Learning Community Agreements” in education.189 This progressive education plan includes all districts, involves over 105,000 students, and is based on a tax sharing plan that allocates school funding based on need. The plan, which has passed into law but is yet to be implemented, is based on focus schools, magnets, and pathway schools that are designed explicitly to achieve a diverse student body. Certainly racial and economic segregation is a difficult issue to address, as the conditions that create this segregation in the first place seem intractable, but until we do, our efforts will likely amount to tinkering within the system, as opposed to creating real, sustainable change for all students.

**Testing/Assessment** Testing and assessment are hotly debated topics in the field of education. Tests have been found to be culturally biased, narrow in scope, and in many ways, constrain the curriculum. Furthermore, their “high stakes” application, or the practice of using them to confer rewards, overextends their original purpose (as student achievement assessments), and may ultimately distort the outcomes.190 On the other hand, assessments have also been very enlightening. Due to mandatory data collection and required analysis on all subgroups, we are now able to identify schools that may be high performing overall, but are failing to educate low income or African American students. Despite the many flaws inherent in mandatory educational assessment, it is unlikely that it will be eradicated anytime soon. Ohio is one of the three states that is moving towards a more revealing system of analysis; instead of comparing overall performance, value-added assessments are being conducted, measuring individual students’ progress over time.191 This gives parents, teachers and schools a more accurate vision of how much the school is contributing to the child’s learning, evaluating the school based upon the real progress it has made, as opposed to a universal standard. This method of evaluation has the potential to be far more enlightening, equitable, and useful, however, it too is not without flaws, and we caution against over-reliance on it for determining (and rewarding) teacher efficacy.

While value-added assessment is certainly an improvement over our current system of testing, in many ways it does not go far enough in measuring the effectiveness of a school. Certainly, standardized tests do capture some of the knowledge students have garnered in school, but true knowledge and intelligence is less about what you know, and more about how you use it, when you use it, and why it matters. Proponents for demonstration-based testing or performance-based assessments emphasize that even if the achievement gap, as measured by standardized tests, is closed, that does not mean we have achieved a level of parity in learning. Education is about more than rote memorization: it requires reflection, adaptation, innovation, performance, and analytical skills that quite simply cannot be measured through a paper and pencil, closed answer test. Revising our system of grading and assessment is a leap that moves us beyond how we measure learning currently, which is necessary in order to not only close the achievement gap, but the lifelong opportunity gap.

**Funding** Perhaps the most difficult, confounded, and intractable issue in education is school funding. Clearly there is no easy solution, as statewide legislators and policy makers have been working to remedy the funding paradigm for years. The primary reason this issue is so complex is due to the interaction and impact of the aforementioned factors on a child’s ability to learn. It is difficult, if not
impossible, to assign a number or create a financial formula that can measure the impact of a high poverty neighborhood, or an undereducated parent in poverty.

Examining the issue of school funding is necessary and enlightening in order to understand the racialized history of our school systems and the impact that history has on funding today. Furthermore, it illuminates the need for comprehensive educational interventions that cut across sectors. High and low opportunity neighborhoods are so deeply entrenched in our society that they have become naturalized, as have the policies and practices that create and perpetuate them. Schools receive inequitable funding because they rely heavily on property taxes. Due to historical factors such as redlining, and more current practices such as exclusionary zoning, we have neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty and families without access to stable housing or wealth building mechanisms such as homeownership. School district boundaries are then drawn in a way that isolates these high-need, low income families into segregated, under-funded schools, and, because they reflect “natural” community and geographic boundaries, are accepted and defended as sacrosanct. These students are then placed in double jeopardy because they have higher needs, but their schools receive less funding. And to make matters worse, these schools are typically older, with aging infrastructure, and higher operational costs. Taken together, all these factors illuminate how intractable the issue of school funding is, and why crafting an appropriate solution is so difficult.

Clearly, school finance reform is critical and has been a long time coming; however it must be paired with policies that consider the health and viability of the entire neighborhood as well (see chapter 8). Governor Strickland’s statewide forums and commitment to school funding reform can serve to position Ohio as a national leader in the creation and promotion of a more equitable funding process. However, funding can only move a school so far; in order to create a more equitable system overall, we must simultaneously address the factors that create disparities in the first place.

Community/Parental Involvement  As important as the time students spend in school is, some research suggests that even more critical is the time they spend outside of the classroom. Low-income students have demonstrated comparable gains to their higher-income peers during school, but lose ground after school and over the summer.192 Some districts are addressing this by extending the school day or switching to a year-round model of education which has shown tremendous success, but it is not always economically feasible. By making the walls between the school and community permeable, equipping parents to fully participate in their child’s education, we can make great strides in providing the academic support students need.

Family, community members, neighbors, the religious community, and other caring adults in a child’s life create a web of support that nurtures and encourages growth and development, and acts as a protective mechanism against the innumerable challenges a low income child of color faces. Programs are needed that put children in touch with caring adults and encourage and support these relationships. Parents can also be mentored in order to better support their children academically. Formally connecting parents to the school has not demonstrated success in improving the academic performance of children in the school, but it does correlate with fewer behavioral problems, and students’ increased likelihood of completing secondary school.193 Children not only need nurturing and guidance, but also safe physical spaces within a community such as parks, libraries, and recreation centers that sponsor or house programs committed to the success of the children in the community. Achieving this has been shown to positively impact a student’s academic achievement, but also their motivation, attitude towards school, and readiness to learn.
Higher Education & Workforce Development  Ohio needs to have a strong education pipeline, from birth through K-16, but it also needs to prepare students to enter into productive, sustainable careers. Thousands of African Americans fall through the cracks in our disjointed education system, and even more fail to see the relevance an education has on their lives. Building a strong system of education not only improves the lives of African Americans, it lifts up all Ohioans by making the State and its localities more economically competitive.194 With the current state of the economy and increasing globalization, Ohio needs to capture the talent, skills, intelligence, and unique contributions of everyone in order to remain economically viable, and in order to emerge as a strong national and global leader.

Career Preparation  As mentioned in chapter 4, a critical component for building a strong State of Black Ohio is targeted economic development. In order to build an economically stable state we must have a highly skilled workforce. One of the biggest obstacles businesses across Ohio face in thriving and expanding is their ability to attract and retain highly skilled, dependable employees.195 Workforce development efforts such as school-to-career or school-to-work programs can provide the mechanism to increase labor market skills, connect students to viable employment opportunities, attract new businesses to the State, and provide existing businesses the human capital they need to succeed. Historically, vocational schools and programs have operated as racial sorting mechanisms, with students of color deterred from pursuing higher education and steered into lower-skill jobs. These programs must be mindful of this history and must be designed in a way that does not foreclose on students’ career or education options. Properly designed and implemented, career training programs and schools can provide students the opportunity to pursue sustainable, profitable employment and the educational foundation to continue their education if they so choose. Schools that successfully accomplish this are currently operating across the country. For example, the Austin Polytechnical Academy in Chicago prepares students for jobs in advanced, high-tech manufacturing. A unique coalition of education, labor, business, government, and community organizations is not only lifting up students by providing them with a life-long foundation to succeed, they are strengthening the economy and viability of the State of Illinois.196 Jobs are becoming more and more specialized, and require training and education that many African Americans are simply not receiving. Equitable, comprehensive schools and programs that open up a student’s career and education opportunities must be implemented in order to ensure all students are fully prepared to take part in our changing economy, and to secure the long-term stability and economic viability of Ohio.

Higher Education  Much has been written about the positive effect higher education has on one’s life opportunities, as well as the under-representation of African Americans in our colleges and universities. One of the first steps necessary for remedying this is formally connecting our K-12 education system to postsecondary education. Education Week’s Quality Counts 2008 report indicates that Ohio is lacking in many key areas: alignment policies for courses and assessments between high schools and higher education, college preparation required in order to graduate high school, and the presence of a State definition of college readiness.197 The Ohio Department of Education is actively working to address these issues: the State has defined what students need to know to be ready for college and enacted requirements that students complete college-prep courses before graduating from high school. The “Seniors to Sophomores” program is another substantive example of progress, allowing high school seniors the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously.198 Currently, approximately 375 students are participating in this pilot program, at no cost to them.199 Policies and programs such as these are positive steps toward making Ohio a national leader in creating a seamless
education pipeline and making Ohio a more economically viable state.

It is estimated that, by 2012, more than 60 percent of the jobs in Ohio will require some college education. Yet, only 28.7 percent of the population over the age of 25 completed four years or more of college and 18.5 percent of the black population has a bachelor’s degree or higher.200 Overall, Ohio ranked 40th in the percentage of the population with a bachelor’s degree.201 There are a number of critical issues that contribute to the decreased presence of black men and women in higher education. Most obvious are the disparities in quality of P-12 education, as well as the numerous factors addressed above that continue to depress the achievement levels of African Americans. Also implicated are the over-reliance on a biased system of testing and admissions, limited access to and difficulty navigating the system of financial aid for parents, and the increasing attack on diversity in higher education in recent years. The doors of colleges and universities must be open to African Americans, and deliberate efforts must be made towards retention, as well. Seventeen percent of African Americans attending a four-year university graduate in four years, and only 36 percent graduate in six years.202 Clearly, our workforce needs are not matched by our current system of education; and, our State’s population is not being served by the cycle of injustice and inequity.

Ensuring that all students reach their full academic potential, and providing all students with opportunities for sustainable employment, can improve entire communities by attracting new businesses, improving housing values, and stabilizing families. Nationally, if African Americans had the same education and commensurate earnings as whites, their national wealth could increase by as much as $118 billion.203 The K-16 pipeline needs to be seamless and school-to-career programs prevalent and effective in order to ensure African Americans have a genuine opportunity for a meaningful, stable, and secure future with possibilities for continued career advancement. By creating workforce development and higher education programs that are focused specifically on the inclusion of African Americans, we will not only meet the workforce needs of the State, we will create a more sustainable future for all Ohioans.

Workforce Development Much attention has been paid lately to workforce development, and rightfully so. Our economy has shifted over the last four decades, but our workforce development efforts have not been responsive to these challenges. The declining economy is changing all that; no longer can Ohio afford to have countless African Americans unprepared to take part in our economy. This has implications for career preparation programs and STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) as discussed above, but those Ohioans outside of K-16 education must have ample opportunity to train for 21st century employment as well.

All eyes are on the federal government right now, anticipating new federal economic stimulus policies that will hopefully carry our nation in a new direction. Obama has expressed his goal of creating at least 3 million jobs by the end of 2010, a number of which are expected to come in industries such as the high tech field and “green” energy.204 The creation of these jobs, however, does not necessarily ensure the inclusion of African Americans; those who are best positioned to take advantage of these jobs are those who have historically had access to opportunity. As government stimulus programs have a history of operating in ways that leave African Americans behind, deliberate efforts must be made to ensure history does not repeat itself. 205 Robert Reich, the former Secretary of Labor, proposes one approach to equitable workforce development to ensure those populations historically excluded are included. He recommends that all stimulus-funded contracts provide 20 percent of jobs to: “the long-term
unemployed and to people with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level,” and 2 percent of all funds be allocated for training such populations. Regardless of what federal economic policies are enacted, state level programs must align resources and programs to ensure all Ohioans, particularly African Americans, have the training and experience necessary to secure stable employment with opportunities for advancement. Ensuring employment opportunities reach those who most need them is the only way to move Ohio’s economy into the 21st century.

Recommendations for Sustainable Reform

Without question, all of the above is important information to take into consideration in crafting educational policies. However, with that having been said, knowledge is not nearly enough. As one interviewee said, “It’s not that we don’t know what’s wrong. We do. It’s that we need to scale it up, incentivize it, and we need the political will to fix it.”

Report after report outlines the dire conditions of our State’s schools and the precarious position of African Americans in society as a result. Teachers and researchers alike have broken the education system down into every imaginable nuance and held them up for examination, and most have emerged announcing the next magical silver bullet; the singular remedy that has the potential to close the gap, to equalize the graduation rate, and to fix the system entirely. Unfortunately, as we’ve learned the hard way, facilitating equity is not that easy, but it is also not impossible. There are a number of things we KNOW can work based on experience. However, as the interviewee so succinctly stated, we need the political will. We need long-term commitments to reform of the system both from the bottom up and the top down. Cherry picking the most convenient, least disruptive, and least objectionable solutions may be the easier route, but it will not be the most sustainable, or successful one.

Much has already been said about some of the types of remedies that can achieve the education system our African American boys and girls deserve. There are a few remaining overarching considerations that should guide the reform process. Following are some final thoughts on how to move forward, how to achieve a 21st century education system that truly leaves no child behind.

Stop School Bashing  Since the mid 1950s, schools have come under increasing scrutiny and innumerable reports have been published that deconstruct the schools. Schools are an easy target; public data is available that demonstrates schools’ shortcomings, and as a publicly funded institution, people want to ensure their money is being used wisely. Certainly, not everyone has good intentions in their criticisms, but many do; many are looking to simply highlight disparities in order to create a more just system. Placing schools under constant attack regardless of intentions has a number of unintended consequences. It can decrease public support, lower student morale, and put teachers and administrators on the defensive, reducing the time they can dedicate towards students. Furthermore, a myopic view of schools’ shortcomings obscures the schools’ successes. We need an honest evaluation of the performance of our public schools, including the tremendous positive impact many of them have, in order to identify and implement scalable programs.

Localize the Approach  One common theme across many of the interviews is the incredible diversity that can be found within Ohio, with one interviewee referring to Ohio as a series of nation states. Ohio has tremendous diversity within its borders from the urban city centers to the rural regions. This can pose unique challenges for policy makers as a “one size fits all” approach will inevitably fail, particularly
when applied to education reform. Education initiatives should draw on regional particularities and strengths, and should take into consideration local history. By recognizing and capitalizing on the amazing array of diversity across the State, Ohio can craft education reforms that are relevant and appropriate, and thus more likely to succeed in the long run.

**Sustainable Reform**  With the close linkage between education and the economy, all Ohioans are heavily tied to the state of education; thus it is expected that the calls for school reform be emphatic, and enduring. Certainly public interest and commitment to education reform is beneficial. Without it levies could not be passed, and the function of public education as a democratic institution would be undermined. It poses a series of barriers when reform initiatives are moved in and out of the school before they are given the opportunity to be effective. On average, researchers have found that any education reform will not reach its full impact until 5 to 7 years after implementation, a timeline that far exceeds the lifespan of most initiatives. Education reform must also be an integral part of the budget and the culture, as programs that are dependent on one individual often fail when that individual leaves the school or system.

Ohio needs to set clear goals, incentivize them, implement programs to meet them, and allow the programs time to mature. All pilot programs and state-level initiatives must be subjected to ongoing rigorous evaluation and the programs should be revisited and modified periodically. Programs aimed at education reform cannot be implemented then neglected; continuous evaluation and program modification are critical parts of the process necessary to ensure that programs stay on track to achieve the districts’ and schools’ goals.

**Defining Education**  Ohio already has a number of explicit goals for our system of education. Detailed standards are set across nearly every subject area and for every grade level. Without a doubt, having academic standards is necessary and beneficial. However, over-reliance on them can lead to a narrowing of education, particularly for the low income schools that are already at risk if they do not post adequate gains on standardized tests. Inevitably, state-administered tests have a direct and immediate impact on what is included in the curriculum as well as the way it is taught. Asking students to regurgitate facts as the primary means of measuring achievement denies them the opportunity to learn how to use and apply the knowledge in more creative ways. Building a populace that has a well-rounded, comprehensive education has social, moral, democratic and economic benefits, and would help move Ohio into a stable, prosperous 21st century.

**Comprehensive Educational Policy**  Most policy reforms work within sectors; education policy is relegated to what goes on within the school, or how schools are constructed. This is problematic and ineffectual however, because those students coming into the school are not isolated from the effects of other social institutions. As previously mentioned, the capacity a child has to learn is based on factors wholly outside the purview of the school, yet we expect schools to be able to equalize students’ academic performance. Taking seriously the goal of educating each and every child residing within the State of Ohio requires us to reach into communities and homes with policies that lift up and provide for our children. Education reform requires a strong, seamless education pipeline, equitable funding, high teacher quality and desegregated schools, but it also requires addressing children’s physical and emotional needs. Comprehensive educational policy that includes housing and healthcare provides a strong foundation for learning, and gives schools a real chance to provide all children the education they need.
Summary

As those who work to address educational inequities know, educational reform is neither tidy nor immediately possible. Despite the approaches many reformers try to sell, there is no singular magic bullet that can instantly provide African American children the education they need and deserve. The racialized inequities present in education have been inscribed in the foundation of our educational system since its inception, and have been reinforced across history through both education and housing policy. In order to disentangle our education system from this discriminatory past we need comprehensive systemic reform, not changes that amount to little more than tinkering. Certainly the efforts made across the past decades to reform schools and close the achievement gap have not been made in vain. However, they have done little to disrupt the status quo in education and thus are inherently limited.

Creating an equitable system of education is a moral imperative; the mere presence of the achievement gap has long-term psychological and social impacts as well as profound consequences for our legitimacy as a democracy. Furthermore, it is an economic imperative. The stability of our State in the increasingly globalized economy depends on the education and productivity of all of our citizens. Building the political will and establishing financial support of a more equitable system of education will not only create a strong “State of Black Ohio,” it will position Ohio as a national leader in progress. While this stands as a daunting task, Ohio has a tremendous amount of resources that may enable our political leaders to achieve the necessary systemic changes, if the appropriate reforms are implemented.
When describing the overall conditions for the black community, many respondents indicated that Black females and males had specific challenges. There is inadequate data for many critical measures of gender-specific well being; therefore, this section leans heavily on the insight of interviewees and available data.

Males

When asked to assess the conditions for African Americans in Ohio, some respondents cited the lack of educational achievement for African American males and the inefficient channels available to advance positive outcomes for males. Conversely, another respondent commented that, “Columbus is an open-minded city as any. Hindrances for African American males are as few here as they are anywhere.” Questions addressing the strengths, achievements, and opportunities available for African Americans frequently yielded responses that targeted a significant number of males holding important leadership positions in the State of Ohio. Respondents cited the achievements of black males holding leadership positions (i.e., Mayor, Senator, etc.) in cities like Columbus as a noteworthy accomplishment. Other respondents listed the efforts of C.J. Prentiss, Special Education Advisor to Governor Ted Strickland, to close the achievement gap and increase the graduation rates of students with a special focus on African American males as a valuable asset for the State.

Several themes emerged from conversations about what challenges are facing African American males. Key issue areas included educational and employment constraints, health care disparities, and personal development issues, as illustrated by the interview quotes below:

“Higher education enrollment [is] still lacking for African American males.”

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“In Columbus there are more jobs. Traditionally in Ohio there were manufacturing jobs, and they are not there anymore. There are no opportunities in the Northeast and Northwest Ohio. I’m from Northeast Ohio, so I know there are no opportunities.”

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“We haven’t had enough conversations on how we build manhood and how we define it. This is one of our biggest challenges. And, not just how we build men collectively but how do we build men individually. This is a very scary thing. We need these conversations and we also need to discuss how we do this for women also.”

Overwhelmingly, respondents viewed the number of black males entering into the prison system as a major challenge for the African American community. One respondent said that “this needs to be the primary goal of the Commission of African American Males” and, as another respondent said, “it is hard for men with felonies to get out of jail and find employment. How many men are in jail because of drug charges, not violent crimes? ... Even the ‘victimless’ employers just see the criminal record, and that makes it difficult for these people to turn their lives around and become taxpayers.”

As one respondent noted, “the cradle to prison pipeline is ominous for black males trapped in poverty.” As another said, the disproportionate imprisonment of black men and the resultant loss of the father
from the family is “a challenge for youth...no matter what your race. If there is not that strong base in the family, that poses a big challenge.” Younger black males are also impacted by the juvenile justice system. As another respondent noted, “of the kids in the juvenile detention center/court system, 61% of those in the system are black boys, though they are only 11% of the population, and 3% in terms of teenagers. It’s disproportional.” Respondents also voiced concerns about the number of youth entering into the prison or juvenile system because of factors in the school system. Several research studies have shown that there is a relationship between suspension and expulsion rates leading to youth imprisonment. In Ohio, during the school years of 2000-2007, black students received considerably higher school disciplinary actions (per 100 students) than other racial and ethnic groups.

Research supports respondents’ concerns for the high number of males entering into the prison system. Although blacks in 2007 had the second highest number of individuals in the prison system at 47.4%, whites had the highest number of members currently imprisoned at 49.7%. This number is extremely high considering the proportion of blacks in Ohio (11.5%) compared to whites (85.0%).

Several respondents indicated that the African American Male Initiative is a significant strength for the State of Ohio. One respondent suggests that the initiative should be expanded, “to assist ex-offenders integrate back into society, especially through work.”

Some additional responses needed to address the challenges center around the differential treatment between black and white males. As one respondent said,

“Two black guys and one white guy, all brought up on traffic violations, all three found with drugs, and the white guy got the lesser charge....The prosecutor has to make sure that laws are being fairly applied, and State Attorney General same thing. If you do wrong, you do wrong, but shouldn’t be a greater penalty if you are black.”

The sentencing disparity between blacks and whites in Ohio has been well documented. An October 2008 investigative report in The Cleveland Plain Dealer found that “since 2000, a black person has been 12.7 times more likely than a white person to be sent to a state prison from Cuyahoga County on drug charges.“207

Respondents offered a range of programs or initiatives that may benefit African American males. These included the IMPACT program, the African American Male Initiative, and apprenticeship programs that provide fathers an avenue through which to establish a steady income for their families. “Fatherhood initiatives to improve children would correct a whole lot of issues.” One respondent positively reviewed Project Mentor, a program that unites Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Central Ohio and Columbus City Schools in an effort to boost high school graduation rates.

“I think Project Mentor is a good program. I also think the West Coast has a lot of good programs. Ohio needs to look to the West Coast to model some of their programs. One exceptional program in the West is AVID. The Governor’s program had remarkable results in terms of ninth grade boys moving to tenth grade.”

Females

Respondents often called out the challenges of single parenting:
“the masses are not doing well, especially single, female-headed households. Poverty in this household is a problem because there is one income, and this impacts the development and growth of children and families as a whole.”

In Ohio, 39% of African American families are headed by single mothers. Many respondents pointed to challenges for these families. As one interviewee explained:

“Let me give you some background...many black children are born to single mothers. That has to change. I was talking with a young mother recently having trouble with her 14-year-old son. Teenage boys are going to challenge; if there’s no alpha male in the house, they get more challenging to the female head of the house...Those mothers are more likely to live in poverty, in minimum wage jobs, have more than one job, so those children’s opportunities are impacted.”

Other challenges that black women who have children face are low birth weight babies and high infant mortality rates. Black women have the highest number of low birth weight babies among all racial groups (roughly twice the rate of any other group). Two factors that may contribute to the high number of low birth weights in the African American population are teenage pregnancy and the lack of prenatal care for mothers. Current research results show that Blacks have the second highest number of teenage births (77%) in comparison to whites (31%), Asians (19%), and Latinos (86%). In 2006, Black women were found to have the highest percentage of mothers not receiving prenatal care (5.8%) compared to Latinos (4.2%), Asians (3.0%), and Whites (1.9%). Similarly, black women in 1997 and 2006 had the highest infant mortality rate of all racial groups. Black women were also the only group to show no decrease in infant mortality rates from 1997 to 2006.

These challenging circumstances are exacerbated by Ohio’s gender wage gap. One interviewee said that “black females are getting jobs, but they are paid disproportionately to male workers.” This observation is empirically correct: in 2000, Ohio’s African American women earned 87% of what their male counterparts made, earning $10.00 per hour compared to black men’s median hourly wage of $11.44.

Some respondents suggested changes to current initiatives and programs in Ohio. As one respondent said,

“A lot of our people are locked into the old welfare system (TANF). That whole program needs to be restructured to be family-focused so we are not just giving people money and to get a job, but helping the whole family. Children Services and Job and Family Services should be merged to strengthen the family as a unit.”

Other respondents indicated that it was critical to develop policy support for women and families as well as for males, and that Black women’s leadership capacities were unfairly constrained.

“There is an African American Male Initiative, in full support, but I also think there needs to be recognition that the children that are the recipients of these programs are being led by women, and they need a lot of support to get the children raised to successful adulthood.”

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“Black women are holding up a lot of the family structure within Ohio; it is almost a given that this is what it’s supposed to be.”

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“I think it’s hard to emerge into a leadership position...if you don’t have the right ‘image.’ If you don’t have the right image, despite your confidence and intelligence you are least likely to have a mentor...Politics equals image, and if you don’t have the right image, you won’t be mentored. A woman won’t be mentored to go further because she’s a woman. She doesn’t fit the right image.”
Section VII: Focus Area - Immigration Impacts

Introduction

“Black Ohio” is not a monolithic entity. It is comprised of many communities across the State, each a rich and unique assemblage. In the overview chapter, we introduced the axes of difference within Ohio’s black communities, including gender, class, age, religion, education, sexuality, income, skin tone, and country of origin. The growing immigrant populations in Ohio, particularly Somali refugees in Columbus and Latinos throughout the State, affect African American identity, material conditions, and potential coalition building. Policies that attempt to lift up, strengthen, and connect communities of color must be premised upon a robust concept of “Black Ohio.”

The two main immigrant populations in Ohio, the Somalis and the Latinos, both make distinct contributions to our conceptualization and understanding of what comprises “Black Ohio.” First, the inclusion of Somali immigrants seems intuitive because they are considered racially black. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Somalis maintain a notion of blackness and black identity that is different from American blacks (discussion to follow later in this chapter.) As such, the presence of a large Somali community in Columbus adds a new dimension to the concept of blackness that should be considered when addressing “Black Ohio.”

Second, while most Latinos do not share the same racial identification as African Americans, they still have a significant connection to the State of Black Ohio. The growing Latino immigrant population often resides in the same disadvantaged neighborhoods as African Americans. Accordingly, Latinos tend to share many concerns with Black Americans, such as racial profiling by the police, the lack of quality education options, and scarce affordable housing. As such, many potential policies that could positively impact African Americans, concurrently would affect the Latino immigrant communities. The structural problems that the two groups share and their residential propinquity make Latino immigrants a necessary consideration in any discussion of the State of Black Ohio.

Apart from the specific immigrant communities, the immigration debate itself is also relevant to “Black Ohio.” First, the increasing visibility of immigrants in Ohio invites many questions on the concept of U.S. national identity, the inclusiveness of the U.S. democracy, and who is considered a legitimate member of U.S. society. As Eric Ward aptly points out, the immigration debate is analogous to themes from the Civil Rights movement:

“... the current so-called debate on immigration is not about coming to terms with the issue of migration; it is about who is an American and what America will look like. At its core, anti-immigration is a national debate about civil rights, citizenship and national identity.”211

Secondly, for Black Americans, the immigration debate has further significance, as the popular rhetoric that the anti-immigrant movement uses against newly-arriving (undocumented / Latino) immigrants is reminiscent of the racist, bigotry-filled rhetoric of the White nationalist groups of the past. In short, these questions of identity and the concept of an inclusive democracy create parallels between the experiences of immigrants and Black Americans.

This chapter summarizes some recent immigration trends and highlights the role of immigration and immigrant communities in “Black Ohio.” We also discuss the relations between African Americans and immigrants statewide.
National Trends

As of 2006, 53.5% of foreign-born persons in the U.S. emigrated from Latin America. The second largest category was Asians (26.8%), followed by Europeans (13.3%) and Africans (3.7%). Between 2001 and 2006, immigration accounted for at least 20% of the growth in the U.S. black population. "In 2005, two-thirds of the 2.8 million foreign-born blacks were born in the Caribbean or another Latin America country and nearly one-third were born in Africa." Most Caribbean black immigrants hail from Jamaica, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago. Approximately 70% of black African immigrants emigrate from ten countries, with the majority hailing from Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Ghana, followed by Liberia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, and Eritrea.

It is important to note that while many African and Caribbean foreign-born individuals would be considered black in the United States, not all immigrants from these areas fit this categorization. Because the U.S. government does not record the race or ethnicity of its new legal residents, many analysts rely on country of birth as a proxy for race, although this practice is imperfect. Indeed, some countries have a predominantly black population; however, those who emigrate are primarily white. South Africa provides a particularly extreme example of this phenomenon, as 82% of South African-born U.S. residents in 2000 reported being white - a stark contrast to South Africa’s 80% black population.

Ohio Trends

When compared to other states and the District of Columbia, Ohio ranks 19th in terms of the size of its foreign-born population. From 2000 to 2004, 47,668 of the immigrants admitted to the U.S. intended to settle in Ohio. This number does not account for secondary immigration into the State.

As of 2006, 412,352 Ohioans were foreign-born, thus representing 3.6% of the State’s population. Data from 2005 indicate that more than one quarter (27.6%) of the State’s foreign-born population entered in 2000 or later. The City of Columbus has been particularly transformed by this recent influx, as 42.8% of the city’s foreign-born population entered during this time period. Most of Ohio’s foreign-born residents live in urban areas. Roughly following a national trend, the percentage of foreign-born in Ohio’s largest cities declined from approximately 1940 to 1990, after which the percentage began to increase. Although Cleveland was once a favored destination for the foreign-born, by 2000, Columbus outranked Cleveland as having the highest percentage of foreign-born in Ohio.

Ohio is home to more than 40,000 foreign-born African Americans. Nearly 31,000 of these came from Africa, while an additional 6,500 arrived from the Caribbean. Most of those that hailed from the Caribbean arrived pre-2000; nearly half (45%) of those who emigrated from Africa tended to arrive in 2000 or later.

Refugees and Asylees

Nationwide, 48,217 refugees were admitted into the United States during fiscal year 2007 (October 1 – September 30). The top three countries of origin for these individuals were Burma, Somalia, and Iran. Somalis comprise a considerable proportion of the refugees that are relocated to Ohio. Of the 1,573 refugees that Ohio received in fiscal year 2007, 845 (54%) emigrated from Somalia. This percentage was even higher in previous years, as 62% and 77% of the refugees entering Ohio were Somali in fiscal years 2005 and 2006, respectively.
The influx of Somali refugees into Ohio and the U.S. has been interrupted recently due to the State Department’s discovery of fraud in the family reunification program. The program was suspended after only 13% of East Africans seeking to enter the U.S. as refugees through the family reunification program were found to be actual blood relatives. This suspension of this program, which has reunited 36,000 Africans with U.S. relatives since October 2003, will likely slow the influx into Ohio. When the family reunification program resumes in March or April 2009, both the individual in the U.S. and the one abroad will be subject to DNA testing prior to the latter’s admission to the U.S.

The exact population of Somalis in central Ohio remains unclear. According to the Somali Community Association, more than 45,000 Somalis live in central Ohio. The Somali American Chamber of Commerce estimates that over 75,000 Somali Americans live in Columbus. Columbus and Franklin County officials provide a broad range; they estimate the Somali immigrant and refugee population in central Ohio to be between 35,000 and 80,000. Regardless of the precise number, the considerable presence of this population has implications for the State of Black Ohio, specifically African American–immigrant relations. Any policies aimed at African Americans or “Black Ohio” generally need to account for the diversity and unique challenges that the growing Somali population introduces.

**African American – Immigrant Relations**

As discussed above, Somali and Latino immigrants in Ohio stand out in terms of numbers and relevance for Black American-immigrant relations. Below we will discuss some issues regarding identity and alliance building that stem out of the interactions between African Americans and these two immigrant groups.

**African immigrants: Context**

Constructive relations between African Americans and African immigrants are not as inherent as some may believe. It is significant to note that even immigrants who may be classified as black in the United States often do not see themselves as such; this fact enhances how we may conceptualize “Black Ohio.” In many countries, race is not as salient as it is in the United States. A study on Somali immigrants by Kusow (2006) finds that, when considering U.S. racial classification systems, “blackness does not provide a meaningful category for social understanding” for these immigrants. As such, skin color is generally not regarded as a basis for group solidarity. One African American interviewed by a local newspaper in Columbus described the differences between these two communities:

> “You can look just alike and appear to be on the same team, but we’re as different as night and day... Just because we are black or originate from Africa doesn’t mean anything. We have a separate language, culture, and religion. It is a big thing. This is not an issue of color.”

Moreover, many communities are not prepared for the entry of African immigrants and do not understand the forces that are propelling them here. The number of Somali immigrants increased immensely in Columbus and central Ohio after 1994 due to the massive immigration that took place as civil war ravaged their country. After Minneapolis, Columbus became the city with the highest Somali immigrant population in the United States.

**Somali immigrants: Unique differences and challenges**

Religion is one major topic where Somali immigrants are distinct from many other Black Ohioans. Somalis are overwhelmingly Muslim, a sharp contrast from the mostly Christian African American
population. Some manifestations of Islam create tensions between the two groups. The *hijab* (veil) that the females wear is a visible symbol of the Somalis’ religious beliefs. The often negative perception towards the manifestations of Islam (e.g. the veil) is undeniably influenced by the Islamophobic atmosphere created in the post-9/11 U.S. As noted by one of our respondents, these differences in religion and clothing can be the source of intergroup tensions.

Language barriers are also notable challenges, as most Somali immigrants speak Somali and/or a related dialect such as Maay Maay. Although newly arriving Somali immigrants are learning English, there are still a significant number of non-English speaking Somalis, thus inhibiting their ability to communicate with other groups in the United States.

Other distinctions exist within the Somali community itself. For instance, some of the Somali refugees who used to be white collar workers in their country have had to settle for less prestigious jobs in the U.S., such as being a cab driver. Moreover, within the Somalis, other forms of diversity exist, such as groups that lack social capital. For example, Bantus, who belong to a persecuted African tribe and are descendants of slaves from Malawi, Tanzania, and Mozambique and came to Somali in the 19th century, arrive with fewer skills than most Somalis.248 Since Bantus were denied schooling, land ownership, and everyday rights, they lack many of the skills necessary to survive in a modern, capitalistic context,249 and this creates additional challenges to their integration into U.S. society.

In addition to cultural differences, misinformation and assumptions by African Americans and Somalis about each other yield some tensions. As the executive director of East African Community Services, Suliman E. Ahmad, mentions in an interview with a Columbus newspaper, there is a perception in some parts of the African American community that Somali immigrants (mostly refugees) get undue attention and material resources from the government, thus giving them a head start.250 One interview respondent cited the perception that, in contrast to African Americans, African immigrants have more easily transitioned into the mainstream and received societal acceptance. On the other hand, as Ahmad states, Somalis’ perceptions of African Americans are sometimes skewed by the mass media narratives that depict Blacks as drug dealers and criminals.251

Another challenge to the relationship between African Americans and African immigrants that is significant for “Black Ohio” is the reluctance to accept diversity. As summarized by one respondent:

“The diversity and culture is there, but as a community, we do not mix and embrace the diversity; we protect ‘our own’ instead of embracing each other. We are more competitive. ... Diversity is there, but we are not embracing it – missing a tremendous opportunity.”

Due to the conspicuous cultural differences, the perpetuation of misperceptions, the increasing demographic presence of Somali population in traditionally African American localities, and the lack of communication between the communities, some overt tensions have surfaced in different social spheres, such as schools or neighborhoods where both communities interact. There have been news reports about the segregation of Somali and Black American students in schools and incidental fighting between youth.252 More serious incidents occurred in Columbus’ Three Rivers Apartments and Breckenridge Apartments, where misunderstandings and culture clashes escalated arguments into fights between neighbors.253

_African Immigrants: Alliance Building Efforts_
In spite of the differences and tensions that exist between African Americans and African immigrants, there are some attempts to forge bridges between the two communities. The most visible attempt, Project Brotherhood, was launched by the cooperation of Columbus Urban League and Somali Women and Children’s Alliance. A $35,000 grant from the United Way of Central Ohio funded the program, which focused on building constructive dialogue between Black Americans and Somalis living in subsidized housing. The program included educational workshops, community forums, and a diversity celebration day.

Furthermore, local attempts, such as forming boards to diffuse tensions in high schools or bringing African immigrants and African Americans together in dance classes, such as at the Thiossane West African Dance Institute in Columbus, aim to forge cultural bridges between the two communities and diffuse existing misunderstandings.

**Latino immigrants and the State of Black Ohio**

Columbus is becoming a new Latino gateway city. Similar to other parts of the U.S., the number of Latino immigrants settling in Ohio increased significantly in the last two decades. By 2006, nearly 264,000 Ohioans declared Latino heritage, thus representing 2.3% of Ohio’s population. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that a third to half of Ohio’s Latinos are undocumented.

Newly arriving immigrants often face structural problems upon entering Ohio. These problems include a lack of infrastructural facilities for their absorption and integration into the larger society. A recent study cites discrimination, lack of documentation, segregation, and language barriers as the four main obstacles to the successful integration of Latino immigrants in Ohio.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, many of Ohio’s Latino immigrants reside in low-opportunity neighborhoods alongside African Americans; these racialized spaces generate shared concerns for the two groups. Studies show that African Americans and Latino immigrants number disproportionately among our nation’s truly disadvantaged. The point could be made with respect to virtually any dimension of well-being, including poverty, health, wealth, education, criminal justice, and civic engagement. Discriminatory housing policies, such as redlining, urban sprawl and the concentration of poverty in inner-city neighborhoods, persisting segregation within public schools due to neighborhood segregation, continuing racial bias in the employment sector, and the racialized criminal justice system all create a web of forces that lead to the creation of these racialized outcomes. One prominent manifestation has been in the housing market, as African Americans and immigrants are two groups that have been particularly affected by the foreclosure crisis. The national nonprofit, United for a Fair Economy, reports that people of color (55%) are three times more likely than whites (17%) to receive high-cost, subprime loans, with black and Latino neighborhoods being the hardest-hit.

Clearly, these structural concerns that plague Black Ohioans are closely linked to the issues faced by Latino immigrants, thus making Latinos a consideration when addressing the State of Black Ohio.

**Latino immigrants and the immigration debate in Ohio**

The increase in the numbers of undocumented immigrants, the passage of anti-immigrant bills elsewhere in the nation, and the criminalization of undocumented immigrants in the public and political discourse also influence Ohio. Accordingly, some anti-immigrant bills have been recently formulated in the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives. As of September 2008, there were five major bills pending on the floor of the House of Representatives or Senate. The most notorious of these bills, House Bill 308, was introduced by Representative Courtney E. Combs on September 11, 2007.
other things, House Bill 308, if passed, would ban the transportation of undocumented immigrants; would require public agencies and subcontractors to check the social security numbers of each employee through the federal employment verification system; would eliminate any scholarships, financial aid, or loans to the children of undocumented workers; and would require sheriffs to verify the citizenship status of immigrants jailed on drunken-driving or felony charges.

While there are many national or local attempts in different parts of the United States that attempt to forge relations between Latino immigrants and African American communities, we are not aware of any such initiatives in Ohio. In the interval between the interim report and the final version, we aim to further explore what characterizes the interaction between Latino immigrants and African Americans in Ohio and whether there are any explicit attempts to build bridges between these two communities within the State.

Policy Recommendations

Given the diversity that exists within the State of Black Ohio, proposed policy solutions need to be multifaceted. Some of the roots of the conflict between Black Americans and immigrants reflect structural factors, such as inadequate affordable housing, job stress, and the lack of basic social services in neighborhoods where both communities live side by side. As such, structural solutions need to be addressed in order to improve African American-immigrant relations.

Another area on which the policy makers need to focus is on helping immigrants become established in Ohio. State and government agencies should provide documents in a variety of languages to accommodate individuals who are not comfortable reading in English in order to minimize misunderstandings. Policy makers should encourage and enable banks to serve all immigrants irrespective of immigration status. Finally, policy makers should be mindful of how Ohio is perceived by immigrants and support them by fighting against anti-immigration bills.

In addition to these basic structural steps and efforts to integrate the immigrants, there is also a need to support attempts that unite African American and immigrant communities. These recommendations can be manifested in many forms.

First, for immigrants to adapt smoothly to their new surroundings, channels of communication must be open. ESL classes should be prioritized as a way to help eliminate language barriers. English skills can also help immigrants gain entry into the workforce, another arena in which African Americans and immigrants may interact. Surmounting these language barriers successfully benefits intergroup relations generally.

In addition, community preparation programs should be considered for areas where new immigrants will be arriving in order to educate current residents about the impending arrivals, including the circumstances surround their arrival (i.e., the civil war in Somali) and their culture. Brief education programs or even written materials disseminated within apartment complexes or other facilities may create a better reception for the newly arriving neighbors. This would also serve the purpose of helping to counteract some of the myths and misperceptions that the groups hold about each other and potentially neutralize some tensions.
Conclusion

Given the considerable diversity that exists within “Black Ohio,” a State of Black Ohio analysis would be incomplete without addressing immigrants. The unique conceptualization of race that some immigrant groups hold highlights the very question of what is “Black Ohio.” Moreover, immigrants encounter many of the same structural challenges that African Americans face; this linked fate implicates immigrants in many of the policies that target African Americans. As such, Ohio’s growing immigrant population will continue to affect African Americans for years to come.
Section VIII

Political Empowerment, Leadership, and Representation
SECTION VIII: FOCUS AREA – POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND REPRESENTATION

Political Diversity

Politically, Ohio has seen a great deal of diversity, leadership, and representation at the state and local levels. From city council members and school superintendents to mayors, state legislators, and the secretary of state, Ohio has seen African Americans elected to a myriad of public positions. With six African American mayors, a strong legislative Black caucus, a growing number of judges, and more leadership developing in state educational institutions, numerically, African Americans seem to be fairing well in terms of leadership and representation. Given that Ohio is also an influential swing state and considering that Barack Obama was running for office, the African American community seemed to be both engaged and eager to vote in 2008, despite concerns of voter suppression and disfranchisement.

Voter Disfranchisement

The controversial 2000 presidential election provided the biggest modern day example of alleged voter fraud and suppression the nation had seen. The 2004 presidential election hit even closer to home. In a report of the House Judiciary Committee Democratic staff initiated by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), ranking Democrat of the House Judiciary Committee, it was stated that there were “numerous, serious election irregularities in the Ohio presidential election, which resulted in a significant disfranchisement of voters. Cumulatively, these irregularities, which affected hundreds of thousands of votes and voters in Ohio, raise grave doubts regarding whether it can be said the Ohio electors selected on December 13, 2004, were chosen in a manner that conforms to Ohio law, let alone federal requirements and constitutional standards.”

At the center of the controversy was then African American Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell. Two weeks prior to the election in 2004, a federal judge reprimanded Blackwell for attempting to “accomplish the same result in Ohio in 2004 that occurred in Florida in 2000.”

In a 2006 Rolling Stone article, Representative and former presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) stated, “The election in Ohio in 2004 stands out as an example of how, under color of law, a state election official can frustrate the exercise of the right to vote.”

This is significant because an African American secretary of state allegedly lending a hand to voter fraud undoubtedly has an effect on a Black electorate already historically plagued by issues of partisan and structural disfranchisement. “Structural disfranchisement targets members of low-status groups while partisan disfranchisement targets members of a particular political party.” Swing states are more likely to deal with issues of partisan disfranchisement since the margin of victory can be so narrow that individual votes count, unlike safe states where very few upsets are likely to occur. Democratic voters are also more likely to be targeted, so when it comes to the African American voting population, partisan and structural disfranchisement combine to more damaging effect. “Blacks and Jews are the only two constituent groups that consistently give over 80 percent of their vote to a political party. If the Republican Party wants to depress turnout that favors the Democratic Party...there is no better constituent group to target than Blacks.”

Along with concerns of disfranchisement, the African American community is also overwhelmed by growing concerns over the equipment used to cast and count votes, voter registration requirements and
procedures, voter identification requirements, provisional ballots, challenges to voter eligibility, long lines at the polling place, recounts and contests, and confusion over early voting.

**Term Limits**

For years, there has been a national debate weighing the pros and cons of legislative term limits. Many legislative theorists believe that term limits have an effect on both the composition and the behavior of legislatures. It is assumed that since most politicians are ambitious and pondering political career opportunities, “careerism is expected to affect the types of individuals who seek and win legislative seats, their behavior in office, and how they organize the legislatures in which they serve.”270 In general, individuals both for and against term limits tend to agree that limiting one’s time in office creates more opportunities for individuals who are not looking to be career politicians. While some supporters feel that term limits would create a more diverse legislature,271 some opponents believe that term limits would only create opportunities for people with money and time on their hands.272

The Ohio Constitution indicates that, “No person shall hold the office of State Senator for a period of longer than two successive terms of four years. No person shall hold the office of State Representative for a period longer than four successive terms of two years.”273 One interviewee indicated that term limits are a real issue in Ohio:

“There needs to be a better functioning General Assembly, and a lack of experience negatively impacts policy drafting and the attitude of the legislative services committee.”

As a solution, the aforementioned interviewee suggests an amendment to the State constitution repealing term limits. Although there is little conclusive evidence that indicates that term limits and membership turnover have an effect on legislative efficiency, there is less opportunity for more influence from senior legislators. While efficiency and turnover do not necessarily correlate, “efficiency declines as demands are placed on the legislature and as legislators respond by introducing more legislation. Where introductions are limited, efficiency increases.”274

In comparing states with term limits to states without, there is a general tendency for term limits to free legislators from the demands of the constituents in the district.275 This, however, can be interpreted in different ways. On one hand, this suggests that term limits allow legislators to be less responsive to their constituents. On the other hand, it is possible that term limits allow for broader consideration of the collective good: rather than having to focus narrowly on district issues, legislators’ perspective moves from “representative” to “trustee.” Interestingly, a 1995 survey showed that “newcomers in [non term limited] states were as attentive to their constituents as old-timers, more dedicated to seeking pork, and more likely to sacrifice demands of conscience to district pressure.”276 In terms of institutional effect, researchers find that “term limits weaken the legislative branch relative to the executive. Governors and the executive bureaucracy are reported to be more influential over legislative outcomes where term limits are on the books than where they are not.”277

**Leadership Strengths**

Despite the aforementioned setbacks, Ohio possesses a number of strengths in terms of leadership in the African American community. A number of interviewees indicated that Ohio’s African American community has strong and diverse leadership, both presently and historically, that reflects multiple sectors including politics, faith, business, and education. There are more African Americans in higher
political and public positions allowing for more influence across the State. The Ohio Legislative Black Caucus was founded in 1967, and its members currently represent over 2.5 million constituents. OLBC was established expressly to meet the needs of African Americans in Ohio by focusing on public policy, advocacy, and development as well as involvement in state and national electoral politics. “Over the past 40 years, OLBC’s achievements have included obtaining increased funding for medical research, creating special subsidies in higher education for minority youth, and creating the nation’s most successful minority business set aside law.”

In fact, interviewees indicated that leadership has been successful in creating opportunities for the success of minority firms, affirmative action, and access to higher education and college attendance.

The median age of African Americans in Ohio is 26.9, compared to an overall median age for Ohioans of 37.6. With a relatively younger population, there is an opportunity to encourage and develop younger leadership. Voting trends and individuals seeking public and political positions indicate encouraging signs of younger people becoming involved in the political system and several interviewees pointed to the Urban League and NAACP as good community leaders. Throughout the State, there are numerous local NAACP units, 9 National Urban League affiliates as well as an Ohio Urban League Young Professionals consortium, all of which have programming to serve their local communities and specific programming for developing and enhancing young leadership. As one Urban League president explains, “there is a decent amount of current leadership that understands the responsibility to reach back to next leaders, to ensure that the next generation doesn’t make some of the same mistakes.”

Leadership Challenges

In thinking about those mistakes, a number of interviewees indicated that while leadership is generally good, it is still a work in progress and some critical challenges remain.

“In some places leadership is visionary, but in other areas leadership has struggled with producing change for the African American community. There are impediments to enacting the vision of change needed for the community. Leadership is making effort to address issues, but too many structural and institutional barriers limit the impact of these efforts and a collective agenda has not been defined for the community. There certainly are individuals who have shown strength and courage and intelligence, but there are not enough of them and they are not in every jurisdiction in Ohio. There are not enough of these pockets in general, especially in metropolitan areas. There are not a significant number of individuals that would be identified by the entire community as community leaders.”

African Americans in Ohio face many of the same challenges similar to those one might find in any other community. Despite there being leadership development opportunities through various organizations such as the Urban League and the United Way, and specific leadership programs like the Ray Miller Institute for Leadership and Change281 in Columbus, and the Neighborhood Leadership Institute282 in Cleveland, there still exists some challenges in developing a new generation of leaders. Several interviewees indicate a generation gap between existing and emerging leadership that does not create a warm environment or allow for mentoring opportunities. Because of this gap, younger leaders are not reaching out to older, more traditional leadership which does a disservice to both groups and the community as a whole. There is a need to find a way to work together despite such differences. Some of this divisiveness is also perceived to come from a lack of support and unnecessary competition between and among leadership as well as a lack of a common agenda.
Normally when we think of Black Ohio, the focus tends to be on larger metropolitan areas. “The majority of African Americans in Ohio live in urban areas. Four out of every ten African Americans in the State live in the cities of Cincinnati, Cleveland, or Columbus...Overall, more than 98 percent of African Americans in Ohio live in urban areas; 94 percent live in or near a large city. The Cleveland urbanized area alone is home to more than one-quarter of Ohio’s African American population.”283 That being said, Ohio is extremely unique in that it is very diverse in terms of urban versus rural and northern versus southern areas and there is some acknowledgement from interviewees that Ohio’s rural community has a very strong political voice that is often very influential over state policy. This, however, does not necessarily translate into political empowerment for African Americans living in rural areas. Many interviewees stated that rural and suburban communities do not have much leadership and, as a result, the political voice for African Americans in these areas is diminished and may contribute to less overall political involvement in those areas.

Grassroots organizations are often pointed to as a source for political engagement and potential leadership development, but because of a lack of resources, many in Ohio seem skeptical about the presence and viability of such organizations. One individual stated, “Grassroots and local initiatives face challenges because of the significant fiscal stress facing local governments and local school districts. Local governments are facing budget shortages and must prioritize funds toward police, fire and public works, leaving short funding for community programming.” Despite the obvious fiscal constraints, some individuals still indicate that a powerful grassroots movement is what is needed to lead to a response by the government and the courts.

Developing Future Leaders

Regarding whether or not the next generation of leadership is being developed, both the successes and the challenges must be considered. In that light, perceptions of leadership development seem to be conflicting. While some interviewees see a noticeable amount of leadership development within schools and churches, some point to less church involvement and lower education rates as a hindrance. Several individuals pointed to the presence of specific programs as an indicator of leadership being developed.

“We see more involvement in groups like the Urban League (Head Start), Children’s Defense Fund, and The National Leadership Development Institute working to develop future leaders. The Urban League’s African American male development initiatives provides youth with solid, stable male models. We need more programs like this in the community and identify models for leadership outside of just church-based programs.”

Others, however, indicated that leadership development needs to be strong, persistent and consistent and unfortunately there is a lack of continuous leadership training and comprehensive programming to help develop leadership skills. One individual states, “I think we are not developing the next generation. I think there are pockets of individuals that are trying to cultivate this, but I don’t think there is enough of this.”

The concern of friction between generations causing a divide between the two groups also seems to remain a salient issue for individuals in Ohio. Some point to development styles being different from generation to generation (i.e., mentoring versus self-initiated) while others point to a resistance to change.
While there is no consensus regarding whether or not future leadership is being developed, it is clear that there is a lack of cohesion, programming and information sharing, and communication between generations that would lend itself to not effectively cultivating a new generation of leaders.

Recommendations

Leadership Development Leadership styles vary across individuals and generations. Six different styles of leadership appear to be most common: laissez faire, autocratic, participative, emergent, transactional, and transformational. A laissez faire style of leadership is largely hands off and tends to minimize the amount of direction and face-time required. This style works well if one is leading a highly trained and motivated group of individuals. The autocratic style of leadership is sometimes thought of as the classical approach where the leader retains as much power and decision making ability as possible without taking in much input from others. The participative style of leadership encourages everyone to be a part of decision making and the leader serves as more of a coach. This style is challenging, however, because it requires a high level of creativity and teamwork but is also a happy medium between micromanaging and not being engaged. Emergent leadership points to the challenges of new leaders who are unaware of the proper behaviors to use when taking over new groups and find individuals resistant to their leadership. Transactional leadership emphasizes getting things done within the umbrella of the status quo, which is almost in opposition to the goals of the transformational leadership. It is considered to be a “by the book” approach in which the person works within the rules. As such, it is commonly seen in large, bureaucratic organizations. Finally, transformational leadership is about implementing new ideas: these individuals continually change themselves; they stay flexible and adaptable; and they continually improve those around them.

Transformative leadership should be the goal of any leader. The goal of leadership should not be to reorder existing conditions but to meaningfully change and improve conditions. Leaders, in general, find themselves faced with a number of challenges. Keeping oneself grounded to his or her community, serving as a bridge for his or her group, and serving as a bridge of his or her group with other groups are all issues with which a leader must contend. Keeping that in mind, the ultimate nature of serving as a bridge is transformation.

Leaders of color often find themselves faced with a more specified set of challenges, especially when dealing with a diverse world. There are often tensions between dealing with the group one is leading while also dealing with those outside of the group. There is a need for a leader to be grounded within his or her group but that person should also be able to go beyond their community, not by distancing themselves from it but by linking it to other communities and linking other communities back to their group. This creates something new for all, yet it is grounded in what is already known so there is some type of guidance. For example, if we want our leadership efforts to be transformative, then the product of our undertakings should be a better, more just, and inclusive society.

Inclusion A region and all its residents share a linked fate. To thrive, regions must be competitive in the global economy. Inequality is a sign of an economically and socially inefficient region where proper investments are not made in human capital, and where much of the population cannot meet its creative potential. These disparities make the region less competitive, nationally and globally. We need to increase public and political will to address the challenges facing the African American community. We need to illustrate the connectivity between the challenges facing the Black community and the overall vitality of the State of Ohio.
In demonstrating this connectivity, efforts should be collaborative to help re-conceptualize society to promote the political and social well-being of all. In order to allow for such transformative change, increased efforts should not be spent in directions that have shown little success in the past. New approaches that take into account personal and social responsibility as well as seek to dismantle the barriers that hinder political empowerment and leadership in order to bring about lasting, substantive change are what are necessary.

Big problems do not necessarily require big solutions. Small interventions can be critical to create change, but these interventions must explicitly target the arrangements causing the breakdown in leadership development and political empowerment. Some interviewees pointed to programmatic interventions. “We need to expand and provide more resources to critical organizations in the African American community like the NAACP and the Urban League.” Other solutions could include maintaining a comprehensive and visible database of all leadership development programs and institutes specifically aimed at developing cultivating African American leaders in Ohio in order to establish better communication among groups and with the public, established leaders committing to personally mentoring emerging leadership, State funds specifically allocated to minority leadership development, and statewide collaboration on developing a common agenda for addressing the needs of African Americans in Ohio.

**Civic Engagement and Political Participation** Encouraging civic engagement and political participation are among the most basic ways to become involved in the community and the political process and help make the connection of shared fates. Although there are a number of indicators that suggest civic engagement and volunteerism are lower than in previous decades, individuals who do participate socially and politically are more connected to their communities both formally and informally. “Volunteers are more interested in politics and less cynical about political leaders than non-volunteers. Volunteering is a sign of positive engagement with politics.”

In order to foster a sense of community and connectivity, ownership and pride in one’s own community, and political empowerment, encouraging and even incentivizing, civic and political engagement and participation may help bring about positive transformative change. Capitalizing on the momentum following the election of Barack Obama and sense of political empowerment could help in this endeavor.

Increasing voter education efforts would also help ease some of the anxiety many African Americans experienced with the more recent presidential elections. Despite many changes having been implemented by current Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner and the information provided by her office, many are still skeptical about the voting process in Ohio. Increasing effort, how and where the information is communicated, and reaching larger and more diverse populations could help ease distrust of the voting system.

**Utilizing Existing Assets** Ohio is a wealth of institutions of higher education including historically Black colleges and universities, active Urban League and NAACP chapters, African American legislators, and African Americans in prominent positions in nearly every sector.

“The State needs to pool the institutions that serve the African American community to meet the needs of the community. These include institutions like the Urban League and NAACP but also universities and Historically Black Colleges. We need to tap into our higher education institutions more to help develop and build the community (especially HBCUs). We need to provide more support to places like Central State, community colleges and tech schools.”
It is also important to utilize grassroots and other nontraditional organizations to look for and help cultivate new leadership. For example, one interviewee indicated:

“The skills of fraternities and sororities are underutilized and many in the community are not aware of the extent of their work. We should strengthen their work, which could provide young professionals as role models who would show young people that there are opportunities for advancement.”

Grassroots Movements and Coalition Building Coalitions and grassroots movements possess the capability to promote transformative change. Transformative thinking increases the opportunity for new movements and coalition building and organizations that bridge traditional institutional, class, geographic, racial, ethnic and denominational boundaries while also recognizing connectivity. In general, successful and lasting coalitions require an engaged leadership and followers that act on a regional, and possibly state-wide, level in order to be inclusive and develop initiatives to strengthen the African American community in Ohio as a whole.

Term Limits There is a perception that term limits produce inexperienced legislators which, in turn create an inefficient policymaking process. Such sentiments, however, are not unique to the State of Ohio. Amending the state constitution to repeal term limits is one plausible solution with the caveat being that problems of efficiency may not necessarily be solved. States with and without term limits each face their own set of challenges with no quick fixes. Further research on the pros and cons of term limits as well as a comparative analysis of states with and without term limits is necessary before any recommendations to amend the constitution should be made.

Conclusions

Ohio is a politically diverse State that has enjoyed a history of African Americans in significant and influential leadership positions. However, as new leaders emerge, there is a need for leadership development and mentoring in order to see this tradition continue and bring about transformative, progressive change. Though many of the tools necessary to address the challenges of the African American community are already currently available, cohesion and inclusion are needed to move forward. Ohio will undoubtedly continue to play a significant role in the political landscape of the country, and the African American community in Ohio has the ability to bring about substantive change as well.
Section IX

Health and Healthcare in Ohio's African American Community
SECTION IX: FOCUS AREA - HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE IN OHIO'S AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Introduction

African Americans’ health status is a topic that has been researched and discussed at length, but has not been particularly well addressed by comprehensive, effective policy. We know from decades of research that disparities between racial lines are substantial; the overall mortality rate for blacks today is comparable to that of whites 30 years ago, and this is just the beginning. Infant mortality rates for African Americans are higher, blacks suffer from a number of diseases at higher rates than their white counterparts, and on average they receive inadequate medical treatment. Knowledge of these disparities provides a critical lens through which we can begin to understand the factors that impact health and shapes our interventions to ensure they are all encompassing, culturally relevant, and effective. However, health is not limited to physical illness alone; it also encompasses an individual’s mental, spiritual, and physical wellness. This report will provide an overview of the state of health and wellness for African Americans in Ohio, describe the systematic determinants of health, and recommend a number of policy solutions designed explicitly to lift up the health of African Americans.

Like other structures in society that confer opportunity, health is complex, embedded in larger historical, geographic, cultural, economic and political contexts. Due to hyper-segregation regardless of class, blacks Ohioans often reside in neighborhoods that lack the amenities to ensure good health, and thus limit healthy choices. Grocers and zoning laws determine if a neighborhood will be littered with liquor stores or housed by establishments that can offer a selection of healthy, fresh foods. Physicians choose where to set up practice, not members of the community. Insurance companies determine whether preventative services are included in particular health plans. Sick leave availability, although marginally negotiable, is determined by the employer. Countless factors working in conjunction impede the ability of the Black community to access quality, timely health care.

Certainly there is an element of personal responsibility, but one’s health is not solely made by an individual’s own effort; an individual or entire group’s health is influenced by a number of systemic factors, which in turn shape decision-making. Far too many African Americans are forced into lose-lose decisions, whether it is an individual who must forgo preventative healthcare due to a lack of medical insurance, or a parent who cannot care for a sick child because they lack paid sick leave. Further, these decisions have reverberating effects across an individual’s lifespan. Far too many African American students sit in classrooms today, unable to focus due to untreated dental decay or undiagnosed vision impairments. This has deleterious effects on their education, their employment opportunities, and their long term ability to secure healthcare throughout their life. Furthermore, pervasive, pernicious disparities in the health of a portion of the state’s population have profound consequences on that entire state’s physical and economic viability. Thus, we must all work collectively to not only close the health disparity gaps, we must also shift our focus to include the promotion of good health and wellness for all.

Wellness as a societal goal

While a focus on disparities is a critical component of any policy intervention, a focus solely on disparities can mask the aggregate status of a population. For example, while Whites may be faring better than African Americans on certain indicators of health, reliance on a comparative analysis alone
could obscure the reality that the entire population’s health is depressed. Instead, it is critical that we focus on health outcomes which can be clearly defined and measured, and set benchmarks for ongoing evaluation to monitor progress and assess the success of our interventions.

One of the outcomes that should be pursued in any health intervention should be the wellness of all of Ohio’s residents, particularly African Americans - including the physical, social and emotional realms. Goals of this approach should include: the pursuit of positive mental and physical health, access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant healthcare, and safe neighborhoods that provide ample opportunities for healthy choices. Setting wellness as a desired outcome has implications for the way research is conducted, policy is enacted, and interventions implemented. All systems and processes must be aligned in order to ensure all Ohioans have full opportunity to lead healthy lives. Setting the bar high for all races is a direction the medical community and policy makers have been moving in, with a prime example being “Healthy People 2010.” Businesses are also beginning to embrace the concept of wellness; many organizations are providing incentives and programs to keep employees healthy and productive. At the community level, the focus of analysis has also shifted towards wellness with the implementation of wellness programs. Several programs targeted specifically toward African American communities have demonstrated success in promoting healthy behaviors, such as improving diet and exercise, and have had a notable positive effect on physical and mental health. While these programs have been effective, their impact is limited and they do little to disrupt the arrangements that are negatively impacting the health of African Americans in the first place.

Wellness is a goal that all should have the capacity to achieve, but it is also one that is often elusive for Black Ohioans. Central to a wellness approach is a system of preventative interventions. Unlike a conventional approach of medicine that treats the disease after it has occurred, a preventive approach seeks to intervene beforehand, in order to minimize disease and promote health. Unfortunately, the availability of these preventative interventions are not race neutral; African Americans have decreased access to prevention measures, in large part because of segregation and seemingly race-neutral housing and neighborhood policies. Health issues such as fluoridation and sanitation are typically a municipal responsibility, and receive tax based allocations. Because African Americans are typically segregated in neighborhoods with lower assessed property values, municipal services have smaller budgets for operational expenses, and African American populations do not receive equitable services. Thus, setting and achieving the end goal of wellness for African American populations has far reaching implications across sectors and policies, and further has implications for the population of the entire State.

Linked fate

Whether it is personal responsibility or forces beyond their control, the health of the African American community indelibly affects the lives of everyone. Through all structures in society we are inextricably connected, and perhaps nowhere more so than in health. Our fate is shared not only physically (as communicable disease knows no boundaries), but economically as well. The costs of an individual being forced into using emergency rooms instead of primary care physicians is shared by all, as is the cost of covering minimal medical services for the uninsured. Many in this economy are only one step away from bankruptcy due to health emergencies, and some choose to forego care altogether as the stress of another bill to pay outweighs the benefits of personal welfare.
Health is not a luxury; it is one’s lifeline. Maintaining a healthy population across the State is not an option, it is a necessity. When a portion of the population is not served in terms of health access and improved welfare, the State as a whole suffers. One less healthy citizen is one less that can contribute to the ongoing welfare of the State. Poor health in the African American population is an albatross for all Ohioans, and the State must work to improve the health of African Americans. In order to achieve this, it is critical that health care policy encompass the systemic factors that impact health outcomes.

Systematic determinants of health

“I think that it is a mistake to concentrate on the individual and not the structure. I am not diminishing the need for care. If (you) really want change, work on the system where it occurs.”

-quote from an Ohio stakeholder

Although diminishing, there is a general debate about the locus of responsibility for health status. Certainly an individual has the responsibility to make healthy decisions, but they are invariably limited by the options available to them. Naturally, doctors or health care providers have a responsibility as well, but most do not have a say in the location of the office or clinic, or they may lack the cultural competency training to effectively interact with their patients. Further, employers play a central role in health by providing insurance and paid sick leave, but many companies are struggling financially and simply cannot afford such benefits in this economy. These factors, taken in conjunction with neighborhood based disparities, illustrate how complex the issues of health and wellness are.

A teetering economy based on disappearing jobs, an exodus of the “haves” from the “have-nots” and the lack of parity of health access across all segments of the populations illustrate some of the sources of health disparities today. These disparities are multifarious but they are also system-based. Acknowledging that there are systematic forces at play in addition to individual action or inaction provides the overall clarity needed to pursue improvement on this front.

Housing/Low opportunity communities

“If you do not have health, you do have other things to worry about.”

-a concerned Ohio stakeholder

Certainly much has been written on the effects of housing across all aspects of opportunity in this report, and health is no exception. Segregation has been found to have a direct and profound negative effect on the health of African Americans, even after controlling for socioeconomic status. Segregated neighborhoods suffer from a number of factors that negatively impact health such as more fast-food restaurants and vendors of alcohol than in white communities. These low-opportunity communities also have higher rates of crime and violence which lead to decreased exercise and increased levels of stress, both factors which have demonstrated negative effects on health. One example of a neighborhood condition associated with racial segregation that has dire health outcomes is environmental pollution. Poor air quality in neighborhoods of color and low income neighborhoods leads to increased rates of respiratory disease for African Americans. In 2007, nearly 17% of African Americans were diagnosed with respiratory asthma, the highest asthma rate of any racial or ethnic group in Ohio. This is a state-wide phenomenon; six of Ohio’s major metropolitan areas (Toledo, Columbus, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dayton) were listed in the top 60 “Asthma
Capitals” in 2008.  

Asthma, not unlike other ailments occurring in large numbers in the Black community, is growing at epidemic proportions, and uncontrolled, the consequences could be dire. Nationally, African Americans are three times more likely than Whites to be hospitalized from asthma, and four to six times more likely to die.  

This is just one example of a disease that plagues African Americans as a result of residential isolation, and the extreme consequences that follow.

**Education levels/Employment**

We know from a vast array of literature that neighborhoods determine school quality, which in turn shapes academic achievement. Further, school performance in part affects the type of job an individual can attain, which has implications for health in a variety of ways including exposure to toxic materials, and access to health insurance. One study found, for example, that eliminating racial segregation would essentially close the black-white achievement gap, graduation rates, and employment.  

Thus, it comes as no surprise that education is closely linked to a wide variety of health behaviors and outcomes. Following are a few correlates of education and health:

- Education decreases the likelihood of tobacco use: people with more education are more likely to have never started smoking and more likely to quit.
- Individuals with more education exercise more.
- People with higher education are more likely to drink moderately versus abstaining or drinking heavily.
- Well educated people are more likely to seek preventive health care.

Thus, in order to successfully address health disparities, the health care field must not only address residential segregation, but also work collaboratively with education policy makers.

**Health Insurance Status**

Unquestionably, we all know the importance of insurance for one’s health in America. Insurance dictates access to physicians, the quality of services received, and how much the person pays for those services.  

The availability of medical insurance not only has a direct impact on a family’s long-term physical health, but also their financial health and stability; not surprisingly, medical costs contribute to half of all bankruptcies. In Ohio, over 200,000 African Americans are uninsured, comprising nearly 17% of the total uninsured population during 2006-2007. Furthermore, the percentage of all Ohioans who are uninsured has increased from 2004 to 2007, which is troubling considering these statistics do not capture the more recent economic downturn. Research has shown that African Americans typically experience a greater negative impact during economic crisis; thus, we can expect the number of uninsured to have drastically increased.

Certainly health insurance is necessary in order to promote health and wellness for all; however, the factors that contribute to disparities are many, and health insurance is not the panacea that many suggest it is. For example, the Institute of Medicine found that racial disparities exist between patients with comparable insurance in the amount and quality of care they received. Thus, it is important our approach to remedying health care be comprehensive and far-reaching.
Availability of and access to preventative healthcare

**Hard Choices (a story...):**

It is a humid summer morning. A young Black mother with a child diagnosed with asthma has to make a difficult choice today. There is an air quality alert that makes his attacks more frequent today. The housing they occupy does not supply proper ventilation or central air. In terms of going outside, she works days with no means for child care so her son is instructed not to leave the home while she is away. But it is clear that if he remains indoors, he will continue to wheeze. His medications are not working today. He needs to see a doctor.

This mother must make a choice: go to work with worry with an ill child at home or take yet another unpaid leave to go to the emergency room. She is fortunate to have insurance though it has a high out-of-pocket cost for her and rent is due. She calls her clinic. The family doctor does not have any openings. How about two weeks from today? This is of no help.

Her only choice, she decides, is taking transit to the local emergency room where she will be given a large bill she cannot afford to pay. She is at a loss. Her son is her world and she will sacrifice what she must. She has to make another heart-wrenching decision.

Blacks in Ohio are forced on a daily basis to make tough choices such as these regarding their health. This story illustrates some of those choices, and highlights the multitude of forces that have an effect on the health status of one woman’s son, as well as the financial stability of the family. This story also demonstrates a serious issue that many African Americans face- a lack of access to primary care facilities. Countless African Americans are falling through the cracks without access to primary care physicians as there are fewer primary care physicians in neighborhoods of color and low income neighborhoods.310 The mother in this story is fortunate as she has health insurance. Without it, she may not have access to a health care facility even if it was located nearby, as many do not accept the uninsured or Medicaid.311 She has made sure that her son had a medical home, but nevertheless she had to resort to utilizing an emergency room- a choice that may have serious long-term financial consequences for her.

Not only are more medical clinics and physician offices needed in low opportunity areas, offices that serve the uninsured and those on Medicaid, but outreach efforts which are also coordinated to better understand what services are delivered to whom. If service providers fail to communicate with each other, it results in duplication of services in some areas, and an absence of them in others.312 Agencies and organizations must collaborate to ensure all are being captured by comprehensive intervention efforts.

**Quality of healthcare**

Unquestionably, the availability of care is an issue, but so too is the quality of treatment that African Americans receive when they are able to access services. Far too many doctors lack the cultural competency necessary to communicate effectively with their patients; this has devastating consequences for patients of color, particularly when taken in conjunction with the deep underlying distrust many African Americans have of the medical system.313 For example, several studies have identified biased assumptions among medical professionals about African American patients, which in
turn directly affect a patient’s quality of care. Black patients are often considered to be difficult and noncompliant, and African Americans routinely receive different medical interventions than white patients. One study demonstrates the health effects of racial categorization, and the distinct health benefits of appearing white. A social identification of a patient as White was highly correlated with significant advantages in health status, even for those who self-identify as a member of another racial or ethnic group.

However, as important as the doctor-patient interaction is, one study found that even eliminating unequal treatment within healthcare facilities would not eliminate health disparities between African Americans and Whites because of the disparities between facilities. African American Medicare patients, for example, are more likely than whites to live in areas with low quality of care and low medical procedure rates. This is not to say that quality of care is not an issue, only that as mentioned, the contributing factors to healthcare disparities are incredibly complex.

Health behaviors

Lose or get lost (a story...):

A middle-aged obese Black man in his early 60s seeks treatment for uncontrolled sugar related to type 2 diabetes. His doctor once again reviews with him what his proper regimen should be: test insulin often, consume small meals, limit processed and sugary foods, increase exercise and lose weight. The doctor asks him if he has tried exercise. His life has consisted mostly of back-breaking labor so lifting for “pleasure of exercise” does not appeal to him. Do you walk, the doctor inquires? Yes, he does but his neighborhood is less safe at night and that is the only time that he has to do it. Fresh food is a must. That is funny. The corner convenience store only stocks everything in a can or sealed bag and there is no grocery store within a 10 mile radius of his home. Fresh salads daily seem out of the question. Lastly, do you have testing supplies? Yes, but I cannot afford the needles so I have cut my testing so that I can save money. The doctor shakes his head, makes a note, gives him a script for needles, and tells him to take care. The patient thinks, “Take care...Sure.”

This man is not alone.

It is accepted that health decisions have a great influence on the status of health. Chronic illnesses are said to be due in part to self-imposed behaviors such as diet, tobacco use and lack of exercise. However, these decisions are constrained by a system that hinders good decision making. This story illustrates some of the systemic factors that limit “personal choice.”

Certainly, this man holds a level of responsibility for his health outcomes, but it must never be forgotten that actions towards health that are posed as purely personal actions are never such. They take place within a set of circumstances often outside of the control of the patient. Individuals whose income precludes buying necessary medication or who are under constant stress about their physical safety and financial security are at risk from social stressors that prevent Ohioans of color from attaining the best health status possible. African Americans in Ohio and across the nation are often placed in situations where making healthful choices proves more difficult, often resulting in actions that may hinder health. In discussing systemic effects on the health of African Americans in Ohio, one key is access to resources. The unavailability of fresh produce and the overabundance of fast food in urban neighborhoods make healthful choices less accessible, as do unwalkable, unsafe neighborhoods. Thus, while behaviors do
have an impact on health status, we must remember that health choices African Americans make are not made in a vacuum. In order to improve health behaviors we must improve the conditions that constrain them in the first place.

**Black disease in Ohio**

Blackness should not automatically equate with disease; however, health statistics illustrate a tragedy that has long been in the making. The nation’s historical and present day policies on housing, education, employment and health (among others) have placed African Americans at a distinct disadvantage, which is reflected in disease and mortality rates. It is paramount to illuminate the health of African American Ohioans in order to move toward rectifying these disparities.

The hope of this section of the report is to provide a brushstroke of the overall picture of health in black Ohio. In doing so, a pronouncement of the reality for health and wellness should lead to more enlightened policy, lead to work to reduce and hopefully eradicate these disparities for future generations of black Ohioans. Please note, only those being medically served are captured in these statistics. These do not include African Americans not receiving care or those yet to be diagnosed by a health professional.

**Cardiovascular disease** Cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes heart disease and strokes, is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality among African Americans in Ohio. According to the Ohio Department of Health, cardiovascular disease accounted for 37% of all deaths in Ohio between 2004 and 2006. CVD affects African American men and women differently. While black women in Ohio have the highest likelihood of suffering a stroke, the death rate from strokes for black males is 53% higher than any other racial-gender group. Overall, some research demonstrates a decrease in CVD death rates for African Americans, however, due to the rather large disparity, a substantial gap in mortality remains when accounting for race. The mortality rate for heart disease in African American females and males was 26% and 18% higher (respectively) than for their white counterparts.

There are numerous risk factors and environmental effects that contribute to and exacerbate cardiovascular disease; African Americans experience these factors disproportionately. Several of these reflect the constraints many African Americans experience as a result of high levels of segregation in low-opportunity neighborhoods, such as stress, poor diet, and little exercise. Another contributor to the disease and mortality rates is a knowledge gap. Although strong educational efforts have been made by public health officials and others, many are simply unaware of the warning signs of CVD. For example, The Ohio Department of Health released a report in 2006 demonstrating that only 24% of black males and 29% of black females were likely to recognize all five symptoms of stroke and to call 911 in response. In order to address the disturbingly high rates of cardiovascular disease for African American men and women, definitive steps must be taken from knowledge dissemination to the provision of high quality preventative health care.

**Cancer** Cancer is the second leading cause of mortality and morbidity in the United States, and like other diseases, it places a larger burden on African Americans. Cancer is a growing concern for black populations; in 1950, African Americans had a cancer rate below whites, however in 2000, the incidence rate among African Americans was 30% higher than whites. In Ohio in 2004, 454 (per 100,000) African Americans in Ohio suffered from cancer when compared to 426 (per 100,000) for whites. Cancer has both behavioral and environmental risk factors that African Americans generally experience...
at higher rates. Factors such as diet, exercise, and smoking increase the likelihood that someone will develop cancer, as does exposure to environmental pollutants. Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are more likely to have high levels of pollution and other environmental risks, and African Americans are overrepresented in jobs with high exposure rates to known toxins.329

Early detection and treatment is important for nearly every disease, but perhaps none more so than cancer.330 African Americans have less access to preventative health care, thus it logically follows that they are less likely to have cancers diagnosed at earlier stages. This is reflected in cancer mortality rates, with a disparity gap even wider than that of cancer incidence rates. In 2005, 249 (per 100,000) African Americans died as a result of cancer compared to 194 whites.331

![Average Annual Number of Cancer Cases (per 100,000 people)](image)

**HIV/AIDS** In terms of HIV, infection rates continue to rise among people of color, in particular for heterosexual women and for men having sex with men (MSM), who may or may not self-identify as gay. Data from 2005 demonstrates a grave disparity in HIV acquisition rates, with the majority of new infections occurring among African American Ohioans.332 Black Ohioans are also grossly overrepresented in the overall distribution of AIDS, representing 38% of all cases despite only constituting 12% of the total population.333

Not only do African Americans experience HIV and AIDS at higher rates proportionally than other racial/ethnic groups, a gap also exists in terms of treatment knowledge and rates. Although African Americans represent 38% of all AIDS cases, only 33% were served by the AIDS Drug Assistance Program in 2007.334 Additionally, in a study of HIV drug knowledge, 63% of blacks were less likely to have heard of or used any antiretroviral drugs, particularly Black women and patients with less than 12 years of
education. This places African Americans at a distinct disadvantage, as they cannot take ownership in their own treatment if they are lacking knowledge of pertinent medical interventions.

Obesity & Diabetes  Obesity is a critical indicator of health as it is linked to a variety of other ailments from cardiovascular disease to diabetes. A large number of African Americans are affected and the epidemic is worsening. The obesity rate in Ohio among African Americans rose from 29.7% to 33% from 1998 to 2002, and numbers from 2006 suggest that this rate may be nearing 40%. Further, inclusion of the African American proportion of the population who is overweight illuminates a state-wide epidemic. Sixty nine percent of African Americans are either overweight or obese, 9 percentile points higher than whites.

Obesity has a range of implications from decreased quality of life, higher risk for co-morbid disease and disability, and one recent study shows a decrease in life expectancy by two to five years.

Obesity is problematic not only in and of itself, but also because of the high co-morbidity rates with other diseases such as Type 2 diabetes. In fact, one study found that "being obese or overweight was more common among Ohio adults with diabetes compared to Ohioans without diabetes." African Americans are not only more likely to suffer from diabetes (13.4% compared to 7.4% for whites), but to die from the disease. The morbidity rate for African Americans in Ohio is almost double that of whites.

Diabetes requires a number of preventative measures and ongoing medical attention in order to ensure it is properly managed; left untreated it can cause a number of complications such as heart disease, kidney failure, gangrene in the legs and feet, and blindness. Because diabetes requires close monitoring and has implications for both behavioral modification and institutional support, African Americans are at a particular disadvantage, as illustrated in the above story. Many do not have the
resources necessary to properly monitor their disease, practice good health behaviors, or receive the medical treatment necessary. Diabetes is taking a tremendous toll on the health and wellness of the African American population. It not only decreases the quality and length of life for those directly afflicted with the disease, but also has economic consequences for the entire state. African Americans need access to a stable, effective, and responsive health care system, as well as programs focused on diabetes education and prevention.342

**Mental health** One component of wellness, every bit as important as physical health, is mental health. Although often overlooked in health policy, mental health is racialized and many disorders manifest differently in African American populations. For example, while African Americans have lower reported incidence rates of major depression or major phobias, they experience somatization (the presence of physical symptoms with a psychological causation) at higher rates than whites.343 Several research studies have demonstrated the long-term deleterious psychological effects of racial isolation in low-opportunity neighborhoods on children and adults alike.344 Furthermore, African Americans constitute a large proportion of particularly vulnerable, high-need populations such as the homeless, the incarcerated, children in foster care and the welfare system, and those who are exposed directly to or who live under the constant threat of violence.345 These populations have unique mental health needs that all too often go unmet.

Nationally, approximately one-third of those who need care receive it; however, the percentage of African Americans receiving treatment is about half that of whites.346 In Ohio, recent data suggest that our publicly funded mental health system is capturing a number of Blacks, with African Americans constituting 22% of the population served.347 Considering that African Americans are only 12% of the population, this seems to suggest good news. However, since 42% of African Americans are suffering from poor mental health, it remains likely that far too many are left untreated, which has distinct consequences for quality of life, productivity, and vulnerability to other health ailments.

Comprehensive mental healthcare requires not only access, but also a high level quality of care; cultural competency of mental health care providers is just as important as those who attend to people’s physical health. As a result of cultural mismatch, diagnosis tends to differ depending on a patient’s race, as does treatment. One study found that a smaller percentage of African American patients received antidepressant medication as compared to whites, and a higher percentage inappropriately received antipsychotic medications.348 Finally, like physicians, African Americans are under-represented in the mental health field; nationally, African Americans account for only 2% of psychiatrists, 2% of psychologists, and 4% of social workers. We know from decades of research that there are distinct negative effects of segregation on physical health, so equal attention needs to be paid to the effects of isolation in high poverty communities on mental health. Data from Moving to Opportunity shed some light on the substantial psychological benefits of living in high opportunity neighborhoods, such as a significant reduction in depression.349 Research such as this needs to lead the collaboration between mental health professionals and housing and education advocates, in order to ensure all have the opportunity to lead productive, fulfilling, and rewarding lives.

**Children’s health** An explicit focus on childhood health must be included in public health policies as the foundations of adult health, productivity, and well-being are all established early in life.350 As we might expect, African American children suffer from health disparities beginning at birth. In Ohio, the infant mortality rate for African Americans is more than double that of whites- 16.9% as compared to 6.7%.351 In addition, only 7.8% of non-Hispanic White babies are classified as low-birth weight, compared to
13.6% of Black infants. Both factors are related to the prenatal care a woman receives while pregnant. In Ohio in 2005, only 72% of African American women received prenatal care in the first trimester, the lowest percentage across all racial and ethnic groups.

In terms of dental care for Black children, poor health outcomes tend to be the norm. More than 150 million Americans do not carry dental insurance and this has a significant impact on dental care obtained by people of color. Poor children were five times more likely to have unfilled cavities and 80% of tooth decay is disproportionately found in only 25% of children. This is a travesty, as dental decay is the most common and easily preventable disease in children.

While some progress has been made regarding Medicaid outreach (such as linking child care applications and State Children’s Health Insurance Program, and the development of consumer guides), the State must remain vigilant in this regard. Through a concerted effort of State agencies and stakeholders, community engagement will be nuclear to the success of reaching out to those in need. More funds must be allocated to programs such as the Children’s Health insurance Program and Medicaid, and Medicaid eligibility should be expanded to include households with income up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

In addition to suffering from physical health disparities like adults, many low income children of color also experience the negative psychological impacts of living in segregated neighborhoods. One study found that children between the ages of 6 and 17 who had a parent classified as either being in poor mental health or having high degrees of aggravation suffered from more behavioral disorders or severe emotional problems – both of which have negative impacts on education. In addition, many of these children are at an increased risk of “double” or even “triple jeopardy” from living in poor families, in poor neighborhoods, and attending impoverished schools.

**Gendered Aspects of Health** Within the African American community, health and wellness is experienced differently based on gender. From cardiovascular disease to diabetes, incidence rates vary between African American males and females, as do treatment rates. These gender factors not only exist in diagnosed diseases, but also across factors influencing access to healthcare, such as insurance status. Poor women find themselves without access to health care more often than men of the same social group, and The Institute of Medicine found that among those who do have insurance (and even the same insurance plans), vast gaps in health care exist depending on the patient’s gender and race.

Certainly some health issues are limited to women and need direct intervention. Prenatal care and breast cancer, for example, are distinctly gendered; as such, outreach, education and treatment plans must focus specifically on African American women. Gender disparities in health are by no means limited to women, however. In one national study, Black women had the same probability as white women of receiving needed surgery, whereas black men were less than half as likely as white men to do so. African American males are also more likely to experience negative conditions which have a direct impact on their health such as greater exposure to toxic substances (as a result of workplace conditions), a higher likelihood of being in the prison system, and they are more likely to experience violence. Just as race should not determine health status, neither should the social construction of gender. Distinct research, outreach, prevention, and treatment plans should be in place to better understand the nexus between race, gender and health, and to ensure our wellness strategies are targeted and relevant.
Policy Recommendations

The current system of healthcare delivery is not only failing the State’s African American population, it is failing all Ohioans. The public recognizes this; nationally more than 3/4 of Americans believe the healthcare system is fundamentally broken or in need of a complete overhaul.362 Although it is impossible within the confines of this report to lay out all of the necessary steps to bring health parity to African Americans, following are a few overarching recommendations of ways we can collectively work towards improving the health care system in Ohio.

Systematic approach to health and wellness  If we are to take seriously the goal of promoting wellness for all, we must start with a comprehensive approach that includes neighborhood and housing policy, as well as education and employment interventions. We must work across sectors, and broaden what we understand as “health” policy. Neighborhoods are so important, for example, a growing body of research indicates that community interventions for low-opportunity neighborhoods, even absent explicit health interventions, can lead to improvements in health.363 Despite the increasing literature demonstrating the multivariate factors influencing health, policy in the United States has yet to catch up, and is still excluding social determinants of health.364 The Acheson Commission in Britain embraces a multi-systems approach and has released 39 evidence-based recommendations to narrow health disparities, of which only three target health care directly.365 This type of comprehensive policy approach to health care could make great strides in permanently closing disparity gaps in Ohio.

Clinic/Physician locations  Increased medical access must be granted for African Americans, particularly for primary and preventative care. An increase in accessibility of primary care physicians for African Americans has shown to lower mortality rates and partially mediate the negative effects of low socioeconomic status.366 As early as 1977, it was found that the compounding of race, class and income decreased the likelihood of quick access to medical services.367 When there is access, those physicians serving Black patients often do so without adequate support and resources.368 One landmark study found that 80% of black patients were seen by only 22% of the physicians; further, those physicians serving the majority of African Americans were less likely to be board certified.369 Diminished access to quality care and specialty services undoubtedly affects the health of the Black patients being served under these unnecessary constraints.

Primary care physicians and health care clinics must be more accessible to people of color, particularly low income populations. Community health centers must be sited in neighborhoods with high levels of need. They must be easily accessible via public transportation keep extended hours that accommodate the varied shifts many African Americans work. All Ohioans should have a patient-centered medical home, and all health care facilities should have access to networked health records through the expansion and implementation of health information technology across all facilities. The tragedy of the overrepresentation of disorders and diseases in the African American population is that much of it is preventable with early intervention and treatment. The provision of primary care physicians and networked medical homes can make great strides in closing the disparity gaps in diseases, reducing the burden placed on communities of color.

Community involvement  In order to be successful, any health intervention must have active buy-in of all stakeholders, particularly those citizens who are being directly affected. Empowering individuals to engage in planning in their communities ensures health-based practices are relevant, effective, and
more likely to succeed. 370 Directly involving the community and allowing the community to serve itself also ensures that community strengths are identified and fully utilized.

Black communities have historically held resilience through the use of mutual aid networks from their own community. Often it became important to serve one’s own when resources were unavailable or insufficient. It is no less true in assuring the collective wellness of Ohio African Americans and their health today; placing the individual and community at the center of any support plan, health based or otherwise, is paramount for success. 371

*High quality, universal health care*  Due to the way our medical system is arranged in the United States, it is difficult if not impossible to close health disparities without providing universal health care to all. Certainly, it is hoped that this becomes a national policy priority in the long run, as the U.S. is the only industrialized country that does not provide some type of national health insurance. 372 In the short term, Ohio can take steps to become a national leader on this front. Massachusetts already has universal health care coverage in place; they were the first state to pass this policy in 2006, which operates on a sliding pay scale based on income. After two years of implementation, this program is supported by 2/3 of Massachusetts’ residents. 373 Many recognize that this model is far more efficient than the entire state being burdened by the costs and consequences of the fractured national system. It is critical for the vitality of the State that all Ohioans have a health care safety net. While universal health care is a long-term goal, there are several steps that can be taken in the interim to ensure more people have health care coverage. Subsidies could be provided to help low-wage workers afford employer-sponsored coverage, a health plan similar to Medicaid could cover adults with incomes below poverty level, and people below 300% poverty level should have access to medical care coverage on a sliding fee scale.

In addition to medical coverage that treats and prevents physical ailments, special attention must be made to promoting mental health as well. Public and private reimbursement systems should cover both family counseling and individual therapy, and state-wide universal health care must contain provisions ensuring African Americans receive the psychological support they need. Attaining universal health care in Ohio will take a substantial amount of effort and political leadership to achieve, but it is a necessary policy that will have long-term benefits for African American populations, and the entire State.

**Health care providers**

*Cultural competency training*  There needs to be an immediate commitment to improving cultural competency in the health care labor force. No longer should cultural competency be considered an empty catch-phrase that is treated as an afterthought; instead, it should be incorporated into every medical school curriculum. Doctors must be aware of racial differences in treatment disparities, and differences between racial and ethnic groups; however, knowledge alone is insufficient. True cultural competency also requires that doctors must be able to fully “acknowledge, understand, respect and accommodate differences.” 374 This demands a knowledge of and exposure to the tools that help health care providers realize the importance of edifying culture as a determinant of proper medical care. Certainly, there are more opportunities to transmit cultural fluency skills among students in medical school, but cultural competency training must be provided for medical personnel at every stage. Ongoing professional development programs should be offered that transmit the skills and knowledge necessary to treat diverse populations. Pilot programs could also be established to monitor the health care experience of Ohio patients of color and health outcomes, creating a pipeline of information to be engaged by doctors and clinics.
Increasing the pool of doctors of color As doctors of color are more likely to practice in underserved areas and African Americans are more likely to select an African American physician, one approach to ensuring African Americans have access to health care is to increase the pool of physicians and other health care workers of color. This is a particularly important issue as African Americans are grossly underrepresented in the medical field. Only 2.3% of the nonfederal physicians in Ohio are African American, despite comprising nearly 12% of the population. Furthermore, this gap is not likely to close soon considering only 5.7% of the population graduating from medical school in Ohio, in 2007, was African American. Some literature suggests that increasing the number of African American physicians not only has a positive effect on access, but also positively impacts the clinical encounter and improves patient adherence to treatment. Certainly this has far-reaching implications for our education system.

Collaborations between K-12 schools, universities, and hospitals should be developed and supported despite the organizational impediments to doing so. Pipeline programs need to be implemented that strengthen science and math education for African Americans at the K-12 level. Schools must provide an environment that builds efficacy in students of color, and fosters the science and math skills necessary for a career in medicine long before students reach the halls of a university. Further, early outreach and exposure programs linking K-12 to the university system must be established and supported. Once these students have successfully reached college, mechanisms must be in place to foster retention. Medical schools must also be on board and committed to increasing the medical professionals of color; their incoming classes must be diverse, and representative of the larger population they are serving. This need is recognized by the Association of American Medical Colleges, who in 2006, called for a 30% increase in enrollment of students of color by the year 2015, in order to be able to effectively serve the nation’s population. Finally, programs such as the Ohio Physician Loan Repayment Program must be supported and extended to ensure students of color do not become overburdened by educational debt, and to support physicians working in underserved areas. This cross-disciplinary, collaborative effort to recruit, train, and retain students of color will make great strides in improving the health status of the African American community.

Research & clinical trials Much of the work still to be done in ensuring parity in health treatments resides in the research realm. Clinical trials must be deliberate about recruiting and retaining people of color in their studies, and data must continue to be generated illuminating the state of health for African Americans. This includes studies that focus not only on negative outcomes, but also how to promote positive outcomes, such as fostering resiliency.

Summary

“It is not just poverty that works through health status. We know that there is something unique to being poor and Black.”

---a concerned stakeholder

Ohio is as geographically diverse as the people that inhabit it and the strength and viability of the State lies in its population and the health of its people. For African Americans, this report suggests a grim prognosis. African Americans in Ohio all too often experience health disparities, or differences in health status and treatment that are apparent due to social indicators such as race, education and income. Even more troublesome, much of this is preventable.
Addressing problems that are prevalent in disadvantaged groups will affect everyone by default; helping Black Ohioans serves the greater good of the entire State in more ways than one. The type of interventions needed move us beyond those sited in the medical arena alone, into other sectors such as housing, education, and economic development. Further, they involve ongoing communication and collaboration between advocates, community members, and policy makers alike. We must work collectively to establish and publicly communicate our health and wellness goals, and dynamically arrange the systemic factors necessary to achieve them. Only when all of the residents of our State are given the opportunity to live full, productive, and healthy lives, will the entire State be healthy, and fully equipped to thrive in the 21st century.
SECTION X

CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE AMONG BLACK OHIOANS
SECTION X: FOCUS AREA - CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE AMONG BLACK OHIOANS

Introduction: Blacks’ Disproportionate Involvement in Crime and Criminal Justice

Across the United States, Blacks continue to interact with crime and the criminal justice system at a rate considerably higher than that of other racial populations. As a result, Black communities are plagued by the negative consequences of victimization and all the hardships associated with having a criminal record. Within our nation, and in the State of Ohio, data and research emphasizes that racial disparity continues to persist within the criminal justice system, especially with regards to the disproportionate rate of Blacks’ involvement with crime.

This section seeks to address the following questions:

- Why are blacks so disproportionately involved in crime as both offenders and victims?
- To what extent does race impact the administration of justice?
- What are the consequences of racial disparity in crime and criminal justice?
- What should policy makers do to address these issues?

Although our criminal justice system rests upon the premise of “Equal Justice Under the Law,” minorities, especially African American males, receive harsher treatment for similar offenses committed by their white male counterparts. Even when controlling for the seriousness of the offense, minorities are more likely to be treated harshly, and are more likely to be placed in correctional facilities than non-minorities. This racial disparity is indicative of a system that is “separate and unequal.”

One of the most compelling facts about corrections in Ohio and in the U.S. is that although crime has consistently declined throughout much of the 1990s and into the 21st century, the number of people under correctional supervision has continued to climb. Crime rates are lower than they have been in nearly 25 years, yet the nation’s probation population is up nearly 300 percent – prison population has increased by more than 400 percent. While African Americans account for less than 12% of Ohio’s population, they account for over 25% of all arrests in the State; Blacks across the nation and in Ohio are involved in crime at higher rates as both offenders and as victims. Victimization is higher among Ohio’s blacks for both violent and property offenses when compared to whites.

In light of the increase in probation and prison population, it is important to recognize that blacks are disproportionately arrested, imprisoned and executed, even when controlling for the seriousness of offense. Perceptions of the justice system tend to vary according to race; for example, blacks are more likely than whites to hold negative attitudes toward police and are less likely to view the criminal justice system as fair. These differing perspectives of the justice system may exacerbate racial conflict as well as contempt directed at agents of the criminal justice system.

Perceptions of the police and of the overall criminal justice system may be influenced by citizens’ personal experiences with police. Citizens who share the perception that they are treated fairly by the police are more likely to express favorable opinions about the police, regardless of the outcome of the interaction. Perceptions about the sources of criminal behavior also influence responses to crime. For example, many blacks believe that inequality in the justice system is a result of white racism, as evidenced by blacks’ disproportionately large involvement in the criminal justice system.
As such, Blacks are more likely to support preventative and rehabilitative policies that support efforts aimed at reducing structural conditions, such as unemployment and poverty, thought to produce crime. On the other hand, the majority of whites believe that racial differences in crime result from lack of motivation among blacks, lax child rearing, and aggressive personalities. Therefore, it is not surprising that whites are more likely to support punitive crime policies such as capital punishment, and “three strikes” legislation.

Numerous studies reveal that even after controlling for the seriousness of offense, minorities are more likely to be treated more harshly and are more likely placed in a correctional facility as a punishment, compared to non-minorities. This example of racial disparity is indicative of a system that is “separate and unequal.” While public attention tends to focus on the disproportionate number of blacks in confinement, overrepresentation is often a by-product of the accumulation of actions that occur at earlier points in the justice system, such as the decision to arrest, the decision to detain, and discretion involved in sentencing.

In Ohio, the trend is no different. Blacks face the same disproportionate and hopeless path towards involvement within the criminal justice system while the public remains without knowledge of such stark realities. Unfortunately, survey data confirm that most Ohioans are not well informed. As a result of higher rates of involvement in the criminal justice system (both as victims and offenders), blacks are more likely to experience the negative social and psychological effects of crime. For the majority of these young Black males, their participation in the criminal justice system is a harrowing journey through institutionalized racial disparity. This report will provide a glimpse into the challenges faced by Ohioans whose lives are affected by crime and the criminal justice system and what steps need to be taken to amalgamate this crisis.

Explanations for Racial Differences in Crime

Most explanations of crime typically focus on either individuals being rational actors, or on the role structural conditions have in society, such as poverty, unemployment, and residential instability that give rise to crime and delinquency. Research offering individual explanations of crime has consistently demonstrated that factors such as race, age, marital status and sex are the best predictors of a person’s risk for engaging in violence. However, critics of individual level explanations contend that environmental and social factors are not given enough consideration. They point to the fact that in extremely disadvantaged neighborhoods, primarily occupied by African Americans, residents tend to be socially isolated from mainstream society. As a result, they have less access to jobs and less exposure to conventional role models. In such communities, residents are unable to address problems such as crime, and the maintenance of residential control. From this view, high levels of disadvantage, not race, are what produce high levels of crime and other social problems in African American communities. Thus, as research is increasingly demonstrating, a substantial portion of racial differences in crime are accounted for through the examination of differences in the social context within which blacks and whites tend to live.

Effect of Segregation and Community Disadvantage

Americans continue to live in areas that are highly segregated by race and socioeconomic status. Blacks tend to live in areas with relatively few whites and with poverty levels and rates of female-headed households that are more than twice that of white neighborhoods. In fact, almost two-thirds of all
blacks in the U.S. live in highly segregated, disadvantaged areas, while the majority of whites live in highly segregated advantaged areas. These separate black and white neighborhoods provide separate social environments that produce racial differences in crime.

Research has shown that segregation is an important component for reproducing neighborhoods that are structurally unequal across racial lines. Segregation concentrates disadvantage across neighborhoods within cities, detaching primarily minority populations from social institutions. In fact, researchers have established that segregation leads to increased concentration of black poverty, unemployment, female-headed families, and male joblessness, all of which contribute to higher crime rates. High levels of disadvantage leave members in isolated and perilous communities with little resources and, consequently, cultural adaptations develop that foster violence and that make crime more attractive.

As a matter of fact, the effect of concentrated disadvantage is race neutral; crime rates vary with community conditions regardless of the racial composition of an area. Two studies conducted in Ohio provide strong support for this conclusion. First, a study conducted in Columbus compared predominately white and predominately black communities with similar levels of disadvantage and found that extremely disadvantaged communities have substantially higher levels of violent crime compared to less disadvantaged areas. More importantly, consistent with the racial invariance arguments, this pattern is consistent across black and white neighborhoods. Another study conducted in Cincinnati came to similar conclusions examining the effect of disadvantage on assaults for white and African American males. Their findings reveal that levels of neighborhood disadvantage serve to increase assaults in Cincinnati and the effect of disadvantage operate similarly across races. Taken as a whole, the body of literature explaining the racial patterning of crime has concluded that the sources of crime are invariant across race and rooted in the structural differences evident in racially segregated communities.

Challenges in Criminal Justice

Non-Violent Crimes Contrary to popular belief, most offenders in prisons and jails are non-violent criminals. Although high levels of black imprisonment can be explained by “high crime communities” that are racially segregated and violent, the disproportionate number of blacks in our prisons cannot be explained simply by these severely disadvantaged communities who have high correlation to high rates of violence. In 2005, Ohio law enforcement agencies reported 287,972 arrests to the FBI, 70% of which were non-violent misdemeanor offenses, while serious property crimes of burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson accounted for just over 12 percent of all arrests. Arrests for drug offenses were slightly higher than property offense constituting 13 percent of all arrests. On the other hand, violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assaults, constituted only 3 percent of all arrests made in Ohio.

In 2005, whites were arrested for 49% of violent crimes in Ohio while blacks were arrested for 51%. Although the number of blacks arrested for violent crimes was about equal to the number of whites arrested for violent crimes, it is important to keep in mind that blacks make up only 12% of Ohio’s population. That being considered, it is clear that a disproportionately large number of blacks were arrested for committing violent crimes in Ohio.
Racial Profiling  The role of racial profiling in the disproportionately large number of black arrests is often called into question. Racial profiling refers to law enforcement targeting people based on race or ethnicity in the belief that certain groups are more likely to commit certain types of crime.395 The practice of racial profiling is based on false assumptions that most offenses are committed by minorities, particularly African Americans and Hispanics. Consequently, more minorities are arrested, prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated, thus reinforcing the perception that crime is primarily an activity engaged in by minorities. However, not only is racial profiling a discriminatory practice, it is an inefficient method of policing. For example, “Operation Pipeline,” a major drug law enforcement program that relied heavily on racial profiling, stopped over 34,000 vehicles operated by minorities and found that only 2% contained illegal drugs.396 Furthermore, whites are more likely than both blacks and Hispanics to be found with contraband in their vehicles.397

In an effort to curb racial profiling in traffic stops, recent legislation now requires Ohio law enforcement officers to collect data on the race of the driver and all other persons in the vehicle, whether a search was conducted, whether contraband was found, and whether an arrest was made.398 Agencies across Ohio are required to report the data to the attorney general at least once a year.

Racial Pattern of Incarcerations  According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, racial differences in incarceration are staggering; among over two million prisoners incarcerated, there were 4,834 black male prisoners per 100,000 black males in the United States and only 681 white male prisoners per 100,000 white males in the United States.399 High rates of incarceration have negative consequences for African American families and communities. For the past two decades, black men have been sentenced to prison at a faster rate than they have enrolled in college.400 Meanwhile, the female incarceration rate is growing at a faster rate than that of their male counterparts, while mirroring the disparity patterns between black and white males. Black females were 4.5 times more likely than white females to be incarcerated, which could be an even greater threat to black communities.401

The majority of the prison population is comprised of minority men, especially African Americans and Hispanics. Although in theory, prisons are reserved to house only the most dangerous offenders, 50% of the U.S. prison population consists of nonviolent offenders, most of whom are inmates of color.402 A study examining incarcerated offenders found that Black inmates were more likely to be incarcerated for nonviolent crimes than white inmates. Consequently, the disproportionate numbers of absent black men and women as parents and community members are causing families and neighborhoods to suffer. These trends can be seen nationally and in Ohio. The impact on black children, families, and communities has been devastating.

Special Populations

The Mentally Ill  Across the United States, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported in 2005 that over half of state prisoners, and almost two-thirds of jail inmates, report a history or symptoms of mental illness. Moreover, the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health estimates that rates of mental illness are 3-4 times higher among inmates than of the general population.403 To the dismay of many, the Bureau of Justice Statistics report that more people with mental illnesses are being treated in the criminal justice system than in the mental health system. Among blacks in state prisons, 55% are categorized as having a mental illness. Mental illness is even higher among blacks in jail (63%). Currently, there are close to 7,000 individuals suffering from a mentally illness in Ohio’s prisons. The Sentencing Project sought to explain why mental illness is increasingly being criminalized. The research
offered several explanations. First, the deinstitutionalization of hospitals has left many in their communities without treatment. In 2008, Ohio was one of many states to significantly reduce spending on mental health as a result of State budget cuts. As a result of reduced spending on mental health care, many patients in need of mental health care may be directed instead into the criminal justice system. Second, public perception of mentally ill people as dangerous or violent personalities has led to an increasingly punitive approach toward dealing with individuals who do not meet society’s norms. As a result, the insanity pleas in criminal cases, which have traditionally offered alternatives to incarceration, have become increasingly rare. Finally, there are few resources to assist the mentally ill as they reintegrate into society once they leave jails, prisons, and hospitals.404

To address the increasing problem of criminalization of the mentally ill throughout the State, Ohio utilizes crisis intervention teams (CIT) and mental health courts. The crisis intervention team is made up of officers from a variety of State agencies and local schools and universities who have been given special training to respond to mental health crises. The CIT officers generally attempt to divert the mentally ill away from the criminal justice system. Many defendants, however, are not diverted; their cases may be held in mental health courts that specialize in ensuring court-supervised treatment and services such as job training, housing assistance, and drug treatment.

**Sex Offenders in Ohio** Currently, sex offenders account for nearly 20% of Ohio’s prison population. Sex offenses are viewed as public health concerns, and violent crimes. Ohio classifies sex offenders based on the age of the victim(s):

- **Child molesters** are offenders whose victims are under 13 years of age.
- **Teen molesters’ victims** are between the ages of 13-17.
- **Rapists’ victims** are over the age of 18.
- **Multiple age offenders** are those whose victims overlap with more than one category.

**Female Offending** In Ohio, females constitute 31% of serious property crimes and 17% of serious violent offenses, including 1% of murders. The most common violent offense both black and white women in Ohio were arrested for is aggravated assault. Studies using national data indicate that female patterns of violent offending in Ohio resemble national patterns. For example, when examining race and victim offender relationships, researchers found that minority females are more likely to commit violent crimes against intimate partners or acquaintances,405 and this pattern can be seen among Ohio women as well. In fact, the victims of females arrested for murder tend to be their significant other at a rate 3.9 times higher compared to their male counterparts.406

More recently, data from the Ohio Incident Based Reporting System (OIBRS) were analyzed to determine which types of crimes females are most likely to be arrested for. The researchers classified crimes into three categories: 1) crimes against society, such as prostitution and disorderly conduct; 2) crimes against property; and 3) crimes against individuals where the victim is present during the commission of the offense. The results of the study indicate 56 percent of all female arrests in Ohio were for crimes against society, the most frequent being possession of drugs. The most common crime against persons that females were arrested for is domestic violence.407

**Juvenile Arrests** Nationally, rates of confinement for black youth are drastically higher than for white youth, especially in light of the fact that white and black youth use illegal drugs at similar rates. In a recent study examining the arrest figures of white and black youth, research found that only 20 percent of drug arrests for white youth are for felony sale or manufacture, compared to 38 percent for black
youth. Conversely, roughly one-third of black youth are charged with simple possession, compared to over two-thirds of white youth arrested for similar drug offenses. These racial differences in arrests have important implications for other stages in the justice process as well as other domains of life. One-third of young, black males are either in prison or under some form of correctional supervision. One-third of young, black males are ineligible to vote because of felony convictions.

Prior to 2002, the Ohio juvenile justice system focused on rehabilitation and treatment. Under this rehabilitative framework, juvenile offenders typically were sentenced to community sanctions; although, in the case of violent or dangerous youth, they could be sentenced to State detention facilities. The increase in high-profile crimes involving youth such as school shootings and gang violence prompted Ohio’s legislature to change its juvenile justice system to model more closely after the adult criminal justice system. In doing so, legislation in 2002 lowered the age at which Ohio juveniles can enter the adult system. The new sentencing structure relies heavily on the age of the offender and the type of crime committed, and it requires one of three types of dispositions, two of which involve being transferred to the adult system. This new approach not only gives the options of hearing the entire case in either juvenile or adult court, it allows for “blended sentences” that allow juvenile courts to impose adult sanctions if the youth does not successfully complete the juvenile disposition. In 2002, 16 youth were committed to Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS) for blended sentences and 23 youth were committed to adult institutions during the first six months of 2003.

In the case of heinous crimes, prosecutors can request that cases be held in adult criminal court. If this occurs, a Relinquishment of Jurisdiction for Purposes of Criminal Prosecution or, as it is more commonly referred to, Rule 30 hearing is held to determine whether the juvenile should remain in the juvenile court. Four criteria must be met for a case to be bound over to adult court. First, the youth must have committed an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult. Second, the youth must be over the age of 14. Third, probable cause must exist, and finally, the court must determine that the juvenile is not amenable to being rehabilitated in the juvenile system and should be subject to adult sanctions. Rule 30 hearings are also used to classify youth as “Serious Youthful Offenders,” which grants the court dual jurisdiction. This new classification, created through Ohio’s Senate Bill 179 (S.B. 179), mandates that juveniles have rights equal to that of adults in criminal court. Furthermore, sentencing enhancements have been introduced as a way of increasing the severity of juvenile dispositions if the youth had prior commitments to a detention facility or used a firearm during the commission of their crime.

The Ohio Governor’s Council on Juvenile Justice specifically looked at changes that have occurred after S.B. 179 and found that prior to its implementation, the racial distribution of felony admissions was 48 percent white and 47 percent black; after Senate Bill 179 there were 47 percent white, 48 percent black. Albeit slight, the increase in arrests for blacks suggests that S.B. 179 has not had any meaningful impact on reducing racial disparities in juvenile justice. Furthermore, although these punitive efforts may only be intended to reduce juvenile offending, prior research suggests that young, African American males will most likely bear the brunt of harsher sanctions and reduced efforts at rehabilitation.

In addition to arrests, black youth in Ohio are also overrepresented in juvenile detention facilities. Over half (58%) of all juvenile commitments in Ohio are black, primarily young black males. Nationwide, white youth make up 60 percent of the detained population while black youth make up 37 percent of all detainees. Across all offense categories, African American youth were disproportionately detained and were overrepresented in the detained population in 45 states. About two-thirds of all studies on
disproportionate minority confinement showed that race had a negative impact on at least one stage of the juvenile justice process.414

Consequences of Racial Disparity in Crime and Criminal Justice

Large racial disparities in all areas of the criminal justice system illustrate that not all individuals are treated equally under the law. Policy implementation often precedes research and does not always incorporate practice, or account for disparities in opportunity outside of the criminal justice system. To address these issues, it is important to understand the sources and consequences of racial disparity in the criminal justice system, and to ensure that approaches to reducing crime in Ohio are grounded in multi-faceted/dynamic/multi-dimensional research.

Negative Effects of Victimization There are many costs and consequences of crime for those victims whose lives are affected by violence. Research shows that victims of child abuse have greater involvement in crime while adolescent victims are more likely to embrace a delinquent lifestyle (often by joining a gang) in response to perceived threats; females that are sexually abused are more likely to engage in prostitution or drug use.415 This path, which starts in the juvenile years continuing on into adulthood, is commonly referred to as the “cycle of violence.”

In 2005, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (UCR) reported that blacks accounted for over 49% of all U.S. homicide victims. It is important to remember that blacks account for only 12% of the population, in light of those statistics. From 2001-2005 blacks had an annual violent victimization rate of 28.7 per 1,000 persons aged 12 and older. This rate was higher than the rates of violent victimization for whites (22.8), Hispanics (24.3), and Asians (10.6).416 Both nationally, and in Ohio, Black males, who had never been married, blacks with lower incomes, and blacks in urban areas were at the greatest risk of victimization. Black victims accounted for almost 55% of violent crimes reported to Ohio police departments and 46% of property offenses. Among blacks, young males aged 12-19 are the most likely to be victimized by violence, with rates of victimization of over 6,600 per 100,000 persons in the population.

One of the most revealing patterns among victims of crime is that the amount of crime reported to police departments depends on the type of crime committed. Victims are more likely to report violent crimes compared to property crimes with 50 percent and 40 percent of violent and property crimes reported respectively.417 This pattern also holds true among blacks in Ohio. While reports of violent victimization among young males are similar, female reports of victimization vary by race with black females reporting about 62 percent of violent victimization experiences and White females reporting about 50 percent.

While many estimate the cost of crime in terms of property lost, hospital bills, or other economic measures, crime is also costing Ohio victims by diminishing their chances of successful personal and social development. Considerable research documents the consequences of victimization and shows that being the victim of crime influences long-term trajectories of psychological distress and inhibits educational and socioeconomic attainment, all of which are predictors for future involvement in crime.418 If blacks are disproportionately experiencing victimization, it is not surprising that blacks have higher rates of depression, and achieve less in the areas of education and employment.
**Black Male Mass Incarceration**  
Across the nation, the prison boom has had a detrimental effect on the lives of young black men. By 2002, almost 12 percent of black men in their twenties were in jail or prison. For young, African American males, incarceration has become so pervasive that it is an expected right of passage in many inner-city communities. High rates of incarceration among African American males have damaging effects on familial structures, marriage rates, and life outcomes for children. Family structures have changed dramatically in recent decades and the percent of black children living with a single parent is expected to continue to increase. Mass incarceration of young black men reduces the number of eligible, male, marriage partners for African American women, thereby reducing the African American marriage rate and increasing the rate of out-of-wedlock births. In 1960, only 6 percent of children in the U.S. resided with a single parent. Today, over half of all children can expect to live in a single-parent household while they are a minor, which is strongly related to a host of negative outcomes for children including receiving less supervision, lower socioeconomic status, and lower grades, all of which are associated with greater involvement in crime and deviance.  

While 9 percent of all males will go to prison at sometime throughout their lives, the imprisonment rate for black men is 28.5 percent compared to 4.4 percent for white men. The imprisonment rate for young, black, male, dropouts is even higher; 60 percent can expect to go to prison. In fact, incarceration is becoming so commonplace that for black men in their 30s, prison records are twice as common as college degrees and military service.

The practice of mass incarceration has long-term implications for ex-offenders. Racial disparities with respect to incarceration serve to exacerbate racial disparities in socioeconomic conditions, since economic and employment opportunities are diminished for people with criminal records, even after they have been released from prison. Ex-prisoners earn lower wages, and experience higher rates of unemployment than men who have never been incarcerated. This limiting of opportunity may actually force ex-offenders back into offending.

In Ohio, among incarcerated fathers, a higher proportion of fathers were black (53.4%) than white (46.6%). Most of these incarcerated fathers are between the ages of 20-39, an age where family formation is commonplace.

**Felony Disenfranchisement**  
Disenfranchisement has emerged as a major issue of public concern because currently in the United States, 48 states limit voting rights based on a felony conviction. Although on the surface such a policy seems to be “race-neutral,” the historical and social context surrounding felony disenfranchisement suggests that the practice must be closely linked to race, particularly to the post-Reconstruction period of racial retrenchment in the American social order. A recent study examining the changes to state felony disenfranchisement laws from 1850-2002 found that higher percentages of non-white prisoners were strong predictors for passing more restrictive disenfranchisement laws.

The impact of felony disenfranchisement has numerous policy implications because it dilutes the electorate voting strength of African Americans, further marginalizing a significant portion of the voting age population. In the 2004 presidential election, over 8% of African Americans were disenfranchised as a result of a felony conviction compared to 2% of all non-African Americans. More importantly, the size of the disenfranchised population has increased tremendously, so much so that this form of
franchisement has a measurable impact on the outcome of close elections. For example, in the absence of disfranchisement laws, researchers predicted that seven races for seats in the U.S. senate would have turned out differently. This could have changed the overall racial composition of Congress during the 1990s just as the “get tough on crime” legislation was popular.428 Similarly, the 2000 presidential election was decided by less than 600 votes in the State of Florida.429 If Florida allowed at least felons who had completed their sentences to vote, Al Gore would have likely been president in 2000, defeating George Bush by at least 30,000 votes.430 Unless changes are made by states, felony disfranchisement will continue to silence political voices by excluding mostly low-income minorities, altering the political climate and disrupting a fair democracy. Although Ohio allows felons to vote, the process of reinstating voting rights is complex and difficult, and ex-offenders are too often uninformed about voting rights and procedures. In the future, as the nation’s political parties compete for votes in close elections, the issue of criminal disfranchisement and reforming of stringent policy requirements will be of particular importance in swing states such as Ohio, where margins of victory may be extremely small.

**Racial Differences in Capital Punishment** Although whites are executed more frequently than blacks in Ohio, racial disparity exists and persists through the way in which the victim’s race in the crime typically influences the decision to be sentenced with the death penalty. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1981, 269 offenders have been sentenced to death; as of April 1, 2008, twenty-six prisoners have been executed. Today, there are currently 175 individuals on death row, including one woman.431 Of those receiving the death penalty in Ohio, 64% were white and 36% were black compared to the national average of 55% for Whites and 43% for Blacks. Blacks and whites are murder victims in nearly equal numbers of violent crimes, but 80% of those executed have been executed for murdering white victims.

An astounding fact is that most of Ohio’s executed offenders were under the age of 30 at the time of their offense. African American offenders on death row tend to be younger than their white counterparts – over 50% of blacks on death row were under the age of 30 at the time of the murder. Whites on death row under the age of 30 made up less than 40%; they were more likely to be over the age of 30 at the time of their offense (64%).432 The average length of time on death row for all offenders sentenced to death was 5.6 years, ranging from less than one year to over 19 years. Among all executed offenders, the average stay on death row was 15.9 years. However, blacks remain on death row about 17 years, which is well over 2 years longer than whites (14.41 years).

Between 1981 and 2007, 98 offenders have left death row in Ohio for various reasons; most (41) were overturned by an appellate court, many (14) died of natural causes, and some died as a result of suicide, and drug overdoses. Whites were more likely to leave death row alive compared to African Americans. Among those removed from death row, 57 percent were white and 43 percent were ethnic minorities.433 Nationwide, from 1973 to 2003, of the over 100 people who have been exonerated, 45 percent were black.434 The average length of stay on death row for those leaving alive was 8.6 years.

**Reentry: Punishment and Rehabilitation** Over the past two decades, the prison boom has dramatically increased the number of inmates being released from prisons. The fact is, about 95 percent of all state prisoners will ultimately be released from prison.435 Nationwide, nearly 600,000 individuals will be released from state and federal prisons annually to return to their communities. Upon their release, ex-prisoners face numerous challenges in their transition from confinement in a correctional institution to some greater degree of freedom within a community. While most prisoners can be assured that they
will regain liberty, many will return to society ill-prepared for the difficulties they will encounter as they attempt to (re)connect with jobs, housing, and family members. Many will face substance abuse, mental health and physical health problems, and have few resources to successfully reintegrate into society. Reentry is a critical and pivotal moment for prisoners who will return to society; in Ohio, many agencies have already made it a priority.

Ignoring the enormous impact of thousands of inmates being released to communities does not seem to be a viable option. Every year, hundreds of thousands of inmates are landing on the doorsteps of family members, halfway houses, and homeless shelters. In many cases, they are returning to the same neighborhoods they resided in prior to incarceration. Many of these neighborhoods are plagued with high levels of unemployment, crime, and have few legitimate opportunities available for ex-offenders to sustain themselves.

Notably, a small number of communities are taking on disproportionately large percentages of released offenders. Although prisoners exiting Ohio’s prisons are spread rather evenly throughout the major cities in the State, Cleveland has the largest share of returned inmates, with 28% returning to only 5 of Cleveland’s 36 communities. These communities range from 93-98% black and are characterized by scarce resources and high rates of vacant houses, high-school drop-outs, unemployment, drug use, poverty, violent crime, and female-headed households. Of the 5,358 prisoners released to Cleveland in 2001, 78 percent were Black and 18 percent were white, reflecting the overall racial distribution of Cleveland residents. The locations to which many ex-prisoners are returning raises important policy questions regarding how to successfully reintegrate ex-offenders who are being released to areas characterized by extreme disadvantage, in order to overcome the disadvantage plaguing the area, rather than simply allowing the disadvantage to be reinforced.

**Differences in Employment Opportunities** In recent decades, urban areas have experienced huge declines in manufacturing jobs and as a result inner-city families have felt the brunt of this transformation. Lack of employment opportunities for both adults and adolescents has been linked to offending and other criminological outcomes. The concentration of low-wage jobs and unemployment in poor inner-city communities lowers family income, thus threatening family formation and stability. When traditional sources of establishing masculinity such as being the breadwinner are absent, family disintegration is more likely, thereby reducing the number of dual-parent households. Black women are more likely to be poor, single parents, with limited resources that undermine their ability to effectively parent. Inadequate parenting then serves to weaken attachments producing higher delinquent outcomes in neighborhoods occupied largely by blacks. In Ohio, the median household income for whites is almost $43,000 while the median household income for blacks is less than $27,000 a year. When employment prospects are dim for racial segments of the population, individuals within these groups may learn that they cannot rely on legitimate opportunities and thus be more likely to engage in crime.

**Changes Surrounding Prisoner Reentry in Ohio** Ohio has experienced fluctuations in its prison population over recent decades as a result of changes in crime and sentencing policies. From 1982 to 2002, Ohio’s prison population followed the annual average rate of nationwide state prison populations and increased an average of seven percent per year. By the end of 2002, Ohio had the 7th largest prison population in the nation and the 22nd highest incarceration rate, and an average of 398 prisoners were released per 100,000 residents annually. Increases in incarceration rates during this period primarily stemmed from increases in the number of non-violent drug offenders sentenced to prison and increases
in lengths of sentences for serious offenses. Prior to 1996, most inmates were released via the parole board’s discretion and only about one-third of offenders were released to supervision. However, after the implementation of Senate Bill 2 in 1996, most inmates were released via mandatory release at the end of their sentences and supervision rose to about 60 percent in 2002. Whether on supervision or not, many return to prison for committing new crimes or violating the terms of their supervision.

In recent years, the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission assessed the impact of Senate Bill 2 and found that there has been progress towards improving the management of Ohio’s prison populations. Consistent with its goals, Ohio is imprisoning more repeat offenders, and low-level felons are being steered into community sanctions. The Ohio Adult Parole Authority (APA) supervises ex-offenders in the community and classifies all ex-offenders under supervision in one of five levels (i.e., Intensive, Basic High, Basic Medium, Basic Low or Monitored Time), based on how often they are required to contact their supervision officer.

**Criminal Sanctions** Research on the effectiveness of community supervision typically focuses on whether supervision in community reduces offending among ex-offenders on probation or parole. A collective examination of the research suggests that supervision reduces recidivism anywhere from 2-8 percent compared to those who are not supervised in the community. Other research has focused on the length of prison sentences and overall, most studies found that longer incarceration was associated with increased rates of recidivism. In general, research on sanctions show that it fails to deter criminal behavior. In fact, leniency is associated with lower rates of recidivism; those with community supervision are less likely to re-offend compared to those sent to prison and similarly, those with shorter prison sentences are less likely to offend than those with longer sentences. Thus, community-based sanctions are producing better outcomes compared to detention-based sanctions.

**Rehabilitation Efforts** Rehabilitation efforts are different from sanctions in that they seek to motivate and guide offenders by supporting behavioral and cognitive changes to promote prosocial behavior. Often accompanied by some sort of sanction, the effect of rehabilitation has been studied among adults and juveniles. As a whole, the research suggest that rehabilitation efforts reduce recidivism from a low of 10 percent upward to nearly 40 percent; with an average of over 20 percent. Moreover, among the studies on recidivism, the lowest reduction in recidivism among those in rehabilitative programs is greater than the highest reduction reported by studies focusing on sanctions. Unfortunately, although a preponderance of the evidence suggests that rehabilitation treatment is capable of reducing rates of offending among convicted offenders, there is a disjuncture between practice and policy and too often policy is implemented with little guidance from research.

**Life After Prison**

**Recidivism Trends Among Released Offenders** After a decline in the early 1990s, the proportion of ex-prisoners returning to Ohio prisons increased. The overall three-year return to prison rate for technical violations and new offenses increased from 32 percent in 1996 to 37 percent in 1998. While the three-year return to prison data showed increases in recidivism, the one-year return to prison rate was about 17 percent from 1999-2002.

Recent studies using national data indicate that nearly one-third (29%) of inmates released from prison were rearrested within 6 months, well over half (59.2%) within the first year and over two-thirds (67.5%) within 3 years. A recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics followed 30,000 prisoners who were released from prisons in 15 states, including Ohio. The study found that within three years of their...
release, over half (52%) of these prisoners were back in prison for new charges or technical violations of the conditions of their release. Ohio’s three-year recidivism rate for all prisoners released in 1994 was 35 percent.

While the number of ex-prisoners returned to Ohio’s prisons is an important way to assess how well reentry efforts are working, the amount of time spent in prison for a violation is also important for understanding reentry trends in Ohio. Another one of the changes mandated by Senate Bill 2 was a strict limit on the amount of time that ex-prisoners who commit technical violations of post-release control (PRC) can serve in prison. Under SB2, ex-prisoners on PRC can be returned to prison for up to nine months for each technical violation not to exceed half of the inmate’s original sentence. In 2001, the median time served in prison for PRC technical violators was 2.5 months, while for parole technical violators, it was 14.0 months. Since 2001, the average time served for parole technical violators has declined, in part, through efforts to reduce differences in time served between parole and post-release control violations. These efforts have been somewhat effective: in 2002, the length of time spent in prison for parole technical violations decreased to roughly 9.5 months.

In an effort to determine what works, researchers have relied heavily on whether sanctions and supervision work to effectively reduce subsequent offending and whether the length of time served is related to recidivism. Overall, research suggests that punishments have little or no effect on recidivism. The number of youth who return to ODYS institutions was greater than the number of adults admitted to adult prisons. Among all the youth released in 2004, 24 percent returned within one year and 5 percent were re-incarcerated at an adult institution. Black youth had higher rates of recidivism than any other racial category. After one year, 26 percent of whites versus 33 percent of black youth returned to ODYS; after two years, 39 percent of whites returned versus 48 percent of blacks; and after three years, 43 percent of whites versus 57 percent of blacks were recommitted to an ODYS facility.

Youth Crime Prevention Greater emphasis must be placed on prevention to reduce the incidence of violence among black youth in Ohio. Risk factors for juvenile delinquency include early child-bearing, low school achievement, low socioeconomic status, delinquent peers, and disorganized neighborhoods. Interventions to prevent youth violence typically address one or more of these risk factors. In general, the research on curtailing juvenile delinquency supports three general conclusions. First, interventions applied in early childhood appear to be more effective than interventions in adolescents. This suggests that providing parents of young children with training in parental skills and providing quality early childhood education may be effective strategies for reducing delinquency. Second, most interventions applied during adolescence have limited short-term benefits for reducing violence. Although short-term reductions in violence are beneficial, more time and resources are needed to redirect the attitudes and behaviors of youth. Finally, community-based interventions may be more effective than secure-based interventions for reducing recidivism and marginalization among young offenders.

The best approach will likely involve some combination of efforts focusing on various aspects of prevention, addressing structural, educational, and economic disparities, and reducing the consequences of crime for communities.

Policy Recommendations and Future Research

This report provides a glimpse into the status of blacks in crime and criminal justice in Ohio. While “Equal Justice Under the Law” is the foundation of our legal system, the justice system is far from
equitable in its treatment of African Americans. Throughout the system, blacks in Ohio receive different and harsher treatment for similar offenses. As a result, disproportionate numbers of African Americans, particularly young males, are too often subjected to all of the collateral consequences of arrests, convictions, and incarcerations. The problem of racial disparity in the criminal justice system deserves immediate attention. Ignoring such harmful disparities reiterates common stereotypes of the “criminal black man” as the face of modern crime. These recommendations will hopefully serve to reduce the structural disparities that plague the African-American community with regard to crime and criminal justice in Ohio.

**Eliminating Racially Patterned Structural Inequalities** Blacks are still more likely to live in areas characterized by concentrated disadvantage. In fact, there is such disparity in living in disadvantaged areas that “the worst urban contexts in which whites reside are considerably better off than the average context of black communities.”452 Moreover, studies have found support for the racial invariance thesis which asserts that environmental factors predict crime the same for all racial groups. This pattern of community context has explained racial differences in offending in several studies. For example, using a national sample of young adolescent males, research found that young black males who do not reside in an underclass neighborhood have offending rates that are similar to young white males.453 This finding that structural inequities are linked to crime is also evident in Ohio. The Ohio counties with the highest rates of offending correspond to the counties with the largest inner-city disadvantaged areas (i.e., Cuyahoga [Cleveland], Hamilton [Cincinnati], and Franklin [Columbus]). Thus, efforts to invest in the structural locations of communities seem to be promising approaches for reducing racial disparities in offending. Disadvantaged neighborhoods should be the beneficiaries of financial investment that will create legitimate opportunities for members to raise their communities out of disadvantage and the accompanying problems.

**Increased Use of Community-Based Corrections** A recent study in Ohio explored whether community-based alternatives such as half-way houses, probation, and electronic monitoring programs are more effective and cost efficient methods for reducing recidivism compared to jails and prisons. Overall, the study found that participants in community correction programs produce less recidivism compared to prison inmates and generally stay under the supervision of the State for shorter periods. They note that “high risk” offenders benefit the most from intensive community-based treatment programs while “low risk” offenders do not benefit as much from such programs and, in some cases, actually exhibit increases in recidivism. In addition, the State saves anywhere from $2,000 to $11,000 per person when using community corrections instead of prisons.454

Unfortunately, in November 2002, Ohio voters defeated a proposal to amend the Ohio Constitution to allow, with some restrictions, first and second-time drug offenders to be referred to a residential treatment facility in lieu of incarceration. Years later, Ohio is experiencing the devastating cost of mass incarceration above and beyond the fact that community corrections are cheaper than prison. It only seems logical that public policy should reconsider how to respond to offenders that research suggests benefit little from incarceration. Nevertheless, Ohioans have reasons to be optimistic: Ohio already diverts a significant number of offenders to community-based corrections compared to other states (North Carolina, Virginia, and Oregon), and the prison population has declined in recent years without reports of dramatic impacts on public safety.455 Since the State has already had some success with rehabilitation and treatment programs, policy makers should develop more community-based programs and expect some cost savings and community benefits.
Increase Residential Mobility Programs that Reduce Segregation  Another promising approach to addressing structural inequality has been residential mobility programs that place poor, black, inner-city families in higher-income more racially diverse neighborhoods. Notably, research on this approach has yielded some promising results. For example, residents that volunteered to move to lower crime suburban areas showed improvement in neighborhood economic conditions and two-thirds who initially moved to the suburbs continued to live in the suburbs years later.456 Furthermore, this study demonstrates that helping disadvantaged families move to racially diverse communities that are more economically prosperous serves to lower their neighborhood crime rates. As a result, victimization and the resulting negative consequences are reduced.

Increase Environmental and Situational Crime Prevention Efforts  It is common knowledge that “place” is associated with rates of violence. Frequently referred to as “hot spots,” studies have shown that over half of all calls requiring a police response involved only 3 percent of places.457 This line of research suggests that some places are safer than others in part because of their environmental characteristics. This line of research suggests that altering the environment can be an effective way to reduce the opportunity for crime. Some examples of some promising strategies include increased lighting on city streets, encouraging the legitimate use of space by designing buildings with windows overlooking sidewalks, and using city streets for mixed uses such as residential housing, restaurants, and retail stores to increase the detection of crime through natural surveillance.458 Over 100 studies suggest that opportunity reducing measures are an effective approach for reducing crime, particularly in areas of public housing. Given the overrepresentation of blacks in crime, it seems plausible that altering the environment in inner-cities may be an effective strategy for reducing the prevalence of offending in crime-prone areas.

More Evaluation Research  The problem of addressing racial disparity in the criminal justice system needs immediate attention. One of the most effective ways to understand this is to inquire about the effects of policy and programs before and after implementation. Prior to policies and laws being implemented, policy makers should consider the role race may play when deciding which behaviors to make illegal, what laws to enforce, and what punishments to assign to law infractions. The notorious disparities between the punishment for possession of cocaine versus the punishment for crack is a notable example of how the legal system responded to a crime epidemic before considering how it would differentially affect racial groups in society. Since law enforcement activities typically target crime-prone areas occupied by minorities, whites are better able to avoid detection and thereby reduce their likelihood of receiving a criminal sanction.

Once implemented, intervention strategies should be evaluated based on the degree they meet their goals of incarceration, reentry, rehabilitation and the like. For any conclusions to be drawn there needs to be more evaluations of existing programs, and strategies to analyze the extent to which the justice system is meeting the needs of the community and the populations they serve -- in a way that is fair to all racial groups.
Section XI

The State of Black Ohio: Moving Forward
SECTION XI: THE STATE OF BLACK OHIO - MOVING FORWARD

The State of Black Ohio: Systemic Challenges and Strategic Solutions

How can the State of Ohio effectively respond to improve conditions, especially given the limited public resources and worsening economic conditions? Where should we focus our efforts and resources? Where do we start -- and how do we produce real impacts? The challenges facing Ohio’s African American community are not independent and isolated, but interrelated and systemic, and will sustain disparate outcomes if they are not appropriately addressed. Educational disparities will hinder economic opportunities; unstable neighborhoods and concentrated poverty will contribute to crime and produce great health or safety risks and limit educational outcomes. We cannot repair and rebuild neighborhoods without improving economic and educational conditions. These interrelated challenges produce cumulative barriers to opportunity for many in Ohio’s African American population, barriers that are instrumentally depressing life outcomes for these Ohioans. These challenges not only limit the vitality of Ohio’s African American community, they pose a great risk to the strength, vitality and economic viability of the State as a whole. Ohio must adopt a common agenda for addressing these challenges, an agenda which is comprehensive but designed as a strategic approach to address the systematic barriers to opportunity facing Ohio’s Black community.

Developing a Broad Partnership: Recognizing Our Linked Fates and Our Common Future

Many of the people we interviewed for this study articulated challenges within the Black community that could resonate with all Ohioans, indeed all Americans: a divide between rich and poor, a gap between potentiality and actuality, the sad reality of uneven outcomes, and a hopeful sense of being poised for change. Across Ohio – indeed, across the nation – we see broad outlines of a society moving apart, segregating itself by race and class, a movement taking place within the context of global economic change and dislocation. Almost fifteen years ago, pre-eminent sociologist Douglas Massey observed an “unprecedented spatial intensification of both privilege and poverty”:

“They [poor people’s] social mobility is blocked by the emergence of a global economic structure characterized by stagnant mean incomes, rising inequality, and growing class rigidity; and their spatial mobility is stymied by a rising tide of class segregation that is exacerbated, in many places, by an ongoing pattern of deliberate racial and ethnic exclusion.”

Interviewees observed the same trend -- the growth of neighborhoods of segregated affluence and poverty -- in African American communities in Ohio:

“I would say that there is a group that is upwardly mobile, well educated, involved in the professions or businesses, and that group is doing well. I think there is an increasing number of African Americans who are part of the professional and business and education communities in Ohio. And there is a very large group of African Americans who have made little progress, who are still living in circumstances that involve poverty or near poverty.”

The gap between upper/middle and lower classes is getting broader. The issues and circumstances cultivating the culture of poverty and the disfranchisement of those folks are getting worse. Some folks are intractably mired in that. That is both systemic and attitudinal, but it has gotten worse for that end of the socio-economic continuum, worse than even 20 years ago.
Why should all Ohioans be concerned about class divides, marginalized populations, inequity and access to opportunity? Attending to inequalities strengthens our democracy, our schools, and our churches. Ignoring inequalities has a hard cost as well. Inequities across the State make us, in the aggregate, less educated, creative, and competitive at a time when our most important asset is our people and their innovative capacity. The staggering educational and socio-economic inequalities in Ohio harm all of Ohio’s residents and communities. Ohio’s residents and all of Ohio’s communities share a common future. The visibility of this interconnection grows more apparent as Ohio struggles with many of the 21st century challenges facing the State.

For example, subprime lending and escalating foreclosures have impacted our entire housing market and economy. These phenomena are concentrated in Ohio’s communities of color; predatory lending has been evident in these neighborhoods for years.459 The disproportionate impact of the subprime catastrophe in low-income, urban communities of color was due to the historic redlining in the mortgage and insurance industries, racial steering by real estate agents, labor market discrimination that kept residents’ incomes below average, a lack of capital investment in communities of color (such as investment in retail and grocery stores) that ultimately depressed neighborhood housing values, the proliferation of exploitative credit “options” such as rent-to-own and payday lending storefronts, and the lack of appropriate regulation in the financial and banking industry, etc.

Had we prevented the growth of poor credit products in these communities at an earlier stage, we could have potentially avoided the rapid escalation of our housing and foreclosure crisis. Communities of color often represent our most marginalized communities in society, and larger systemic challenges facing our society are often first evident in marginalized communities or among marginalized populations. This phenomenon is described in the Miner’s Canary by Lani Guiner and Gerald Torrez.460 By addressing these systemic challenges early, we provide insurance against these challenges expanding to broader society. As noted by one interview respondent, the African American community has always been impacted first by Ohio’s housing problems:

“African Americans are bearing the brunt of the [housing] problems here. The mortgage problems have been going [on] for 10 years. In 2000, there were conferences on predatory lending. [It’s] only on the radar now because it’s affecting Whites, upper-income people, [and] people across the globe. Talk about the canary in the coal mine illustration!”

Systemic Challenges Require Systemic Solutions

Many in the African American community face barriers across multiple domains (education, employment, safety, family stability) across their lifespan, from childhood to adulthood. These barriers to opportunity are cumulative and are constantly interacting, building layers of disparate outcomes throughout the lifespan of people living in marginalized areas. To remedy these challenges we must understand and respect the complexity of these arrangements and interactions. We must also design solutions and to strategically disrupt the web of isolation and exclusion found in impoverished African American communities. These activities must identify critical intervention points for action, be goal-oriented (not process-oriented) and consider multi-dimensional strategies to address community challenges. 461

As Jeffrey Sachs, author of The End of Poverty notes, “economies, like individuals, are complex systems.”462 Instead of viewing problems in the system as interlinked, we often view them as isolated and independent. This view creates many challenges and unintended consequences when we attempt
to intervene in the system without understanding its complexity. Sachs advises policy makers to adopt the methods of clinical physicians: (1) understand the “snowball effect” (one system failure can lead to other system failures); (2) utilize differential diagnosis (assuming that multiple causes can lead to a problem); (3) craft personalized remedies reflective of unique community conditions; (4) recognize that conditions are related to other actors in the system; and, (5) monitor and evaluate progress to assure they are outcome-oriented. Similar rules should apply to bringing a systems analysis (or clinical model) to efforts to address the systemic challenges facing the African American community. This systems analysis or clinical model must be utilized to develop a common agenda and strategic plan for Ohio’s African American community.

For example, if we were to take a systemic approach to health and wellness, we would recognize that residential segregation is harmful to life outcomes in a number of ways. If we are to take seriously the goal of promoting wellness for all, we must implement a comprehensive approach that includes neighborhood and housing policy, as well as education and employment interventions. We must work across sectors, and broaden what we understand as “health” policy. Similarly, if we want to improve academic outcomes, we could utilize the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program to develop affordable family housing in areas with high performing schools, or support efforts to place a moratorium on foreclosures to minimize disruptive moves and family stress.

**Building Our Future Together: Opportunity for All**

Unfortunately, segregation into neighborhoods of unequal opportunity will only widen the divides among and within Ohio’s communities. We must knit ourselves back together as one Ohio by communicating and acting upon four broad principles:

- Provide access to neighborhoods of high opportunity for all Ohioans.
- Ensure that all Ohioans have access to high-quality public services and opportunity structures, beginning with core strengthening services: education and health care.
- Make all Ohioans and Ohio businesses competitive in the 21st century economy.
- Define a common agenda and strategic plan for strengthening Black Ohio, along with a communications plan for why this strengthens Ohio for everyone.

**Goals and sample strategies**

*Provide access to neighborhoods of high opportunity for all Ohioans*

Preserve the supply of existing affordable housing and expand the supply of decent housing for low- to moderate-income families in opportunity rich neighborhoods across the metropolitan area.

*Plan for the development of affordable housing on a regional scale that intentionally connects housing to quality schools, plentiful employment opportunities, and an accessible transportation infrastructure.*

Deliberate efforts must also be made to direct resources and cultivate opportunities in distressed neighborhoods or communities. A balance between in-place strategies (neighborhood and community revitalization) and mobility-based strategies (opportunity-based housing) is needed to make a transformative impact. Neighborhood and community revitalization is an important but challenging goal. Revitalization is a complex, dynamic and long-term challenge. Successfully intervening to bring positive and transformative change to distressed areas requires a long-term commitment, extensive collaboration, in-depth community engagement, a multi-faceted approach and the ability to leverage initiatives with public policy and private dollars.
**Ensure that all Ohioans have access to high-quality public services and opportunity structures, beginning with core strengthening services: education and health care**

**Education** Attract and retain high performing teachers to the most distressed schools. The State could research, support and expand the Ohio Teacher Incentive Fund, fund a teacher retention pilot program in high need schools and districts, or consider a housing assistance program in order to attract teachers to high need districts.

Expand access to high-performing, low-poverty schools. Offer students more choice in where to attend school; provide affordable housing in job-rich, high-opportunity neighborhoods; and improve linkages that help students in failing schools attend low-poverty, high-performing schools. Increase student retention through efforts to stabilize housing. For example, the State could establish a universal statewide curriculum to mitigate the effect of high levels of student mobility.

**Health Care** Pursue expanded healthcare access and coverage. For example, maximize funding to community health centers in medically underserved areas and support the implementation of patient-centered medical homes. Fund the widespread expansion and implementation of health information technology. Provide subsidies to help low-wage workers afford employer-sponsored coverage. Attract and retain students of color in healthcare jobs. For example, fund early outreach programs between universities and K-12 schools for children that are interested in a career in the medical field. Increase cultural competency in research and practice. For example, support medical research that focuses on disease incidence rates, treatment and wellness for African American populations. Target health outreach programs for children. Direct funds towards ensuring more children are enrolled in Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance program. Simplify the enrollment & reenrollment process in Medicaid. Ensure that every school, particularly low income schools, have a full-time nurse on staff.

**Make all Ohioans and Ohio businesses competitive in the 21st century economy**

Connect workers and minority businesses to growing sectors of the economy. For example, the State could work with local jurisdictions and land banks to offer low-cost land and building space to minority companies looking to expand in STEM and healthcare fields, or provide tax incentives for minority-owned STEM and healthcare businesses, as well as those that consistently work with and hire minorities. Foster inclusive and equitable regional economic development. Provide financial support to regional collaboration efforts that are actively engaged with minority business enterprises and include representation from the minority business leaders.

Use stimulus investments strategically to support communities and people most in need. The State should target investments to areas with the highest foreclosure rates, poverty rates, and unemployment rates, among other indicators. The State should use its discretion to prioritize or incentivize EDGE and MBE participation in stimulus projects. The State should capitalize on Federal guidelines for inclusive development. For example, under SAFETEA-LU, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation must allow communities the option of creating their own agreements around local and minority hiring. Monitor statewide economic recovery funds for their impact on marginalized groups and areas (areas of rural and urban isolation; women; people of color; etc.). Ohio could hire a “Stimulus CEO” to track spending, advocate for sustainable investments in undercapitalized communities and people, and liaise among state, local and advocacy groups.
Capitalize and connect minority businesses throughout the State. The State could strategically fund existing MBEs to align with stimulus funding, the Department of Development Strategic Plan, and higher education commercial research priorities.

Define a common agenda and strategic plan for strengthening Black Ohio, along with a communications plan for why this strengthens Ohio for everyone.

This recommendation is the heart of the report recommendations. It is the first and most important step towards strengthening black Ohio. We have articulated needs, opportunities, potential goals, and workable strategies, but without a strategic plan and a communications strategy, we will not move policy forward effectively. This will take concerted effort, leadership, and intentionality. As stated in stakeholder interviews:

“The community has a lot of needs and officials can become quickly overwhelmed; there is no common agenda for addressing the needs of African Americans in Ohio.”

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“I have a lament, I guess. It goes to the point I made about our weakness: that there isn’t a greater sense of community, common agenda, especially for those African Americans on the lower end of the spectrum.”

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 “[The response needed is] a strategic plan to create a common agenda so that no matter what the arena...that [we] would identify key outcomes to improve, such as targeting those on the lower end of the socio-economic continuum.”

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“There should probably be a strategic plan for the development of the African American community, or a strengthening of the African American community. Because if we want to grow business, have a good education system, and have anything that is progressive, we have to be intentional about it. In order to make sure the African American community is strong, we have to be intentional about that as well, and that would require strategic planning.”

Conclusion

This assessment shows that Black Ohio has made great strides and will hopefully continue to grow. However, some troubling trends indicate that Ohio is at a crossroads. Although the economic recession is having widespread effects, although all of Ohio (and indeed the Rust Belt economy) is struggling with the dislocations of a global economy, Black families and communities still bear the brunt of these challenges. Ohio’s Black communities’ rates of poverty and unemployment are growing faster than Black rates nationwide. Despite impressive gains in Black political, educational, business and civic leadership in Ohio, there is a growing segment of the most marginalized in the Black community who have not seen similar successes. These families largely reside in neighborhoods of little opportunity. To raise the achievements of all of Black Ohio, and indeed all of Ohio, Ohio policymakers must develop a strategic plan to uplift and connect marginalized, low-income Black communities to Ohio’s areas of promise. We have outlined research findings, advocated for a particular framework for action, and suggested particular strategies. The next step for Ohio’s policy leaders is the development and articulation of a common vision and strategic plan. This will require strong leadership, intentional inclusion, and a communications strategy.
An immediate area of focus should be one which tracks the State allocation of its economic recovery funds. The Kirwan Institute advocates for federal money to be spent in three ways: transparently, according to need, and directed to shrink, not grow, the opportunity divide. First, policymakers should advocate for transparent tracking of federal funds and monitor where and to whom the money is flowing. Second, resources should be directed to those most in need. For example, did funds reach our most marginalized communities? Are more people in need getting training and workforce development? Are neighborhood stabilization funds targeted to communities most impacted by the foreclosure crisis? Third, the use of federal money could further entrench inequality, or could help close the growing gap between low-income, isolated communities and those with a broad set of rich opportunities. As a state, as a nation, and as an interconnected world, we will only be more productive if we connect our isolated communities and families to the opportunity structures we all need to succeed: high-quality educational opportunities, preventative health care, affordable housing in safe neighborhoods, fair credit for families and businesses, and options for civic engagement. We need to keep long-term data to assess not only where the funds went, but how effectively they served to narrow troubling gaps in opportunity.

Next, policymakers need to move beyond the stimulus funding to consider statewide policies with the same perspective. Black Ohioans can use this moment to build coalitions with other communities disproportionately impacted by the recession, and eager to rebuild a new economy: women’s groups, smart growth advocates, Somalis, Latinos, and the labor movement. Are all Ohioans able to access neighborhoods of high opportunity? Are all Ohio businesses competitive in a 21st-century economy? This requires intentional efforts towards robust civic inclusion, creative policy design, responsible administration, and an effective communications strategy. Given all of Black Ohio’s strengths and Ohio’s diverse set of educational, business, political, faith, medical and cultural assets, Ohio is positioned to do this and do it well. A strategic plan for Black Ohio can push Ohio past this crossroads and into a fair, sustainable, and just future.
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The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity is a university-wide interdisciplinary research institute. We partner with people, communities, and institutions worldwide to think about, talk about, and act on race in ways that create and expand opportunity for all.

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