SHINING THE LIGHT: REVEALING OUR CHOICE

ISAIAH

AND

THE KIRWAN INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

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May 2010

Grace and peace to you. My name is Deb Stehlin and I am pastor at Light of the World Lutheran Church in Farmington, Minnesota.

The document in your hand is the result of collaboration between leaders in ISAIAH and the Kirwan Institute for Race and Ethnicity from the Ohio State University. For some time now, leaders in our faith communities have been grappling with hard questions about race and economic equity in our region, and the good research in this document can help you more fully understand how we got to be a state in which there are glaring disparities. But more importantly, this document gives us a new way of thinking and talking and acting so that in the future, our children will inherit a state that is a place of opportunity for all of God’s children.

What does this have to do with our faith? At first glance, this document may seem to be written for those who love to think about policy. But I see it as a moral document, and a loud and clear call from God, propelling us into this new way of thinking and talking and acting.

God has put inside of me a kind of “holy dissatisfaction.” When I look out at the world that God loves so much, I am dissatisfied when policy decisions are made that benefit some, and many of my neighbors are left out—or harmed. Christians are called to bring their “holy dissatisfaction” into the public arena so that when every policy is made, there is first a conversation about equity. All stakeholders are at the table. And providing access to opportunity for all is the primary value guiding decision-making.

Why would a white pastor of a suburban church be so passionate about this? Because I do not want to live in a community where there are dividing walls between people -- where policies are enacted that help some to thrive and not others. My future is connected with the future of the 45 percent of African American kids who won’t graduate from high school this year. My future is connected with the future of the 33 percent of Hmong kids who live in poverty. My future is connected with the nurse who rides the bus four hours a day to get to her job; with the family from my church that chose expensive health insurance over mortgage payments and lost their home.

But God has promised a different future for us. A future where dividing walls between God’s beloved children come crashing down. A future where each beautiful, worthy child can grow up to be all that she wants to be. And God is calling me to be part of co-creating that future. Is God calling you, too?

All lit up,

The Rev. Deb Stehlin
Light of the World Lutheran Church
Farmington, MN
Introduction

For many, Minnesota is a state where the American “good life” has survived; some might even say that it has even thrived. Minnesota has long been touted as one of the healthiest places in the country to live. A seminal 1973 *Time* magazine article painted a picture of a Minnesota that was largely white, solidly middle class, had a highly-educated population, and was one of the nation’s “brain centers.” A commitment to education, environmental quality, living conditions and economic opportunity played a key role in the state’s high health rankings. Unfortunately, the “good life” in Minnesota, while an alluring narrative, was and is reality only for some Minnesotans. Many residents were excluded – and for them the opportunity to share in the good life remains elusive. For the rest of Minnesotans, the good life is fading. When we allow inequities to exist and grow, the entire population and State pays the price with worse health and decreased opportunity. There is a fault line in our State’s foundation. If we sit by, this fault will continue to grow, and in the process all Minnesotans will be at risk, now and in the future.

As Minnesotans we need to fundamentally realign our public policies if we wish to create a sustainable and prosperous future that provides opportunity for all. Minnesota’s current public policies are not working to assure the conditions necessary for a healthy future for our State. We know this because we can measure glaring inequities along every major indicator used to measure the health of a community. It is evident in the Minnesota public schools, where students of color continue to lag white students on proficiency tests by a wide margin, and drop out of high school at rates 2 to 5 times higher than white students.1 It is evident in our housing and finance markets, where predatory lending was targeted to urban, historically disinvested communities of color, and where prime-qualifying borrowers of color were steered into subprime loans.2 Neighborhood targeting and lack of consumer protections resulted in a foreclosure epidemic – a disastrous loss of home equity and community stability. It is evident in the most critical areas of our collective lives.

We are all hurt by these inequities. Although the symptoms of a system at risk may first become apparent in our most vulnerable and marginalized communities, including communities of color and isolated rural and Native communities, the risk will not be confined to these groups. For example, the subprime crisis initially harmed our urban, disinvested communities of color before spreading to suburban and exurban markets and higher-income white communities, eventually affecting the entire global housing and credit system. Public health data shows that the very existence of inequities between groups hurts the health of all groups.3 Even more “privileged” groups fail to reach the levels of health that are possible when there are inequities in opportunity.

Inequities are built, and they can be dismantled. Policies, practices and assumptions create uneven opportunities and burdens that are perpetuated today by the status quo. We need to recognize and change those policies, practices, and assumptions that create inequality of opportunity. To do this, we must acknowledge that we are still living with the consequences of historical and legal racial segregation, despite the anti-discrimination laws that signaled an end to *de jure* segregation. Policies may be racially neutral on their face, but they are often not neutral in effect. Once we acknowledge that the system is producing disparate and unfair outcomes, we can begin to work for change.
That time is now—Minnesota is at a moment of decision. The upcoming governor’s race provides a window of opportunity for real change, but the current political debate has not captured the need for transformative change. Instead, officials are looking at the structural budget deficit and fighting over where to cut spending, just to scrape by, without recognizing that our marginalized communities of color, already disadvantaged, will bear the brunt of these decisions. These piecemeal approaches do not acknowledge the true nature of the problem and will not create healthy, thriving communities.

Instead of looking at individual programs, we need to re-focus the conversation on how we make decisions, how we allocate resources, and the outcomes of our policies. So far, the outcomes of many of our policies – whether by design or inattention—have increased inequities along every major socioeconomic indicator, including housing, education, health, income, and employment. The challenges Minnesota is facing go beyond a current budget deficit, highlighting a system—and a state—at risk. In order to change the direction of Minnesota and put Minnesota back on track for the good life, we need a new way of thinking, talking, and acting—we need to redefine what the “good life” is, and for whom we want it.

The search for sustainability and renewal must be based on a more equitable vision of community. As the federal government is sending trillions of dollars in stimulus funding to states and on to local governments and into neighborhoods, we need to make sure that we are not throwing good money into broken systems. This is especially critical for Minnesota and its fiscal crisis. New policies must be designed, and a new path forged. Even more importantly for Minnesota, this path can be undertaken without fiscal burden in the immediate term. Simply changing the criteria against which policies are judged promises a path to renewal and a future where all Minnesotans—white, people of color, and tribal communities—can share equally in “the good life.”

In the face of these challenges, ISAIAH leaders came together to develop new principles to guide us on a path towards healthy, equitable, livable communities, and against which policies should be judged. These principles are:

1. **Restorative investment in the most marginalized communities that prepares for the future of Minnesota**
2. **Opening access to opportunity, cultivating all human potential**
3. **Growing together, integrating and connecting communities**
Restorative investment describes investment that is targeted to those communities most impacted by our current economic recession, and that have borne the brunt of policies that favored new, suburban, white communities. Examples of this investment include community development, resident capacity building, job training, small and minority business lending, and neighborhood revitalization.

Opening access to opportunity is defined as affirmatively connecting people to opportunity through, for example, opening up housing choices through inclusionary zoning policies, de-concentrating subsidized housing, re-thinking school boundaries, and providing quality, comprehensive public transit.

Growing together is defined as building healthy environments for all, and providing newcomers with access to opportunity. An example of this might be building strong coalitions between city-suburb-tribal governments, developing regional master plans, or coordinating and integrating housing, transportation, and infrastructure plans.

These principles are the true markers of success for communities. To the extent that our policies and decision-making processes achieve these goals, then we can confidently say that Minnesota truly is a state of opportunity, where the health of the communities and people of Minnesota is the top priority.
Achieving sustainable, positive change amidst inequality and economic instability is a monumental challenge. At the heart of this challenge is a new vision of an inclusive society – inclusive physically, socially, economically and spiritually. We know where we have been, and we know how we have gotten to this state of crisis. One of the more difficult parts of this process will be in getting people to challenge the status quo even if the current system has worked to their individual advantage, because it has not worked to everyone’s advantage. Connecting people from all different walks of life, with various needs, opportunities, and barriers of their own to this new vision, engaging them, is no easy task. This report provides an opportunity for engaging that broader conversation to deepen our understanding of our shared history, the policies and processes that benefited some people and communities over others, and to begin working towards a model of decision-making that values equity, health and livability as the markers of success.

In the spirit of developing this new understanding and promoting a new path forward, ISAIAH reached out to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University. We knew that understanding structural racialization was a critical component in building a state of opportunity. The Kirwan Institute is known for its commitment to understanding and remedying racial and ethnic hierarchies, partly by focusing on the policies that create and sustain them. Their work is premised on the belief that opportunities exist in a complex web of interdependent factors, and that to alleviate inequities in any single area, the structures that supports these inequities must first be considered. Kirwan is also known for its research on community revitalization and building “Communities of Opportunity,” a model of fair housing and community development. The Communities of Opportunity model is based on the premises that everyone should have meaningful access to the critical opportunity structures needed to succeed in life, and that affirmatively connecting people to opportunity creates positive, transformative change in communities. To illustrate this model, Kirwan has created opportunity maps for cities, states, and organizations around the country. Kirwan and Isaiah are working collaboratively to develop three reports: this report focusing on the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, a “field guide” for organizers, and a report with a special focus on St. Cloud, Minnesota. They present their initial analysis of the current and historic state of opportunity in the Minneapolis metro area, and preliminary recommendations for moving forward, below.
Preparing for the Future: The Changing State of Minnesota

Minnesota is changing. Most notably, the composition of the state will be changing: estimates by the Minnesota State Demographic Center project that between 2005 and 2035, the population of color in Minnesota will have grown by 121%, while total population will have increased by 24.2%. The increasing diversity of Minnesota is something to be celebrated, but the current and historic reality of segregation and inequitable outcomes places the promise of a vibrant future for all Minnesotans at risk. If the State continues on its current path, educational inequities and labor market disparities may only increase. If fewer people are prepared to enter the 21st Century workforce, while facing increased health care, education, and homeownership costs, the entire state will suffer. Public policies have often put communities of color at a disadvantage. The task before Minnesota now is to rethink its decision-making processes and policies so that all Minnesotans are uplifted. People need to design policies and processes that reflect the future Minnesota, that is, a diverse Minnesota.

The outcomes in public education provide a compelling example of why Minnesota needs to change. The Minnesota Public Schools (MPS) system is becoming increasingly segregated, both racially and economically (see Table 1). Communities of color and tribal communities represent about 14% of the total population in Minnesota, but MPS is over-represented by children of color and American Indian students; almost one-quarter (23.6%) of the Minnesota public school K-12 enrollments in 2008 were students of color, and American Indian. Because racial isolation often corresponds with concentrated poverty, minority-majority schools are often in high poverty areas. The effects of concentrated poverty in schools are especially troubling. New studies are showing that living in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood characterized by racial and economic isolation is equivalent to missing an entire year of school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Nonwhite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Minnesota Department of Education

Not only are the schools becoming increasingly segregated by race and income, but the gap in achievements is widening. Math and reading proficiency tests for 2008 revealed stark disparities in student skills (see Tables 2 and 3 below).
Since 2002-2003, students of color and American Indian students have been 2 to 5 times more likely to drop out of high school than white students. Those students that do graduate show little readiness to pursue higher education, across the board. These figures should be extremely alarming to people who care about the future of Minnesota. The state is becoming increasingly diverse, which means its workforce is changing, and yet the educational system is failing students of color and American Indian students. Many children are not graduating, and if they are graduating, they are not prepared for post-secondary education and therefore will miss the opportunity to obtain well-paying jobs and become contributing members to society. Not only are the foundations for a prosperous future not being laid, but Minnesota is on the verge of a retirement boom. Between 2005 and 2035, the population 65 and over will more than double, while the population under 65 will only grow by about 10%. There is serious doubt as to whether Minnesota’s educational system is preparing students to fill these potential job

![Table 1](image1.png)

Table 1: Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, Inc. “State of Students of Color and American Indian Students, 2009.”

![Table 3](image2.png)

Table 3: Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, Inc. “State of Students of Color and American Indian Students, 2009.”
openings, even as the future of Minnesota’s economic health in a globalized, knowledge-based economy depends on a skilled workforce.

Path to Crisis

The startling disparities in health, education, housing, transportation, and jobs clearly outline a racial divide. When identifiable groups face restricted access to opportunities in housing, education, health and so on, the entire state suffers. With these racial disparities dividing the state and limiting access to opportunity for millions of Minnesotans, it is critical to understand how Minnesota got on this path to crisis.

Part of the answer can be found by looking at policies and practices that guide where the state puts its development dollars, physically and with respect to its people. In American history, the federal government -- and many states, including Minnesota -- implemented policies and practices for a white “us.” Government implemented policies, first overtly racist and later less so, that concentrated resources in white communities and overlooked or disinvested in communities of color. Despite the fact that racist practices are no longer legal and the country has made much progress in terms of racial attitudes, as a nation we continue to experience the legacy of these systemic disadvantages and we (perhaps unintentionally) reinforce the status quo. This is called structural racialization. In other words, policies may be racially neutral on their face, but they are not neutral in effect.

Structural racialization has produced racialized outcomes including targeted disinvestment, restrictive barriers to opportunity, and isolated neighborhoods. And because of this, people in many communities are unable to achieve “the good life” to which all Minnesotans have a right.

Targeted Disinvestment

Targeted disinvestment in neighborhoods stems from racialized Federal Housing Agency (FHA) practices that date back to the 1930s. An excerpt from the 1947 FHA Underwriting Manual reads, “If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally contributes to instability and a decline in values.” Figure 2 below shows a redlining map of Philadelphia. The 1935 city planning map of the Harrison neighborhood is proof of this, and shows how racist practices infiltrated policy-making, with the categories of “negro section,” “middle class” and the “gold coast,” showing both income and race distinctions (Figure 3).
Based on FHA guidelines, neighborhoods were categorized by credit-worthiness, with “the highest category going to new, racially homogenous, all-white neighborhoods…. The lowest appraisal value was given to all-African American neighborhoods, regardless of the age of the dwellings or the income of the residents.”

FHA staff urged lenders to “not insure mortgages on homes unless they were covered by a racially restrictive covenant, [or] located in racially homogenous neighborhoods…. As a result of this classification, banks were less likely to lend in such neighborhoods. The refusal of mortgages in such areas was known as red-lining.

Although red-lining has since been outlawed, patterns and practices of discrimination in housing markets have persisted. With little residential or commercial lending from mainstream banking institutions for decades, isolated communities of color have suffered from high cost “fringe” institutions that have little competition. This includes payday lenders, rent-to-own, check cashing, and subprime lenders. Without access to fair credit, many families are vulnerable to predatory lending practices and subprime loans. For example, in North Minneapolis, where over half of the residents are people of color and 20-25% of the people live below the poverty level, home purchase loans were 3.6 times more likely, and refinance loans 2.3 times more likely, to be subprime than loans located elsewhere in the Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA. Data show that subprime lenders originated a disproportionate share of their lending in North Minneapolis, while prime lenders did relatively little lending in the community. In a study of the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the US, the Twin Cities ranked last in the availability of bank branch locations in predominantly minority census tracts.

Housing is the main source for building wealth in the US, especially for homeowners of color, representing two-thirds of the wealth of African Americans. But both the racialized housing policies of the FHA and the more recent predatory practices by lending institutions have had a lasting effect on the ability of communities of color to build wealth. Consider that in 2007, for every dollar held by whites, Blacks held ten cents, and that while whites have a median net worth of $88,651, Blacks have a median net worth of $5,988. Nationally, the foreclosure and subprime crisis represents a loss of wealth to the tune of $164 billion to $213 billion for households of color. The subprime and foreclosure crisis has brought a staggering loss of equity for homeowners, reduced property values, and reversed gains in minority homeownership.
rates. These effects have broad impact: unpaid property taxes on foreclosed homes also affect municipal budgets, and reinforce existing biases about lending in low-income and communities of color, ultimately leading to further disinvestment in the hardest hit communities.

So not only did the federal government subsidize the growth of homeownership for white middle class families in the suburbs, but made this subsidization contingent upon racial residential segregation, and private industry—real estate developers and bankers—was then happy to follow suit.

**Restrictive Barriers**

The importance of housing extends beyond building wealth. It also affects access to opportunity. After all, the location of one’s home determines whether one’s child will have access to a quality education, which is critical for obtaining a well-paying job. This in turn contributes to financial stability and long-term well-being. However, the same racialized policies that segregated housing have also resulted in segregated schools. For example, school district boundaries often reinforce the racial segregation found in neighborhoods, and school funding mechanisms, relying largely on property taxes, further entrench racial and economic segregation. While *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 signaled a victory for civil rights advocates with the ruling that separate was not equal and called for the immediate integration of America’s public schools, subsequent US Supreme Court rulings have paved the way for school resegregation, most notably *Missouri v. Jenkins*, which ruled that school districts could be based on neighborhood lines unless intentional racial discrimination could be proven, even if the result was segregated schools. Following these Supreme Court rulings, many school districts in cities across the United States are dismantling desegregation orders, including Minneapolis.
Unfortunately, when school integration is no longer intentional, racial and economic segregation can re-emerge. In 2006, for instance, the Hopkins School District decided to close a small, racially-isolated school due to budget constraints. Four new attendance boundary scenarios were considered, one of which was very integrative. Faced with the potential of integrating the schools, white parents from Glen Lake Elementary School threatened to enroll their children in the predominately white Minnetonka School District unless the integrative option was taken off the table. The least integrative option was chosen. With this decision, Minnesotans chose a course of action which resulted in further school segregation. As a school becomes more segregated and less resourced, well-to-do families bypass those neighborhoods for better-performing schools in the suburbs. And so the cycle repeats, and patterns of segregation and isolation become entrenched.

Racial segregation in schools matters deeply for children’s educational outcomes. Racial segregation is correlated with economic segregation, and children of color are much more likely to attend high poverty schools than their white counterparts. Research has consistently found that there is a “negative effect of high poverty concentrations in school on students’ academic achievement.” In fact, the poverty of a school affects student performance more than the poverty of an individual. Impoverished students do better if they live in middle-class neighborhoods and/or attend more affluent schools. Students attending economically and racially segregated schools face many challenges. As one study has found, “high poverty schools have to devote far more time and resources to family and health crises, security, children who come to school not speaking standard English, seriously disturbed children, children with no educational materials in their homes, and many children with very weak educational preparation.” Low-income students and students of color are also less likely to have qualified teachers, more likely to have teachers who completed an alternative certification program, and are more likely to be taught by substitute teachers.

In Minnesota, although only 5% of the public school students are black, 57.1% of all black students attend a school where the majority of students are black. These racially and economically segregated schools, primarily concentrated in the Minneapolis and St. Paul region, rank among the lowest in terms of school quality. Reading and math scores, as well as graduation rates, for students in segregated schools are much lower than those of their white counterparts in suburban school districts. For instance, the graduation rate for Minneapolis public schools is approximately 55%, while the rest of the region has graduation rates of 88-100%. When students from segregated schools do graduate, they are still not as well-prepared for college as their white counterparts. For instance, in Minnesota, 66% of white students were ready for college while only 10% of Black students were prepared. Considering that a college education leads to higher paying jobs, such students will not be able to fairly compete in the job market with their white counterparts who have a college degree. This leads to the disparity in median household income between whites and Blacks. For example, in the Twin Cities whites have a median household income of $56,642, while the median household income for Blacks is $29,404. With an aging population that is set to retire soon, potential workers are not adequately prepared to fill those job openings. The trend is clear: segregation in housing leads to segregation in schools, which results in a segregated job market.

**Isolated Neighborhoods**

While racialized policies and practices have segregated neighborhoods along racial lines, leading to segregated schools and disparities in wealth and income, investment of transportation dollars has been, and continues to be, another key mechanism for further isolating communities. Not only did the federal government subsidize racial segregation by favoring white suburban
homeownership over integrated and urban communities, but the federal government built the roads that carried the white middle class out of the central city. Highways were even designed to divide communities along racial lines, further isolating communities of color, in the name of “urban renewal”—a program that actually decimated entire neighborhoods of color, displacing city residents from their communities and re-housing them in high-rise public housing projects. And state policies continue this trend today, favoring highway and metropolitan spending over infrastructure investments in the central cities.

There has been no similar investment in public transportation, an investment that would help communities located in the central city, which are disproportionately communities of color and low-income. Those communities are often most in need of affordable public transportation options because they lack auto ownership. Transportation spending has instead decentralized, enabling the continued sprawl of affluent, white suburban homeowners by favoring highway construction. This is not to suggest that suburban homeowners are wholly or equally benefitting from this discrepancy in investment—this spending also does not reflect the emerging reality that transportation and housing cost burdens for many suburban homeowners are increasing as well. A recent study finds that in Minneapolis, working families spend approximately 30% of their income on transportation, and 27% on housing, for a combined share of 57%. And not everyone in the suburbs is “living the good life.” In fact, in the 25 largest metro areas in the US, the suburbs witnessed the fastest growth in poverty between 2000 and 2008, especially in the Midwest. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area, the poverty rate in the suburbs grew by 8%, from 46% in 2000 to 54% in 2008.

Just as housing and transportation spending have decentralized, so has employment. Currently there is a spatial mismatch between housing, jobs, and transit access. While federal programs and exclusionary land use policies have concentrated affordable housing in segregated, low opportunity communities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, employment growth is increasingly decentralized. A Metropolitan Council study found that in the Twin City area, seven out of ten entry-level jobs were located in the suburbs, while more than half the people on welfare lived in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Therefore low-income residents face a choice: do they assume the

Table 4: Trends in Public Spending on Transportation and Water Infrastructure, 1956 to 2004, August 2007. Congressional Budget Office.
high cost of car ownership or rely on public transportation that has fixed routes, limiting the number of places that may be reached?

Often times this means that those people who need these entry-level jobs the most will be unable to access them. Even if workers decide to use public transit, dependence on a public transit system that does not have a commitment to comprehensive service results in unpredictable service, increasing the risk of job loss.\textsuperscript{35} Long commutes to the suburbs where most of the jobs are located also strains family relationships—there is less time for family responsibilities, less time to spend with children, and higher day care costs.\textsuperscript{36} The current system of public transit and transportation investment not only neglects the need for central city, low-income residents to access opportunities in the suburbs, but also neglects the needs of the suburban residents who would benefit from a connected, regional transit system.

Despite recent investments in public transit in the Minneapolis-St Paul region, insufficient transit dollars exist to meet the areas of high need. Take for instance the 2008 Minnesota Transportation Funding Bill passed by the state legislature. The Bill invests $140 million per year in transit, making it possible to build a light rail system to connect Minneapolis, St Paul and suburban communities. While this provides a fixed backbone for a growing transit system, these funds can only be used for capital projects. The funds for operating the light rail and bus system continue to face shortfalls each budget cycle; the threat of fare hikes and schedule cuts is ongoing.

The existence of dedicated transit funding allows light rail projects to leverage federal funding for construction of the project. Federal assistance also introduces significant new requirements on project plans. Therefore, the original light rail line design for University Avenue, a central artery of the system, focused on meeting time efficiency criteria. The resulting route bypassed racially diverse areas, including the Old Rondo Neighborhood. Torn apart by the urban renewal highway construction of I-94 in the 1960s, it appeared as if once again, the Old Rondo neighborhood would bear the brunt of racialized policies and practices. Only after public outcry was the plan revised to include three stops in this area. While this took a big fight, it will take even more for the full investment of the Central Corridor light rail line (nearly $1 Billion) to achieve equitable outcomes for community members living and working along the corridor. As the project progresses, local residents’ ability to retain affordable housing, sustain small businesses through the disruptions of the construction phase on University Ave, and access jobs building the corridor will be tested.

Whether it is parents trying to make the best school decision for their children or transportation officials seeking innovative ways to connect people while receiving the most return on their investment, these examples show how policies and actions have racial effects, regardless of intentions, and how racialized policies can seemingly take on a life of their own.

Federal policies and laws have historically provided a framework of racialized policymaking for the states, and many state governments have continued this trend, including Minnesota. States maintain these structural inequalities through their approach to affordable housing that continues the concentration of public housing in low-income communities of color, their policies around economic development and the housing and jobs mismatch, the continued subsidization of highways over comprehensive public transit, and how they correct for unequal educational outcomes. Local governments also have a great deal of control in perpetuating structural inequalities. They have control over zoning, taxation, public services, public education, and economic development as well. Minnesota has been on the path to crisis for a long time. But there is now an opportunity to change and choose a path to build healthy communities for all. The change is not an easy one to make, and it must occur at all levels of government. But continuing
with policies that fail many of our communities—which is what the current path promises—is no longer an option.

The Path to Healthy Communities

The good news is that things can change. The old systems that perpetuate inequities can be dismantled, and a new Minnesota that works for all built in their place. A first step in this process is agreeing on a vision of what a healthy Minnesota should look like, what the systems and institutions should do—for example, an educational system that prepares all students for the global economy and the chance to prosper, and in so doing, help Minnesota prosper. The path to prosperity, one of sustainability and renewal, must be based on a more equitable vision of community. ISAIAH identified three outcomes of the path to crisis: targeted disinvestment, restricted opportunity, and isolated communities. To alter the course, ISAIAH has identified three principles against which policies should be measured, and progress judged. These are:

1. **Restorative investment in the most marginalized communities that prepares for the future of Minnesota**
2. **Opening access to opportunity, cultivating all human potential**
3. **Growing together, integrating and connecting communities**

*Restorative investment* describes investment that is targeted to those communities that have been most impacted by not only our current economic recession, but bore the brunt of historic policies that favored new, suburban, white communities. Examples of these types of investment center on community development, such as capacity building, job training, small and minority business lending, and neighborhood revitalization.

*Opening access to opportunity* is defined as affirmatively connecting people to opportunity through, for example, opening up housing choices through inclusionary zoning policies, de-concentrating subsidized housing, re-thinking school boundaries, and providing quality, comprehensive public transit.

*Growing together* is defined as building healthy environments for all, and providing newcomers with access to opportunity. An example of this might be building strong coalitions between city-suburb-tribal governments, developing regional master plans, coordinating and integrating housing, transportation, and infrastructure plans.

To the extent that new development and new policies achieve these three criteria, then a new path to health and prosperity is being forged. When a new framework for thinking and conceptualizing problems and policies is created—in essence a new decision-making model—then new solutions emerge. These three principles describe a model that is oriented towards equity, a model that values all people’s potential, and a model that seeks to affirmatively connect all people to the opportunity structures needed to reach that potential.

Conclusion

Achieving sustainable, positive change amidst inequality and economic instability is a monumental challenge. At the heart of this challenge is a new vision of an inclusive society—inclusive physically, socially, economically and spiritually. Identifying and reflecting on the policies and processes that have brought Minnesota to its current state of weakened opportunity is
the “easy” part. The more difficult part is successfully challenging the status quo, and connecting people from all different walks of life, with various needs, opportunities, and barriers of their own to this new vision, empowering them. This report provides an opportunity for beginning that broader conversation, to deepen the understanding of Minnesota’s shared history, and to begin working towards a model of decision-making that values equity and opportunity as the markers of success.

The challenges are many. How policymakers and advocates respond to these challenges will determine whether the future of Minnesota is one where all residents contribute to and benefit from a prosperous economy and quality of life, or whether Minnesota continues on the same path, a path that promises inequitable outcomes and a dampened quality of life for communities of color and declining health for the state as a whole.
References


5 Supra n. 1 at 4.


7 Supra n. 1.

8 Supra n. 1 at 14. In 2008, 42% of white students; 18% of American Indian students; 19% of Asian students; 5% of African American students; and 22% of Latino students successfully completed all four subject areas of the ACT test.


12 Id. at 307.


14 Id. For example, Wells Fargo (a prime lender) made 0.8% of its home purchase loans in North Minneapolis compared to Sub-prime lender BNC Mortgage, which made 10.8% of its subprime home purchase loans in North Minneapolis.


19 Supra n. 16.

20 “Gary Orfield Documents the Resegregation of America’s Public Schools” Source: The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, No. 24 (Summer, 1999), pp. 48-49


What Matters Most: Teaching For America’s Future, A Report Of The National Commission On Teaching America’s Future (Spring 1996): Summary Report. (Racially segregated schools more often rely upon transitory teachers, have curricula with greater emphasis on remedial courses, higher rates of tardiness and unexcused absence, and lower rates of extracurricular involvement).


26 Supra n. 24.

27 Institute on Race and Poverty. The Choice is Ours: Expanding Educational Opportunity for all Twin Cities Children.

28 Id.


33 Id. at 9


35 Id.

36 Id.
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