

400 Years of Inequity Movement Progress to Date and Next Steps

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Greater Cleveland

**First Year
Cleveland**

400 
**YEARS OF
INEQUITY**
A CALL TO ACTION

400 Years of Inequity Movement: A Call to Action with nationwide, statewide, regional and local organizers, citizens, providers and leaders from a cross sector to act by declaring racism a public health crisis.

Achievements to Date Include:

- A highly successful **400 Years of Inequity: A Call to Action Summit** kicked off an equity movement that memorialized the legacy of slavery, connected the history to modern day racial inequities and outlined the tools required to move local governments to action toward a more equitable future. Long in the making, it was just the beginning of an equity movement focused on changing the narrative about the experience of African Americans, and discussing where we go from here. Through education, music, reflection, and conversation, participants gained a solid understanding of how America has managed race and its consequences for citizens of African ancestry. Summit evaluations and public testimonies are attached.
- The 400 Years of Inequity Summit was held November 8-9, 2019, at Cleveland Public Auditorium with nearly 600 individuals committed to eliminating racial disparities. Attendees included health care and service providers, policymakers, professionals and citizens, all eager to learn how others are tackling the issue of racial inequity not only on a local, regional, state and national level but on a personal level as well. Summit expenses totaled \$280,000, of which \$240,000 was raised through sponsorships and ticket sales. We are now in the final phase of securing the remaining \$40,000 required to close out the first phase of this equity movement work.
- Participants listened intently to **nationally renowned speakers** including Isabel Wilkerson, John A. Powell, Darrick Hamilton, Harriet Washington, Stacey Stewart, and Gail Christopher. The Summit led them through the history of the first Africans who were brought to British North America and enslaved in 1619 to present day, where inequities and discrimination are still faced by African Americans.
- Breakout sessions provided greater insight into specialty areas including maternal and child health equity, managing implicit bias, education and justice inequities, and more. A highlight of the event was a panel discussion focused on **declaring racism a public health crisis**. Leaders from Milwaukee, a city that is challenged with many of the same racial issues as Cleveland, talked about how their city made history with their recent declaration of racism as a public health crisis, both at the city and county levels, with the end goal of achieving equity. They admit that getting people to recognize that racial inequity is a real problem has been challenging.
- **The Summit achieved its single, top priority which was to connect the dots to increase understanding and recognition that racism is the core root cause for many of our social problems and to move forward in declaring racism a public health crisis.** Declaring it as such is an official pathway for government to address the negative economic, cultural, emotional and physical hardship brought on by 400 years of slavery and oppression. When local governments declare a public health crisis, they are then able to direct **tangible human and capital resources** to resolving the crisis.

Post Summit Action is Taking Place

- In January 2020, **presented to Cleveland City Council's Health and Human Services Committee** to request the Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis. Key presenters included The Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), YWCA Greater Cleveland, First Year Cleveland, Birthing Beautiful Communities and United Way of Greater Cleveland.
- The above stakeholders, Cleveland State University and others will continue to work with Cleveland City Council to design and execute the declaration.
- Continue to educate and inspire other public health officials such as the Health Commissioner for Franklin County Public Health and the President and CEO of National Institute for Children's Health Quality to recognize the adverse effects of racism and **join a growing body of officials** willing to declare racism a public health crisis.

Next Steps

- Discuss with local organizations and foundations their interest in supporting the **400 Years of Inequity Coalition**, with the YWCA as the fiscal agent. Funds raised will ensure the proper resources are provided for multiple, local anti-racism organizations to build capacity and alignment to achieve the following desired results from 2020-2023:
 - The Cleveland City Health Department, Cuyahoga County Executive Office and Cuyahoga County Health Department to **Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis**.
 - A **local accountability taskforce** to be launched to monitor, report out and course correct when necessary to ensure the Declaration is being executed in a timely and effective fashion and that there is transparency and accountability to the work.
 - Offer **technical assistance** to other Ohio local municipalities to successfully Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis within their local government.
 - Partner with the Ohio Department of Health and Medicaid to increase understanding, with the ultimate goal of statewide recognition that racism is the core root cause for Ohio's high African American infant mortality rate. Assist the state departments in **providing resources to local communities to design and execute local anti-racism approaches through an equity lens framework** to reduce infant deaths for all babies of color.
 - Since the US Department of Health and Human Services Region V, which consists of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, has had for over 70 years the worst African American infant mortality rate in the country, we will partner with HRSA Maternal and Child Health Bureau Director, Dr. Michael Warren, to bring the Region V system leaders together and **co-create a pilot initiative that addresses the racial inequities** faced by expectant parents of color in the Region V states.

The Summit served as a starting point, a moment to begin building public will. Now the moment must become a movement.