Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness
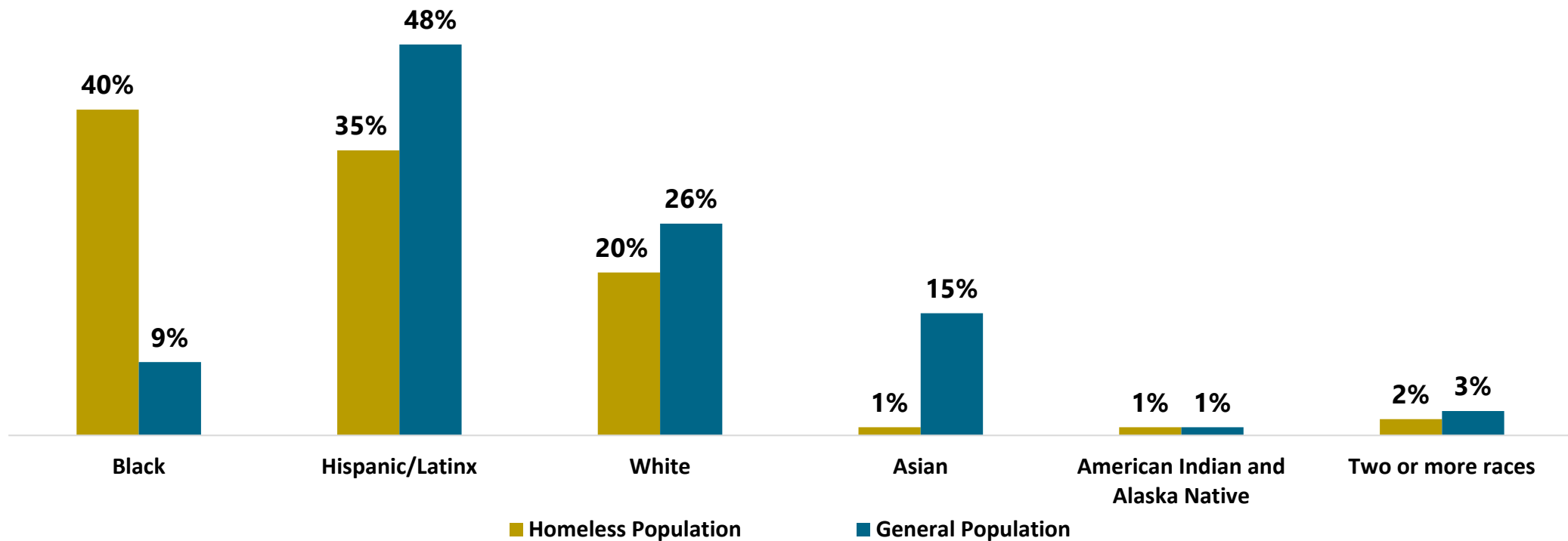
Presentation to the HHH Citizens Oversight Committee

Friday, October 18, 2019

Prevalence of Black People Experiencing Homelessness

**Homeless Population vs. General Population, by Race & Ethnicity,
Los Angeles Continuum of Care, 2017**

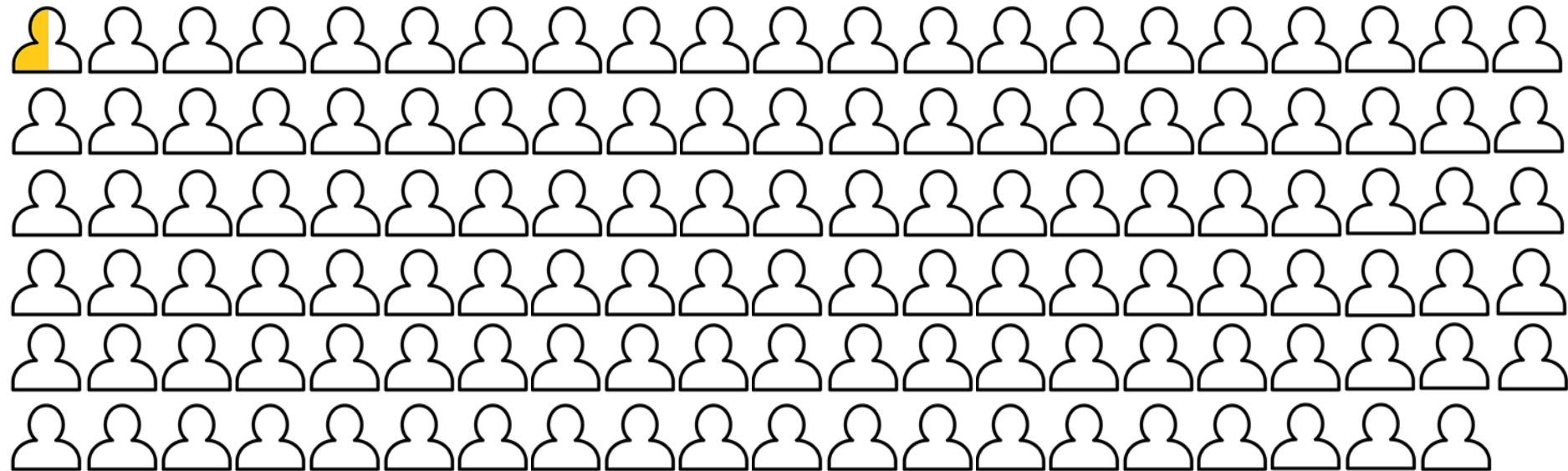|	Black	Hispanic/Latinx	White	Asian	American Indian and Alaska Native	Two or more races
Homeless Population	40%	35%	20%	1%	1%	2%
General Population	9%	48%	26%	15%	1%	3%

■ Homeless Population ■ General Population

Sources: Homeless population data represent estimates from the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC) and excludes the Glendale and Pasadena Continuums of Care. General population data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates for Los Angeles County.

Prevalence of Black People Experiencing Homelessness

In the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, approximately **1 in 40** Black people experience homelessness.

For White people, approximately **1 in 250** experience homelessness.

Committee Formation

The LAHSA Commission approved Committee membership in **December 2017**; Committee launched in **April 2018**. The Committee was formed in response to:

1) The persistent overrepresentation of Black people experiencing homelessness, and
2) The impact of the Ad Hoc Committee on Women & Homelessness

The Committee comprised a broad range of stakeholders:

- 2 LAHSA Commissioners served as chair and vice-chair
- 24 Committee members

Committee Members

LAHSA Commission Committee Members

Jacqueline Waggoner, Chair

Kelli Bernard, Vice-Chair

Committee Members

Dr. Va Lecia Adams Kellum

St. Joseph's Center

Chancela Al-Mansour

Housing Rights Center

Reverend Eddie Anderson

McCarty Memorial Christian Church

Dr. Jack Barbour

Southern California Health & Rehabilitation Program

Wendell Blassingame

Skid Row Resident/Veteran

Rachel Brashier

LA City Councilmember, Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Council District 8

Reverend Oliver Buie

Holman United Methodist Church

Chela Demuir-Cartier

Unique Woman's Coalition

Robin Hughes

Abode Communities

Janet Kelly

Sanctuary of Hope

Monique King-Viehland

Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles

Veronica Lewis

SSG HOPICS

Juataun Mark

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

Nova Mirari

Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles

Anita Nelson

SRO Housing Corporation

Alisa Orduna

City of Santa Monica

Molly Rysman

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Third District

Suzette Shaw

Skid Row Resident/Human Services Advocate with Homeless Lived Experience

Brenda Shockley

Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti

Lola Smallwood Cuevas

Los Angeles Black Worker Center

Sean Spear

City of Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department

Reba Stevens

Advocate with Homeless Lived Experience

Pete White

Los Angeles Community Action Network

Dhakshike Wickrema

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Second District

Committee Purpose

1) Examine the factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Black people among the population experiencing homelessness,

2) Identify opportunities to increase racial equity within the homeless service delivery system, and

3) Develop recommendations to more effectively meet the needs of Black people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

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The Racial Equity Toolkit

To guide its work, the Committee adopted the use of a Racial Equity Toolkit, a process and set of questions designed to guide, inform, and assess how policies, programs, and budgetary decisions burden and/or benefit Black people experiencing homelessness.

STEP 1. Set Outcomes

STEP 2. Involve Stakeholders and Analyze Data

STEP 3. Determine Benefit and/or Burden

STEP 4. Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm

STEP 5. Evaluate, Raise Awareness, and Be Accountable

STEP 6. Report Back

Overview of the Process

In May 2018, the Committee began a series of listening sessions and focus groups to learn firsthand from those who have experienced homelessness, those who serve people experiencing homelessness as well as other interested parties. Following these sessions, the Committee engaged in monthly, thoughtful discussions exploring the impacts of **structural and institutional racism** and the various systems of care which contribute to the overrepresentation of Black people in the homeless population. Public meeting topics included:

✓ *Criminal justice system involvement and re-entry*
✓ *Cost of living and lack of employment opportunities*
✓ *Foster care and child welfare system involvement*
✓ *Coordinated Entry System (CES) access and assessment*
✓ *Permanent housing and retention*

Overview of the Process

The Committee developed **67** recommendations, informed by quantitative data analysis and feedback from experts in the field, including community leaders and advocates, service providers, policymakers, and people with lived experience of homelessness.

Recommendations aim to address the burdens the Committee identified, in areas of:

- ✓ *Cross-System Coordination*
- ✓ *Data & Research*
- ✓ *Funding*
- ✓ *Hiring & Training*
- ✓ *Programs & Services*
- ✓ *Policy & Advocacy*

Key Insights & Recommendations:

Institutional Biases in Upstream & Mainstream Systems

Key Insights: Structural and Institutional Racism

Institutional barriers across agencies and systems must be dismantled to eliminate the racial disparities and systemic racism impacting Black people experiencing homelessness.

"Structural racism is the issue here. Los Angeles doesn't acknowledge this. How can we have the conversation if we don't acknowledge we live in a racist Los Angeles?"

-Participant, San Pedro Listening Session

"African Americans are disproportionally represented in homelessness because they are [over]represented in every area of disparity in our country. And that goes back to our roots of racism, oppression, and institutional racism. It doesn't change with the category. It is almost expected."

-Black Woman, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant

Recommendations: Structural and Institutional Racism

Data & Research	Advocate for funding and engage researchers to use a racial equity lens in conducting qualitative and quantitative research driven by the community.
Cross-System Coordination	Establish a countywide racial equity initiative to provide enhanced coordination and oversight across systems of care.
Hiring & Training	Enhance and require ongoing trainings in areas such as implicit bias, cultural competency, and the impacts of discrimination against Black people.

Key Insights: Cost of Living and Lack of Employment Opportunities

Low and stagnant wages exacerbates homelessness and particularly impacts Black people.

Employment discrimination based on race contributes to high unemployment for Black people.

Stronger connections are needed between the homeless service delivery system and the workforce development system.

"I am a paycheck away from being homeless myself."

-Black Woman, Listening Session Participant

Recommendations: Cost of Living and Lack of Employment Opportunities

Cross-System Coordination	Advocate for and fund the establishment of a cross-system partnership to provide a holistic approach in addressing employment barriers.
Programs & Services	Ensure that living-wage employment training programs align with major growth sectors in the LA region, are adequately funded, and accessible to Black people experiencing homelessness.
Data & Research	Establish a process to collect employment data related to people experiencing homelessness.

Key Insights: Criminal Justice System Involvement and Re-entry

The interconnectedness of incarceration and homelessness creates a revolving door that only serves to make the plight of homelessness more challenging and complex.

Black people are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system.

Transitioning formerly-incarcerated individuals to community may require housing with wraparound services; housing alone is not sufficient.

"It is nearly impossible to house Black people with criminal histories."

-Black Woman, San Pedro Listening Session Participant

Recommendations: Criminal Justice System Involvement and Re-entry

Cross-System Coordination	Conduct a global landscape analysis to identify existing and potential relationships, as well as current efforts, related to criminal justice reform.
Funding	Fund and build capacity for programs that support people who are formerly incarcerated and who are or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.
Programs & Services	Support the development and growth of community-rooted programs, providers, and networks owned and/or led by formerly incarcerated individuals to guide successful re-entry.

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Key Insights: Foster Care and Child Welfare System Involvement

Rates of child welfare system involvement are disproportionately high among Black people experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness often creates a barrier for families seeking reunification.

Transition-aged youth (TAY) participants are too often placed in programs that are not tailored to their individual needs or interests.

"There is no conversation as to what the youth needs; the programs are prescriptive. If I am competent and succeeding, don't take away resources because of it. Ask what we need rather than assume what we need."

-Black Youth, Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles Focus Group Participant

Recommendations: Foster Care and Child Welfare System Involvement

Cross-System Coordination	Enhance education and coordination between the child welfare system and homeless service system, to improve access to services for families and youth.
Programs & Services	Identify strategies to increase the capacity of community-based supports—particularly mental health and behavioral health services—to strengthen families and enhance family stability.
Data & Research	Conduct research to identify interrupters of intergenerational cycles of homelessness and develop appropriate coaching strategies to model desired healthy behaviors and essential life skills.

Key Insights & Recommendations:

Within the Homeless Service System and Permanent Housing

Key Insights: Coordinated Entry System Access and Assessment

Including Black people with lived experience in program and policy design, implementation, evaluation, and service delivery, is critical to ensuring services meet the needs of Black people experiencing homelessness.

The quality of interim housing varies across facilities, and for some, living in a shelter can be a traumatizing or re-traumatizing experience.

Sufficient research has not been done to understand whether CES Triage Tools adequately measure vulnerability and acuity of Black people experiencing homelessness.

"They wanted to put 400 people that all had histories of trauma into one place.... Until homeless services really integrates trauma-informed care and deals with it from the perspective that looks at the whole piece—that looks at the racism—we are going to continue to repeat and spend money in ways that is not going to change the system."

-Black Woman, Service Provider, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant

Recommendations: Coordinated Entry System Access and Assessment

Data & Research	Conduct data analysis to evaluate the efficacy of the CES Triage Tools for capturing the vulnerabilities of Black participants experiencing homelessness and connecting them to appropriate housing and services.
Funding	Provide resources and training for nontraditional sites that frequently interact with people experiencing homelessness to provide direct, targeted services in coordination with CES and mainstream systems of care.
Programs & Services	Fund outreach teams to provide one-time financial assistance in preventing homelessness further upstream, by serving those with less acute needs.

Key Insights: Permanent Housing and Retention

Rates of return to homelessness are higher for Black people than other race groups, despite being housed in CES permanent housing at comparable rates.

There is a large gap between the number of affordable housing units available in LA County and the number of low-income households in need.

Racial discrimination prevents Black people from securing rentals of their choice. More sufficient protection from evictions is needed across LA County.

"The Shelter-Plus Care program is good, but where is the care? The permanent care facilities only have staff working from 9am-4pm. A lot of the staff have credentials, but they have no idea how to help individuals experiencing homelessness.

-Black Woman, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant

Recommendations: Permanent Housing and Retention

Policy & Advocacy	Continue to advocate for policies and funding to support further affordable housing development, to address the deficit in supply of affordable housing.
Funding	Fund and prioritize efforts to establish a centralized system for accessing affordable housing and engage key community partners to enhance the cultural sensitivity and effectiveness of information dissemination.
Data & Research	Increase the quality of housing retention services in permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid re-housing (RRH) through training, data collection, and evaluation.

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Action Plan & Progress to Date

Action Plan

Disseminate Key Insights & Recommendations	**Partner with Critical Stakeholders**	**Implement Recommendations**
Building the Movement for Racial Equity	**Ongoing Feedback & Continuous Oversight**	**Establish Methods for Evaluation**

Progress to Date

A Racial Equity Plan
- ✓ Joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) cohort to develop a Racial Equity Plan for infusing a racial equity and trauma-informed lens into all aspects of the agency's work.

LA City and County Partnerships
- ✓ Engaged with LA City and County leadership to advance the Committee's recommendations through enhanced cross-system collaboration.

Equitable Hiring Practices and Job Requirements
- ✓ Focused on refining the agency's hiring practices and job requirements to expand the diversity of applicants.

Training and Capacity Building
- ✓ Increased resources to train staff in implicit bias, cultural competency, institutional racism, and trauma-informed care.

Advocacy for Tenant Protections and Affordable Housing Development
- ✓ Advocated at the state and local level for expanding tenant protections and the production and preservation of affordable housing.

Next Steps

Ongoing Strategic Development

- LAHSA will be engaging a consultant to provide a strategic framework for implementing the recommendations and support in creating metrics for evaluation on progress.

- LAHSA will hire an Equity Officer for continuous and thoughtful improvement to LAHSA's practices and policies to advance racial equity.

Oversight and Accountability

- LAHSA's Communications and IT teams are working to develop public-facing report card and tracking mechanism.

- LAHSA staff will report-back to the LAHSA Commission on a biannual basis to share progress.

Community-Based Research

- LAHSA is collaborating with academics through the Homelessness Policy Research Institute (HPRI), Committee members, and other key partners to begin scoping and securing funding for the CES Triage Tool and PSH Retention research priorities.