

Communities of Color in Multnomah County: *An Unsettling Profile*

A partnership between



&



Portland State
UNIVERSITY



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The Coalition of Communities of Color was founded in 2001 to strengthen the voice and influence of communities of color in Multnomah County, Oregon. Its mission follows:

The communities of color unite as a coalition to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities. The Coalition will organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.



Portland State University upholds its vision to: "Let Knowledge Serve the City." The academic partners in this research from the School of Social Work hold commitments to social justice and racial equity. The mission statement is:

The School of Social Work is committed to the enhancement of the individual and society. We are dedicated to social change and to the attainment of social justice for all people, the eradication of poverty, the empowerment of those who are oppressed, the rights of all individuals and groups to determine their destiny, and the opportunity to live in cooperation.

This report was prepared to ensure that the experiences of communities of color are widely available for:

- Policy makers interested in better understanding the issues facing communities of color and the agencies that provide services for them.
- Advocates wanting firm footing in detailing the disparities between communities of color and White populations.
- Researchers considering how to improve better assessment of services, data collection practices and expand beyond conventional measures to define experiences facing communities of color.
- Educators wanting to expand their resources.
- Grant writers seeking to statistically document trends and challenges.

The Coalition of Communities of Color gratefully acknowledges the assistance from the following partners:

NORTHWEST HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Community's Partner for Better Health



Multnomah County, Oregon
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Dear Reader,

Existing data that informs decision making in Multnomah County inadequately captures the lived experiences of communities of color. Rarely do existing reports include dimensions of race and ethnicity. Much research has been undertaken without the involvement of those most affected by the decisions guided by the research. The impact is that communities of color are rarely visible at the level of policy. Data has been used to obscure and oppress rather than to empower communities and eliminate disparities. This is not acceptable, and leads to inequitable policy and devastating outcomes for people of color.

"Communities of Color in Multnomah County: *An Unsettling Profile*" is the first of a series of reports developed in partnership with Portland State University. The report documents the experiences of communities of color in Multnomah County. The subsequent six reports will be community-specific reports on the African American, African immigrant and refugee, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, Native American and Slavic communities.

The results of the report are unsettling. But there is opportunity for creating a new policy environment that supports rather than harms communities of color. The report can arm communities of color with accurate data and advocacy methods needed to communicate effectively to change policies, and provide public agencies with the data necessary to reinvent systems in a fair and equitable manner. We aim to ensure that datasets are culturally sensitive and comprehensive, and to influence research development processes to empower communities and reduce disparities.

Advocating for policy decisions that improve outcomes for people of color is the top priority. We hold institutional and policy reform and the formation of a powerful racial equity advocacy coalition as central to improving outcomes. This report builds an important knowledge base from which to advocate and to educate. Educating our communities and the community at large about the disparities and inequities faced by communities of color is crucial to achieving racial equity.

We seek to unite people in collective action for the advancement of racial equity. It is time to act.



Lee Po Cha
Co-Chair
Executive Director, Asian Family Center



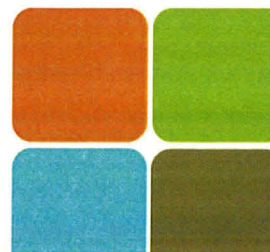
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Preface

This report centers the experiences of communities of color in Multnomah county, and the disparities that exist for our people. As a result, the text centers issues of inequality, inequity and injustice. For many people, this will be a tough read. Most of us would rather avoid this topic. While this may be an unsettling read, we believe that it offers a unique set of insights into one of the most devastating social dynamics in US history and into the present-day. It is intended to be a catalyst for action – to build far-reaching durable solutions that will provide our communities and our children the hope of a better future.

Many living in the USA today think the problem of racism is over. While progress has been made, most people overestimate the impact of this progress on the lives of people of color. The sad reality is that people of color continue to hold second-class status, resulting in lesser quality of life and reduced chances for success.

Discrimination is not an act reserved for people of color. Many people who are White have experienced injustices as Italian, Portuguese or Irish immigrants to the USA. Serious injustice was done to Eastern European immigrants in their settlement. Grave injustices have also been enacted through anti-Semitism. Our record of providing refuge for Jews persecuted around the world has been inadequate.

Injustice also exists for women or from having a disability or having survived child abuse or mistreatment in one's family. Many didn't have families and faced a life of foster homes. All of these life experiences are unfair and unjust. Life generates hardship in many shapes and forms.

Today in Multnomah county, people of color experience overwhelming hardship. As a group of people, too many people of color face severe social and economic exclusion. This report articulates these experiences.

One of the key research tools used in this research is to compare the experiences of communities of color with White communities. This reveals a set of differences in experience (called "disparities"). This selected methodology serves to highlight not only race, but also "whiteness" and doing so draws our attention to the privileges associated with being White. We are aware that this choice may bring discomfort for some – but know that racism does not exist without its corollary of White privilege.

It is difficult to alter racism and racial disparities. And yet, failure to do so means that the promise of equality and the promise that we might cross racial divides and "walk together as sisters and brothers" are shut down. We must offer all our communities real prospects for a positive future, well-being and community empowerment. Closing with the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we know the journey towards racial equity has been slow and we still have far to go, but we draw from his words of 1961 to guide our vision for the future:

A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where we will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where we will not argue that the color of a person's skin determines the content of their character; a dream of a nation where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone, but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where everyone will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality.¹

Executive summary

Communities of Color are a vital presence in Multnomah County. Our leadership has strengthened efforts to improve community health and well-being in many areas. Our roles have stretched from being a sounding board to policy makers, to sitting on philanthropic boards, to staffing committees and advisory groups on matters of importance like child welfare, community development, funding patterns and growing the green economy. Our voice is valued. Yet progress of our peoples is far from assured.

Communities of color are a growing portion of Multnomah County's population. Today, the official count is that communities of color comprise 26.3% of the County's numbers and this number is growing much more quickly than that of Whites, due to high fertility rates and migration. Yet we do not really know how large our communities of color really are.

Official measures to enumerate our community members are plagued by legacies of distrust and cynicism. They are also plagued by the whiteness that pervades all forms of data collection and interpretation. As a result, population measures chronically undercount our numbers. This is due to an array of factors such as ongoing invisibility for some communities of color – for the African immigrant and refugee community, and for the Slavic community, no data are routinely collected. Also at issue are survey question dilemmas, such as the failure to count the Latino community as a community of color, or outdated practices such as allowing only one racial identity to be selected. In addition, language accessibility renders participation impossible for the estimated 5.1% of the county's population who cannot communicate in either English or Spanish.²

Traditional research practices undermine our very existence as our experiences are omitted from routine data reporting in many areas. We have had to use up a significant amount of political capital just to collect the data in this report. A key message is that our communities of color have tolerated invisibility for long enough, and insist that research and reporting practices change sufficiently to make the data on all our communities routinely available in the public arena.

Our communities themselves contribute to the undercounting, as many are reticent to participate and to identify as a person of color. While the larger context for this shame or reticence may have been created by mainstream society, we have work to do inside the community to encourage prideful identification as a member of a community of color.

This project is the result of determination among many leaders in our communities, members of the Coalition of Communities of Color, who defined the need for expanded research, and asserted our leadership and capacity to define the reach, interpret the findings, and consolidate recommendations for change. This report, *"Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile"* is the result of that determination. Before you today are the fruits, as sour and as bruised as they are, of the first two years of a research partnership with Portland State University.

This report documents the experiences of communities of color in Multnomah County. The results are indeed unsettling, as many key insights emerge from the data. **First**, disparities with White communities exist across all institutions addressed in the report. The magnitude of these disparities is alarming. Consider some of the data findings:

- Communities of color earn half the incomes of whites, earning \$16,636 per year, while white people earn \$33,095 annually. Disparities close to this magnitude exist regardless of one's family and household configuration.

- Poverty levels among our communities are at levels at least double those of whites. Our child poverty rate, collectively, is 33.3%, while that of white children is 12.5%.
- Educational attainment is stratified by race. While only 7% of Whites did not graduate high school, 30% of communities of color did not.
- Disparities exist at the preschool level. By the time children enter kindergarten, there is a disparity that, depending on the measure, averages between 5% and 15% in readiness for learning scores. Most children of color are unable to access preschool programs, though they are overrepresented in Head Start initiatives.
- One-quarter of public school students of color were racially harassed in a 30-day study period, either at school or on the way to school. The figure is constant for both students in grade 8 and grade 11.
- Educational disparities in our local public schools are deeply entrenched and gains made earlier in the decade have been lost, and the achievement gap is widening.
- The labor market is similarly bruised by disparities. Communities of color access management and professional positions at half the levels of Whites. One of every two Whites access such high status and high paid work, while less than one of every four people of color access these positions.
- Communities of color have unemployment rates that are 35.7% higher than whites.
- Health disparities, while unevenly distributed across communities of color, average out to result in significant disproportionality. Low birth weights among communities of color are 37% worse than for White babies.
- Child welfare disproportionately removes African and Native American children from their homes and places them in foster care. The longer children are in care, the much greater likelihood they are African American and Native American.
- Juvenile detention rates are much worse for children of color. They are 50% more likely to be held than released into the community once they engage with the police.
- Even systems designed to improve the challenges facing communities of color, such as the protected contracting practices at the City, County and Metropolitan levels fail to deliver sufficient benefits to our communities of color. Less than one-tenth of 1% of the City of Portland's contracting dollars goes to minority-owned businesses.³

In every system we looked at, there are significant disparities. The breadth and depth of these disparities is deeply unsettling. Our best understanding of this is that institutional, ideological, behavioral and historic racism intersect to create these harrowing results. Add to this dynamic that of whiteness and white privilege, and we create the one-two punch that leads to the horrors of racism coexisting with the privileges of whiteness. Undoing such inequities must occur at all levels of every system.

Second, communities of color in Multnomah county suffer more than similar communities of color nationally. In the measures explored in this report (incomes, poverty, occupation and education), communities of color have between 15% and 20% worse outcomes. It is more difficult to get ahead here in Multnomah County than it is more generally across the USA. When we tally the disproportionate "hit" or additional income losses for communities of color living in the county, the average tally of such costs is \$8,362/year.

This inequity does not hold true for White people. On average, one's income is enhanced by living in Multnomah County. The average benefit to a White person living in Multnomah County is \$689/year. While not a large benefit, it illustrates that the harms of being a person of color in the county is additionally disparaging when Whites have a correlated benefit.

Third, we looked to a local comparison group to see how communities of color here fared in relationship to those in a western nearby city. In comparison with King County (home to Seattle), we have worse disparities and worse outcomes on every measure examined: child poverty, those who get a university degree, incomes, occupation, and renters who pay more than 30% of their incomes on rent. In King County, the child poverty rate for children of color is 21.5%, while here it is 33.3%.

This must inform our thinking about what is possible. For King County to have better conditions for people of color, while having relatively similar concentrations of people of color (30.9% compared to ours at 26.3%), should spark our sense of possibilities.

Fourth, we wondered if local conditions were improving or deteriorating for communities of color. We examined disparities in two ways – generational changes in incomes, and a contemporary examination of the last two years of available data on a wider array of disparities. In the first instance, we found that the generational picture on incomes of White families and families of color has changed markedly. Only the wealthiest 40% of White families have gained significant ground over the last generation (at an average of \$47,663/year) while that same grouping among families of color have lost income (facing an average loss of \$1,496 per year). While it is not surprising that there has been a significant growth between rich and poor (as this fact has received considerable attention at the national level over recent years), it is disturbing that this growth between rich and poor is considerably racialized (meaning that benefits seen by White families are not shared by families of color). The net impact is that there is a significant decay of income equality between Whites and communities of color across the generation.

Our second view on changes across time was a thorough view of changes that occurred in the last year (from 2007 to 2008, as the most recent data available). In 26 measures, we found that 16 measures were worse, 6 were better, and 4 stayed the same. The crucial measures of incomes, obtaining a university degree, all poverty measures and health insurance had all deteriorated. Four of the positive gains (in home ownership, mortgage burden, unemployment and dropout rate) were due not to an improved situation for communities of color, but due to a more rapidly deteriorating situation for white people, thus narrowing disparities. We can thus conclude that there were clear gains in only two of the 26 measures – clearly demarking that current disparity reduction efforts are ineffective in achieving key positive outcomes for communities of color.

Fifth, we have learned an important lesson about our Asian communities. Many may know that these communities fare quite well in national studies, typically outperforming Whites on measures such as incomes, occupations, education, poverty and housing. That is not the situation for this community in Multnomah County. Here, the characteristics of the Asian community much more closely resemble those of other communities of color than they do of Whites.

Sixth, for the first time, two additional communities of color are profiled – the Slavic community and the African Immigrant and Refugee community. Separate sections of the report profile these communities. Overall, these two communities are very highly educated but are mostly unable to access occupations, incomes and reductions in poverty rates that are typically associated with high education levels. Within the African community, poverty levels parallel those of the African American community as the depths of racism, social exclusion, and inadequate income support programs result in more than 50% of children living in poverty. In the Slavic community, the employment barriers that prevent the community from accessing good jobs results in high levels of poverty, unemployment and income disparities among families.

Seventh, the need for expanded support for culturally-specific services is in evidence in this report. Our leaders and organizations have an array of effective services customized to meet the specific and unique needs of communities of color. The failings of mainstream institutions to address the needs of communities of color are abundant and must create the impetus to act, to act holistically, and to act under the leadership of communities of color who have the legitimacy and the urgency to remedy many of the shortcomings that besiege Multnomah County.

Eighth, we have determined that there is an undercount of youth in the 2007 American Community Survey that is in the magnitude of 4.8% and further that there is a miscoding of communities of color by an additional 14.9%. We derived these figures from the more robust and more comprehensive data from public school records (centralized at the Oregon Department of Education). This is the first “hard” evidence that there is an undercount issue within ACS. While we do not advocate modifying ACS figures with these numbers, we do highlight that counting our communities is riddled with challenges. As a solution, we are developing “culturally-verified community counts” that better reflect what we believe our accurate numbers to be.

Ninth, we affirm the following commitments and directives that aim to advance racial equity.

1. ***Affirm culturally-specific services funding.*** We affirm and appreciate Multnomah County’s dedicated funding pool within the Department of Human Services, SUN Service System and seek to expand this commitment, urging all funding units in all levels of government to make such allocations a priority.
2. ***Support equity initiatives in existence.*** At the County-level, initiatives such as the Equity Council, Undoing Institutional Racism, and Multnomah County Health Department’s Health Equity Initiative hold promise to reduce disparities.

Tenth, we make the following recommendations for addressing the needs of communities of color.

1. ***Expand funding for culturally-specific services.*** Designated funds are required, and these funds must be adequate to address needs. Allocation must recognize the size of communities of color, must compensate for the undercounts that exist in population estimates, and must be sufficiently robust to address the complexity of need that are tied to communities of color.
2. ***Implement needs-based funding for communities of color.*** This report illuminates the complexity of needs facing communities of color, and highlights that Whites do not face such issues nor the disparities that result from them. Accordingly, providing services for these communities is similarly more complex. We urge funding bodies to begin implementing an equity-based funding allocation that seeks to ameliorate some of the challenges that exist in resourcing these communities.
3. ***Emphasize poverty reduction strategies.*** Poverty reduction must be an integral element of meeting the needs of communities of color. A dialogue is needed immediately to kick-start economic development efforts that hold the needs of communities of color high in policy implementation. Improving the quality and quantity of jobs that are available to people of color will reduce poverty.
4. ***Reduce disparities with firm timelines, policy commitments and resources.*** Disparity reduction across systems must occur and must ultimately ensure that one’s racial and ethnic

identity ceases to determine one's life chances. The Coalition urges State, County and City governments and school boards, to establish firm timelines with measurable outcomes to assess disparities each and every year. There must be zero-tolerance for racial and ethnic disparities. Accountability structures must be developed and implemented to ensure progress on disparity reduction. As a first step, plans for disparities reduction must be developed in every institution and be developed in partnership with communities of color. Targeted reductions with measurable outcomes must be a central feature of these plans.

5. **Count communities of color.** Immediately, we demand that funding bodies universally use the most current data available and use the "alone or in combination with other races, with or without Hispanics" as the official measure of the size of our communities. The minor over-counting that this creates is more than offset by the pervasive undercounting that exists when outsiders measure the size of our communities. When "community-verified population counts" are available, we demand that these be used.
6. **Prioritize education and early childhood services.** The Coalition prioritizes education and early childhood services as a significant pathway out of poverty and social exclusion, and urges that disparities in achievement, dropout, post-secondary education and even early education must be prioritized.
7. **Expand the role for the Coalition of Communities of Color.** The Coalition of Communities of Color seeks an ongoing role in monitoring the outcomes of disparity reduction efforts and seeks appropriate funding to facilitate this task.
8. **Research practices that make the invisible visible.** Implement research practices across institutions that are transparent, easily accessible and accurate in the representation of communities of color. Draw from the expertise within the Coalition of Communities of Color to conceptualize such practices. This will result in the immediate reversal of invisibility and tokenistic understanding of the issues facing communities of color. Such practices will expand the visibility of communities of color.
9. **Fund community development.** Significantly expand community development funding for communities of color. Build line items into state, county and city budgets for communities of color to self-organize, network our communities, develop pathways to greater social inclusion, build culturally-specific social capital and provide leadership within and outside our own communities.
10. **Disclose race and ethnicity data for mainstream service providers.** Mainstream service providers and government providers continue to have the largest role in service delivery. Accounting for the outcomes of these services for communities of color is essential. We expect each level of service provision to increasingly report on both service usage and service outcomes for communities of color.
11. **Name racism.** Before us are both the challenge and the opportunity to become engaged with issues of race, racism and whiteness. Racial experiences are a feature of daily life whether we are on the harmful end of such experience or on the beneficiary end of the spectrum. The first step is to stop pretending race and racism do not exist. The second is to know that race is always linked to experience. The third is to know that racial identity is strongly linked to experiences of marginalization, discrimination and powerlessness. We seek for those in the

White community end a prideful perception that Multnomah County is an enclave of progressivity. Communities of color face tremendous inequities and a significant narrowing of opportunity and advantage. This must become unacceptable for everyone.

Advancing racial equity depends on eliminating the multitudes of disparities profiled in this report. We aspire to catalyze an understanding of the challenges facing communities of color and to provide us all impetus to act, to act holistically, and to act under the leadership of communities of color who have the legitimacy and the urgency to remedy many of the shortcomings that besiege Multnomah county.



Chapter 1: Setting the Context

Introducing Multnomah county⁴

Multnomah County is home to people who come from all corners of the earth. This profile is in service to peoples of color who, as we shall see, experience very different and inequitable challenges to sustaining ourselves, our families and our communities. Threats to our lives are such that our collective ability to live in freedom, with dignity and worth, with equality, social progress and improved standards of living are compromised. If this language sounds familiar, these are concepts extracted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the United States ratified in 1948. Established to guarantee human rights and to preclude the horrors of genocide and holocaust, this international proclamation of the supremacy of human rights was intended to take precedence over the laws of the state.⁵

Flash forward to 2010. The language of human rights and the discourse on the entitlement of all members of a community to a life robust with dignity, equality and prosperity is a distant memory. Today, and indeed for the last 30 years, the public policy landscape has changed tremendously. The centrality of the needs of the people has been curtailed by the needs/wants of business, and economic considerations have surpassed the redress of human need. Other features of the policy landscape include the privatization of public services, the commercialization of need, and escalating economic polarization (also called the growing gap between rich and poor).

The major federal legislation in health care (passed in March 2010) and Oregon's earlier passage of voter referendums on tax increases for corporations and the very wealthy in January 2010 are possible signs of a rejection of the primacy of corporate interests. This said, the evidence in this report point to the need for much more income redistribution, stronger and more robust public services, and a change in the very way that public policy is developed, who is invited to the table, and who is in charge to do the inviting (and by extension, the uninviting).

Despite its sky-high unemployment rate (at 11.3% in January 2010), the Portland metropolitan area has a broad and deep reputation as an excellent place to live. It is an urban hub that many find attractive and, as the most affordable of the major west coast cities, has a growing population that outpaces the national average. The major county in the area, Multnomah, is home to the city of Portland and its suburban cities of Fairview, Gresham, Maywood Park, Troutdale and Wood Village. The population here was 715,000 in 2008.⁶

The region is perhaps best known for its ecological reputation, including land use conservation strategies that have preserved significant tracts of green spaces through the region as well as an emerging green reputation for residents. Intended consequences have been to limit development, while unintended consequences are to increase housing costs. In the profile below, the number of residents who are pay unreasonable housing costs is very high.

Ours is a city where 6.4% of the population cycles to work, and a city recognized as one of the USA's most bicycle-friendly cities (Bicycling Magazine), most sustainable city (SustainLane), cleanest city (Reader's Digest), and tops lists for being "green" (Popular Science). Portland is now the #1 bicycling community in the USA, topping the list of the largest 30 cities in the nation.

Socially, Multnomah County has a long-standing profile as being overwhelmingly White, particularly for a large west-coast city. Indeed, it ranks 5th Whitest in the 40 largest urban centers in the USA.⁷ Typically, larger urban centers are less than 60% White whereas in Multnomah County's most recent official count (2008) is 73.7% White. But this naming of the county as "overwhelmingly White" serves to deeply marginalize and render almost invisible the more than 200,000 people of color who

live here. The visibility of communities of color is at the heart of equitable treatment – it is time for accurate data and appropriate portrayals of the strengths and challenges facing our communities. Simultaneously we call for the end to tokenistic recognition and visibility.

Politically, there is a strong democratic dominance in the county, and local democrats cite it as the “bluest” in the state.⁸ Support for President Obama was profound leading up to the 2008 elections as it hosted the largest rally in the election campaign. We have found, however, that liberalism is not clearly tied to progressivity on equity issues facing communities of color. Racial progress in Oregon has been deplorable at various points in history and inadequate at other times. In 1844, Oregon banned Blacks from living in the state, and did not remove such laws from its books until 1927, and at one point was the sole state in the Union that legislated such exclusion. Not until the 1950s did Oregon legislators repealed prohibitions on interracial marriages, and equal access to public facilities and services. These advances, though desirable, were relatively late in the racial equity advances among states. Legislators themselves continue to be overwhelming White, and all corridors of power in the region sustain significant barriers to the advancements of people of color in the policy arena.

Defining economic features of the region include the absence of a sales tax and negligible corporate income taxes. Together, these two revenue choices result in excessive reliance on income taxes as the source for government expenditures, which results in a revenue profile that rises and falls as does the economy. Accordingly, when residents most need services as in today’s economic era, the ability to provide them is most constrained. Add to this the Oregon tax rebate (called the “kicker”), and governments are impeded by their inability to prevent the crisis situation that today results in cuts to services when the populace most needs them. This kicker returns surplus revenues to residents when taxes collection exceeds official projections, curtailing an ability to “save for a rainy day.” When this economic picture is combined with the state’s moderate income profile (meaning we have a high percentage of workers who earn very moderate wages⁹), we are poised for incredible distress as unemployment rates skyrocket (currently at 11.3%, up from 5.5% in July 2008, a little more than one year earlier).¹⁰

The consequence of this disastrous economic convergence is massive social distress felt across Oregon: food stamp use is up by 38.2% over the last year,¹¹ and TANF cases are up by 21.2% for one- and two-parent families.¹² The largest portion of this increase is for two-parent families who are unemployed and underemployed, whose numbers have surged by 67.4% in the last year. Food bank use has also surged, with an increase of 13% across Oregon in the past year.¹³ Increasingly, people who are employed need to turn to these supplemental supports to weather the economic storm. Today, almost ⅓ of food bank users have someone in the household working full time, whereas in 2000, only ¼ had a full time worker in the family.

Communities of color are tenacious and resilient. Suffering a legacy of racism and unequal treatment has imperiled our health and well-being. And still we keep our children in school, seek and retain employment, and manage to house and keep our families safe. We toil hard to make ends meet and to counteract the damage that racism has dumped on our children. Of interest is that communities of color are becoming more willing to stand and be counted in official data counts. Despite racism, racial pride is growing. More and more people are self-identifying as people of color, in ways that cannot be accounted for by population growth.

Organizing efforts have been legendary in working to hold services accountable for their equitable treatment of communities of color and to promote leaders from among communities of color – the

most famous of which is the election of President Obama in 2008. Today, there are significant efforts to redress numerous systems failures as institutional racism has flourished. Witness such efforts in child welfare, health, government procurement processes, juvenile and criminal justice, and education. While there has been profound disappointment in what has become known as “the adoration of the question”¹⁴ (and failure to actually improve outcomes for people of color), there are revamped efforts that are poised with higher expectations and accountability demands.

As the reader journeys through this report, keep in mind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Appendix #2) and ask yourself if this is the type of widespread experience that the USA should tolerate or whether a real course correction is required. Placing human need at the top of our policy priorities is the only directive that we believe is acceptable. We believe this is attainable with sufficient resources, empowerment and a reallocation of our collective priorities.

The text of this report is the result of advocacy efforts by the Coalition of Communities of Color in Multnomah County to make our experiences visible and to advocate for our needs and priorities in the policy arena. It is the first of a series of reports on the issues facing communities of color. This report addresses the disparities facing communities of color in an integrated manner; the forthcoming six reports will profile each community of color separately. Look for these releases in the coming months and for their availability on the Coalition’s website at www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.com.

Profiled here are the experiences of communities of color as an entirety as they experience marginalization, discrimination and profound inequality and disproportionality across all aspects of life. The report is primarily based on data drawn from official surveys and census documents. Since these data are rooted in mainstream data sources, they are vulnerable to racial dynamics of marginalization. A description of the weakness of mainstream data sources and recommended alternatives follows as a prologue to this report. Look for it in Appendix #1.

No profile of communities of color is complete without action steps. The report concludes with a set of policy recommendations designed to remedy the worst of the situations facing communities of color today.

Service responses to the needs of communities of color

Members of communities of color have the experience and understanding to identify the best and most promising responses to our communities’ needs. Frequently the Coalition of Communities of Color is asked to advise mainstream service providers and funders on how best to adjust practices to improve outcomes with communities of color. Our core recommendation is to expand services that are developed and delivered by and for communities of color, in what has become known as community-based “culturally-specific services.” Sharing the principles and unique dimensions of these services is helpful to understanding the importance of this alternative service delivery model, and the promise it offers to communities of color.

Communities of color have always known we are outsiders in mainstream services. Consider the practices that have been advocated under the guise of “helping” people of color through the horrors of colonization, the historic forced migration and residential schools to “kill the Indian and save the man.” Today’s “helping” avenues have a less obvious but still deeply harmful impact. Examples include:

- Expanded incarceration for youth of color because parental supervision is not available after school (we have more single parents and longer working hours).
- Therapy approaches that continually neglect how racism and discrimination influences one's health and well-being.
- Expanded requirements to use "evidence based practice" in most social service provision, which habitually have been designed and tested with White populations.
- Creation of a "poverty industry" whereby communities of color have no real claim to society's resources to address their needs – instead, the professionals who are mostly White hold the power to design, implement and evaluate programs.
- Tokenistic inclusion of communities of color, when mainstream organizations and initiatives "consult" communities of color instead of allocating majority power, influence and accountability to such groups. When one has been invited to the table on the good will of others, one must tread carefully or the penalty is that one will be uninvited.

With the "discovery" that racism is embedded in many institutional practices, mainstream society has learned what we have always known: that mainstream service providers continue to inscribe oppression and injustices on our communities of color. Whether it is through omission or commission, by intention or by neglect, the relationship between mainstream service providers and the communities of color who rely on their services is riddled with complexity, ambiguity and racism. And whether or not workers are able to unlearn their racial and cultural biases is an unanswered question – but we know this is not necessary when services are received in culturally-specific organizations.

Our pathways to effective practice lead us to prioritize service delivery that stretches far beyond the framework of "cultural competency" into "culturally-specific services." The leadership of the many service providers in the Coalition shares an understanding that mainstream services are unable to adequately respond to the complexity of needs facing communities of color. When mainstream services hire a worker or two who speak the language or translate their outreach materials into the local language, insufficient change has occurred. Similarly, when mainstream service providers take trainings in cultural competency, little real change is enacted.

We believe that culturally-specific services are best able to address the needs of communities of color. These services have the following unique features:

- *We provide respite from racism. People of color enter culturally-specific services as insiders instead of outsiders.*
- We hold the trust of our communities. Mainstream services do not, and relationships are instead marked by distrust. This supports our ability to respond to community needs and to work in solidarity with them to address larger injustices.
- We are accountable to the specific community of color for whom services are delivered.
- Our top leadership (Board of Directors or equivalent) are primarily composed of community members who share the same racial and ethnic identity. This means our organizational leaders have a lived experience of racism and discrimination and will give comprehensive attention to race and racism at all levels of practice.
- We are located in close proximity to the specific community of color that is being served and reflect the cultural values of the community throughout their services. Users of such services are likely to be welcomed and affirmed in their specific cultural context.
- Culturally-specific services are staffed and led primarily by those who share the racial and ethnic characteristics of the community. This means we have walked a similar path as those we serve, and have experienced the types of racism typically targeted against the

community. This provides deep and lasting commitments to eliminating racism in all its forms.

- Such services are typically involved in many advocacy practices, and are involved in challenging institutional racism in its many forms. Given this engagement, service users are more likely to have their needs better understood and more hopeful about prospects for change. As their organizations are involved in social justice efforts, this increases the social capital of the community and its members. [For more discussion of how to implement culturally-specific services funding, we have attached the County's values statement on such services in Appendix #3.]

Research backs this up. There is an emerging body of literature that shows the value of such services in meeting the needs of our communities, both in terms of improving individual health and well-being outcomes and also in terms of improving social capital by engaging in community development and systemic advocacy. Culturally-specific service organizations are more likely than mainstream organizations to have the following elements: hiring staff from the community and those who speak their language, include community practices in supporting the individual, engage in community development to increase cultural pride, decrease isolation and exclusion, encourage cultural consciousness, build power, address issues of racism, locate services in the community and offer holistic programming.¹⁵

The research illustrates that a “match” between the identity of workers and clients has a positive impact on client outcomes. This match creates fewer clients departing prematurely from services, making better use of services and improving mental health outcomes and life skills functioning. Additional research emphasizes their retention in services and staying involved for longer periods of time.¹⁶ The research that resulted in such findings was robust, with one studying 54 service organizations over six years.

More research on the importance of this “match” shows that a history of hostile relationships between the client and worker serves to contaminate the work with tension and mistrust.¹⁷ While the research was conducted on the impact of Chinese and Japanese therapeutic relationships, there is an obvious parallel between colonizer and colonized histories that demark most White/non-White social relations.

Moving beyond the issue of the “match,” most instruments used by mainstream health and social services are culturally inappropriate.¹⁸ Most tools set inappropriate norms among communities of color (such as excessive valuation of independence), and the tools do not have cross-cultural validity.¹⁹ One profound example is that experiences of racism, when retold to the White practitioner, are likely to be perceived as unreasonable feelings of persecution or even self-grandiose beliefs. This creates a bias in the tools that leads to over-diagnosis of people of color. Practitioners do not understand the cultural and racial dimensions to these variables, and are more likely to show up as mental health illnesses. Failure to understand coping strategies serves to create over-diagnosis of communities of color. Spiritual beliefs and use of traditional healers are mistaken by White service providers as evidence of psychopathology.²⁰

Language accessibility deepens the over-diagnosis problem. There is the persistent pattern of over-diagnosis of clients of color who do not have strong English language skills. When clients are not interviewed in their own language, they are likely to have more severe psychiatric diagnosis, and are more likely to not comply with the therapist's recommendations, and more likely to drop out of treatment.²¹

Culturally-specific services are also more likely to emphasize the larger context that explains the distress of individuals. Such services have less focus on individual “pathologies” to explain distress and are more likely to understand distress through challenges developed through racism, discrimination, unfair treatment and damaging ideas about our communities and our peoples.²² In addition, communities of color prefer interventions that provide us with tangible supports to address immediate problems.²³ This is congruent with our reduced acceptance with interventions that pathologize the behaviors of our people and diagnostic assessments that aim to label us (albeit often to secure financing).

Even experts in the field of cross-cultural counseling miss the context of racism. When a leading expert suggests that people of color need assertiveness training to redress that they “still feel as though they are second class citizens,”²⁴ the unspoken framework is that it is irrational for people of color to “feel” such experiences exist, and this denies that there is a context of racism in which people of color live. Implied is that people of color “feel” they are second class citizens, rather than an affirmation that, indeed, we are still treated as inferior to Whites. Notice the injury that occurs in such an insensitive framing of issues, leading many scholars and practitioners, and indeed, the entire Coalition membership, to assert the importance not only of workers sharing backgrounds and identities, but also of the organization to be “owned” by the community it serves.²⁵ And also notice that the recommended intervention of “assertiveness training” can lead to internalizing the idea that it is our fault we are being discriminated against – for not standing up for ourselves. Additionally notice that such action could also, depending on the context, lead to getting fired, or being arrested by the police. There is utility in how people of color have adapted to racism: it is the responsibility of professional service providers to seek to understand the resistance and survival skills embedded within our practices.

A final dimension of this research shows that even the context of administering tests serves to influence outcomes. When Whites administer IQ tests to African Americans, their test scores fall.²⁶ In addition, interviewing conducted outside one’s native language increases errors and diagnostic labels are accentuated.²⁷ While this serves as greater impetus for expanding culturally-specific services for communities of color, it also serves to punctuate the possibility that administration of surveys and census forms might be inappropriately conducted by Whites or by those who do not share the identity of the person being surveyed. By extension, this should make researchers wonder if people of color are more likely to self-identify our heritage accurately if these forms are administered in a culturally-relevant context (ie. In our own culture).

When combining the principles that communities of color adhere to in our service delivery system with the research literature, we can conclude that mainstream services can injure clients when they are marked by cultural insensitivity and a lack of understanding. They will also injure communities of color by failing to reach us – for issues of stigma, mistrust, cost, language, culture, and reputations of insensitivity precede mainstream services. In droves, communities of color are less likely to seek help from mainstream service providers. We also know that mainstream services are primarily White-centric institutions and this precludes the possibility of inclusion and equitable treatment of clients of color (even when it is unintentional). Such research shows that mainstream organizations do not and cannot offer this realm of services, and nor do mainstream services understand the complexities of racism.

Training must not be a panacea for change

While we applaud efforts of many large institutions (including government bodies) to embark on training initiatives to reduce institutional and individual racism, we are deeply cautious about the prognosis of such change efforts. At root of this direction is our belief that it is not enough to “unlearn” racism, and that training is an insufficient response to reform legacies of racism embedded in such institutions.

Our observation of many of these efforts is that they are well intentioned, but they are full of promises for reform that do not change the oppressive dimensions of the organization. While one can unlearn racism and reorient towards an anti-racism mission, we are not hopeful about training efforts to reform mainstream services which mostly operate towards “cultural competency.” The current pattern of such training to avoid centering racism and White privilege means that power issues are on the margins of their attention. The central premise of the cultural competency movement is to center cultural differences as the root of culturally insensitive practices. This suggests that understanding of difference is the deficiency of mainstream services. Such a framework neatly sidesteps issues of power, oppression and privilege, to the grave injury inflicted on communities of color.

There are, however, advances beginning to be seen among institutions that are opting to center anti-racism sensibilities in their organizational change efforts. In such an approach, racism and whiteness become the central themes for understanding how institutional, cultural and behavioral racism are reproduced within particular organizational practices, discourses and structures. We hold most optimism for initiatives that combine individual learning about racism and whiteness (that catalyze an awakening to the issue as well as a shift in perspective in how one understands the organization’s structures and practices) with concrete organizational reform initiatives. In such efforts, leadership at the executive levels is instrumental for establishing clear commitment to organizational change as well as the involvement of communities of color to provide insights into change practices most likely to result in real change for marginalized communities. A willingness to be accountable to such external groups is an important dimension of change efforts. Without external accountability, reform efforts are akin to the dubious contributions of an organization that aims to police itself – time and again, we have the experience of half-hearted, sporadic and inadequate reform initiatives. As one research report suggests, “good White résumés don’t trickle down,” meaning that such training efforts may serve to strengthen the *appearance* of change from White service providers, but little real change occurs.²⁸

We are pleased to affirm that Multnomah County is embarking on their “undoing institutional racism” initiative within a robust anti-racism paradigm and are hopeful for its prospects.

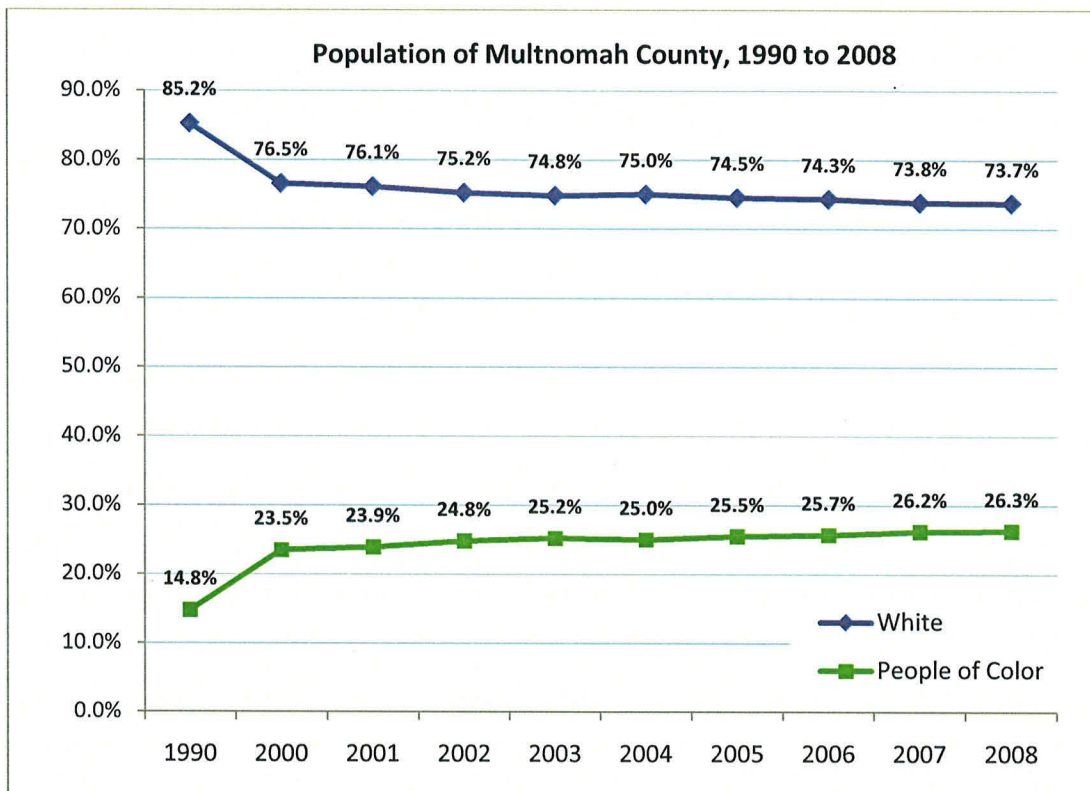
Experience has taught us to hold reservations about the likelihood of real institutional change efforts. We hold a space of suspicion about whether these training efforts will end institutional racism. We are even more troubled when such institutions espouse that they are doing everything possible to create change.

Know that there are viable alternatives and that these are rooted in culturally-specific services. Before us is a viable option to mainstream services. Our communities have the experience, the wisdom and the lifelong commitments to ending institutional racism, racist practices and the distress that flows from such identities. We have the seasoned leadership and creativity to expand our roles. Rather than continuing the path of hoping for change from mainstream services, we advocate for expanding the role of culturally-specific services.

Chapter 2: Measuring the Size of Communities of Color

Population profile

While communities of color may be smaller in Multnomah county than in areas of similar size across the nation, our numbers are greater than generally perceived. In total, people of color in 2008 (by traditional Census Bureau counts) comprise 26.3% of the population of the county. When we add the Slavic community to these data (which is conventionally counted as “White” in mainstream databases), the size of the community totals over 200,000 residents. This number is rising steadily and will accelerate more rapidly as numbers grow (and it quickly becomes a larger portion of the population), as the undercount problems are addressed and as fertility rates stay high.



Source: Author's calculations using data from Census Bureau & American Community Surveys, selected years

While the trend shows that communities of color are increasing in size, we can expect that there will again be a considerable narrowing in the years to come as this year is a census year, meaning that outreach efforts will increase the visibility of communities of color.

Of key significance to communities of color is our size. Size is associated with both power and visibility and, as one can imagine, there are concerted efforts to encourage a prideful identification as a person of color. We do this by working very hard to improve the turnout for Census 2010, participating in the Complete Count Committee, and committing our organizations to assist with outreach efforts, myth-busting the perceived dangers in participation, and encouraging one to identify their race and ethnicity in the forms. Yet, our efforts will not be revealed until 2012 when detailed population profiles for local areas become available.

While accurate counts of communities of color are deeply important to us, we also highlight how they impact all of us, regardless of racial identity. When people of color are counted by the Census, the financial consequences are large. It has been calculated that each person counted in Multnomah County brings in a cash value of \$1,439/year.²⁹ Since the Census is conducted only every 10 years,

the cost to the county of each person missed is approximately \$14,390. It is thus in our collective financial interests to build practices that promote the inclusion of all residents in the county.

We need to punctuate early on that Census 2010 efforts will not be enough to ensure a full count of our communities of color. The historic forces of marginalization are still with us, and not all people of color will self-identify in this way, out of a historic yet pervasive pattern of “desiring whiteness” which results in many of our community deciding not to reveal their status as people of color. In addition, the problems with finding all people of color (given language, poverty, housing instability and fears of recrimination) will not be solved despite the fullness of outreach efforts by our communities of color as well as the Census Bureau itself. Adding to this difficulty is the form itself – which continues to trouble us in very significant ways. While this is the subject of a much longer paper,³⁰ we can summarize the difficulties. First, in the Census, Latinos are identified as an ethnicity instead of a race, meaning that resulting data will be difficult to work with. Second, the African American community is identified by terms that include “Negro.” We do not know how many residents will decide not to complete the form due to the offensiveness of this term. Third, the section for Native Americans to self-identify is easy to misconstrue. It appears to require registration in a particular tribe in order to self-identify as Native American. Finally, there is no clarity as to how many Native American tribal groups one is able to self-identify.

The Census Bureau’s decision to drop the long form for Census 2010 will render two of our communities of color completely invisible: the Slavic community and the African immigrant and refugee community. These groups have previously been identified within items such as “ancestry” and “country of birth.” Neither question is asked on the short form (that is the only form being administered in Census 2010), and thus these communities are being rendered invisible in this administrative decision.

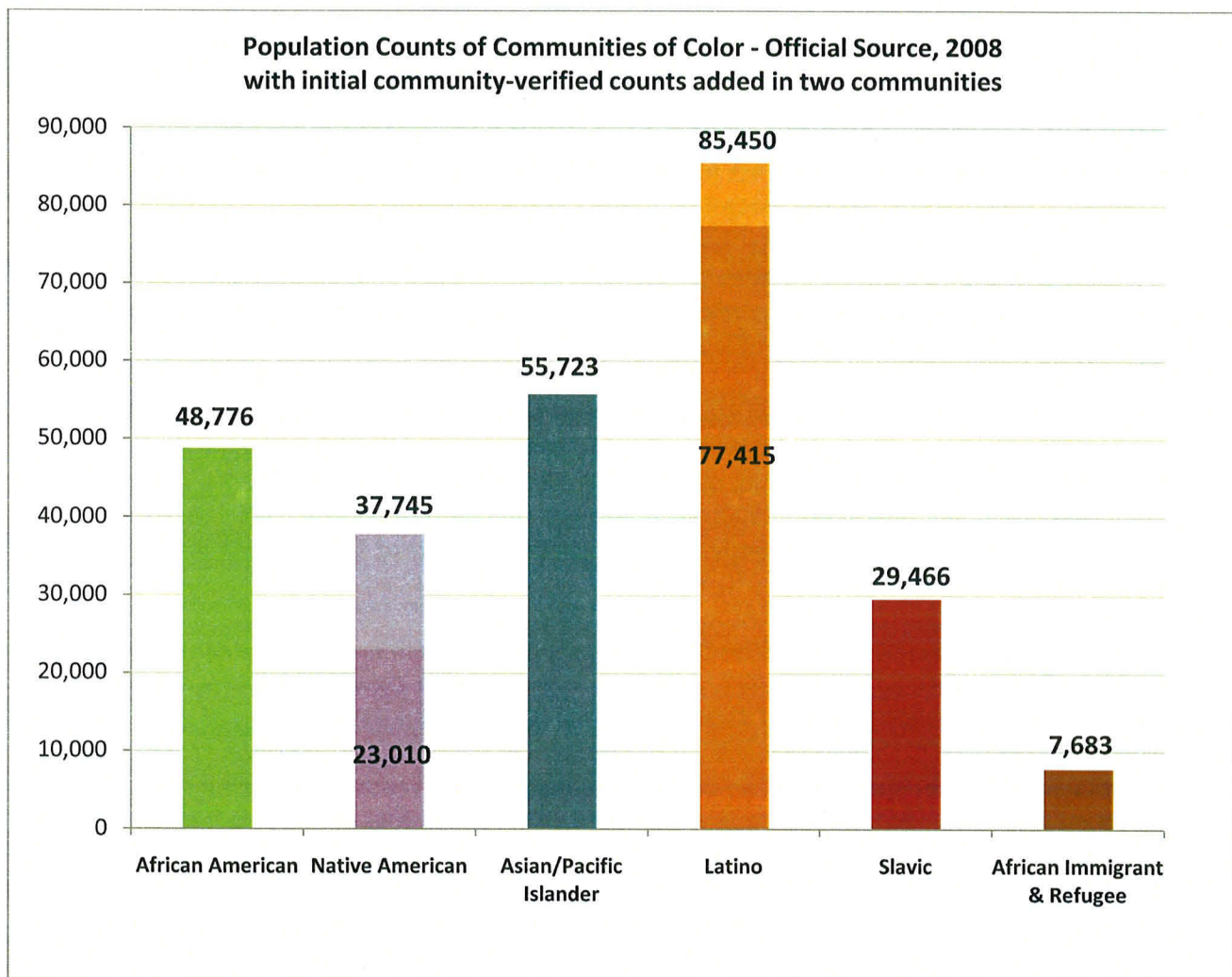
We thus believe that there will be a significant undercount of communities of color in Census 2010, as has been in existence throughout history. Recent survey results show that while communities of color typically value the Census more than Whites, there is a significant number who do not intend to complete and return the form. Among the communities of color identified in this survey, the confirmed intention to fill out the form is 52%, far lower than the 61% of Whites who say they definitely will fill out and return the forms.³¹ Another third is likely to fill out the forms. Approximately 20% of the populace anticipates not filling out the forms. Distrust of government rated the third most common reason for not participating, behind being too busy and be uncertain about how to participate.

The undercounting problem reduces our ability and our willingness to rely on data collected through the Census Bureau (including the American Community Survey) as well as mainstream administrative data that use the race and ethnicity identification tools that were created by the Census Bureau and used in Census 2000 and 2010. Combine this knowledge of the dynamics of undercounting with two pieces of “hard” evidence of the existence of undercounting that we have uncovered. The first is the Census Bureau’s own upward revisions of population counts – by 44,100 people in Oregon. These revisions were, however, rejected by the US Congress and subsequently do not appear in the Census or the American Community Survey (ACS) which relies on Census figures to stratify its sampling practices. The second piece of “hard” evidence comes from our own research work on the differences between the American Community Survey population counts and that of student enrollment figures collected by the Oregon Department of Education. Our work with these datasets show that there is an undercount of school-aged youth of approximately 4.8% in the ACS, and that these numbers are more pronounced among youth of color – as ACS undercounts students

of color by 14.8% while over-counting White students by 9.6%. Our communities believe that school board records are more likely to be accurate as they are collected via a “census” process that documents every school student (meaning that every student or parent fills in a record and all records are tabulated by ODE, instead of the sampling strategy used by ACS).

Figuring out the exact size of communities of color is a difficult task and one that the Coalition names as a priority. To redress this issue, we develop two avenues to define the size of our communities of color. The first one uses the best-available measures of the communities that are available in conventional data sources. These data are from the American Community Survey 2008. The second method flows from our community-based participatory research methods, which places our communities of color in control of how to best measure their communities. Called “community-validated population counts,” our communities work collaboratively with the input of our researchers to define community-determined methods to identify the undercounted populations and/or alternative measures. This approach to measuring our communities is the most comprehensive as in each community, our own leaders determine the most culturally-sensitive methods to determine the size of the community.

Method #1: The American Community Survey, 2008, as measured by those who self-identify as non-White. Below are the most recent data available, with each community including everyone who shares this identity. This is our preferred use of the official data counts, as it is the best answer to the question, “using official data, how large is each of these communities?” These are the figures available in the following format, “alone or in combination, with or without Hispanic.”



Source: American Community Survey, 2008, with Slavic and African data coming from ancestry tables.³² In two communities (Native American and Latino), our initial work on culturally-verified population counts is available. These are added to the upper levels of the specific population bar.

We recognize that this method results in some over-counting of community members, as the total tally is 7.7% too high (that communities of color appear to be over-counted by 7.7% of our total size).³³ This method is, however, the best “official” count of the size of each of these communities of color. We are not concerned that this over-counting adds some people in two categories, and reject the suggestion that this might result in too much flowing towards communities of color when we rely on these numbers. Given that the problem of undercounting continues, we believe that relying on these counts is appropriate in the interim, as we confirm the “community-verified” population counts.

Method #2: Community-verified population counts. Each community has a clear idea of how best to capture its own size. At this point in the research project, we are not ready to report of these findings, other than to present the initial findings for two communities – Latino and Native American. Population counts will be reported in each community-specific research report over the coming months. Here, however, we share some details of these processes.

In the Native American community, tribal registries have enrollment figures for the local region. These are owned and operated by the tribes and accordingly bypass the difficulties that the Census

Bureau has in obtaining complete counts due to issues of distrust and histories of violence. Our initial exploration of these numbers shows that there are a total of approximately 37,745 tribal members in Multnomah County. This is 64% higher than the “official” count within the American Community Survey (ACS) of 2008. This variance is accounted for in the following ways:

- Confusing question on the ACS to ask for Native American identity
- Ongoing fear of retribution and persecution from the state governing bodies
- Ongoing influence of whiteness that leave Native Americans less likely to be prideful and thus disclosing of their identity
- Poverty-related issues such as frequent moving, lack of a phone and homelessness that narrow possibilities to participate in such official surveys

In the Latino community, there are two established methods for measuring the undercounts. The first is used by mainstream organizations including the Department of Homeland Security and the Pew Hispanic Center, and these methods establish that the undercount would be 1,994. This method was developed with Census 2000, and is believed to itself be an undercount – because heightened levels of deportation will likely be increasing the amounts of non-participation in the American Community Survey.

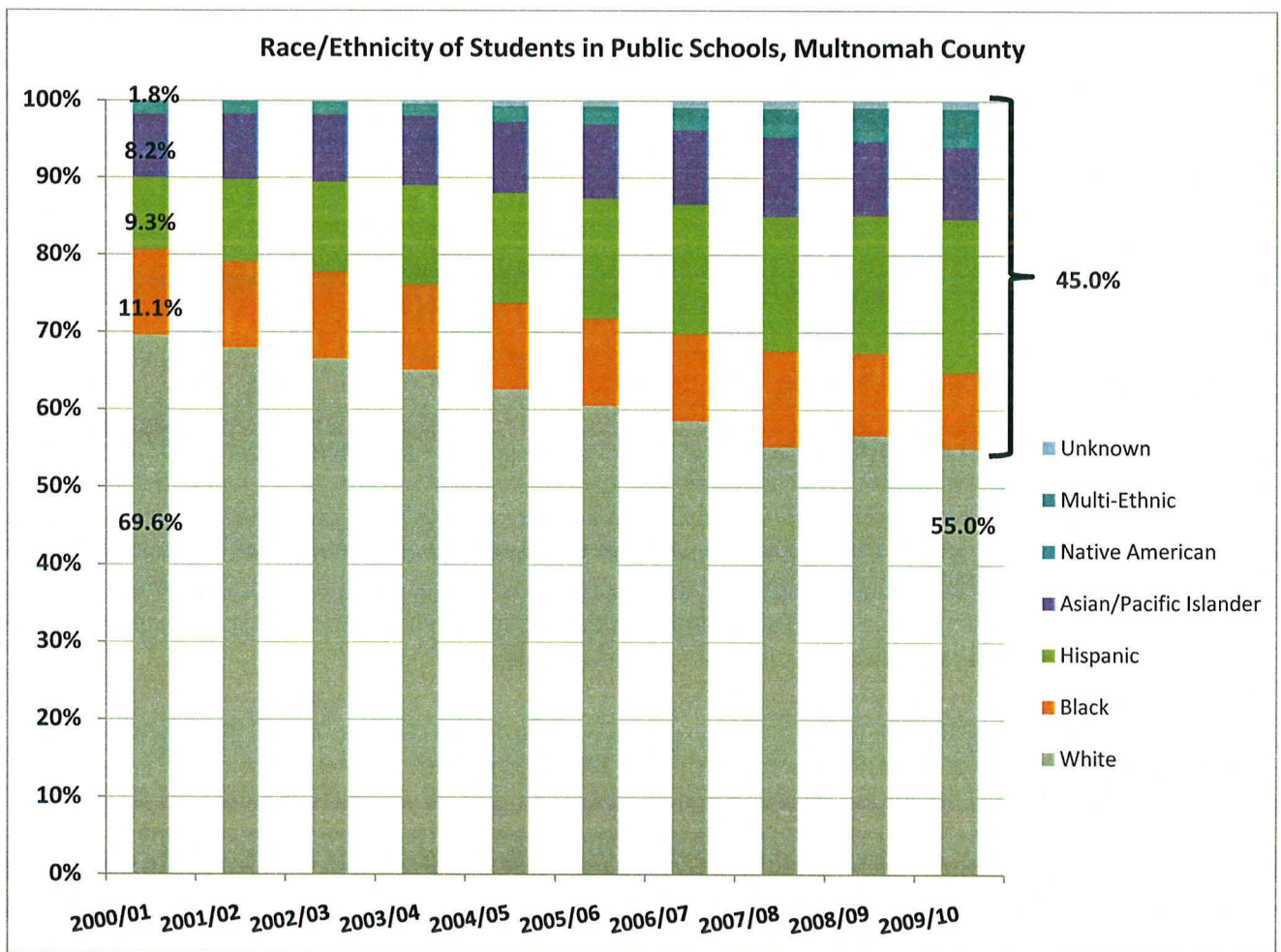
The second calculation uses a community-based participatory research method established by Marcelli (and recognized by organizations such as the United Nations Development Program and the US Government Accountability Office). Using his estimates, we calculate that the size of the undercount to be 14,076. In our preliminary interpretation of these data, we advance a conservative estimate that is the average of these two undercount methods, and reach an undercount of 7.9% which translates to 85,450 Latinos in Multnomah county. The dimensions of these undercounts include different measures for undocumented residents, for foreign-born documented residents and for US-born residents.

At this juncture in the report, we must lay aside our provisos of relying on conventional data sources. Such data must be relied upon for the remainder of the research (and re-centered again when we focus on recommendations). This is because conventional sources are abundant and typically the only source of data on the issues we want to address. Conventional databases are “as good as it gets” for documenting the experiences of communities of color when we aim to use quantitative data that are robust enough to be recognized as valid and reliable sources of experience.

As communities become more diverse, there are incredible opportunities for the region. Collectively, we expand our strengths and our resources – but only if we avoid stratification and denial of opportunity on the basis of race and ethnicity. Unfortunately, this report will reveal that we are poised to entrench quality of life on the basis of skin color and heritage. Taking these dynamics seriously, implementing ameliorative policies, and building structures to make progress accountable to communities of color offer pathways to greater racial justice and healing.

Population profiles of students

The speed of growth of communities of color is best illustrated among children. Today, students of color are quickly becoming the majority of students across the county. Growing rapidly from 30.1% of the population to 45.0% in the last ten years, the clarity of the chart below shows that the structure of our racial profile is clearly and quickly undergoing change.



Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education enrollment figures for Multnomah County public school students.

With this very large and growing population of students, education issues among communities of color are pronounced. The full range of concerns includes the achievement gap, differential dropout rates, graduation levels, access and success in post-secondary education, staffing within the education system and racial equity across all educational institutions are of heightened concern. If there is any dispute about the legitimacy of attention to these issues on the basis of numbers, certainly we have compelling evidence that these issues are significant and we need to hasten our claims to making racial equity in the education systems the top priority for our schools.

Forecasting population growth using fertility rates

The proportion of Whites to people of color is not static – it will narrow rapidly over the next 10 years. Fertility rates are currently high for communities of color. Wide variations exist, but most are significantly higher than White populations, with Hispanic communities growing fastest, and all communities of color outpacing the growth of White communities. The table below illustrates the percentage of women (aged 15 to 44) in each community who gave birth in the preceding year.

Female population who gave birth in last year	
USA – total (to age 50)	5.5%
Multnomah County	
Black or African American	7.8%
Hispanic	11.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6.8%
Asian	7.4%
Average for people of color	8.4%
White	5.8%

Source: Multnomah County Health Department, Feb 2009 and American Community Survey, 2007 (for USA total)

We see here that the proportion of communities of color will continue to grow, and the proportion of Whites will diminish. This illustrates, simply on the basis of official data counts, that our communities of color and our needs will command increasing attention from funders and policy practitioners. Now is the right time to support the leadership of communities of color. Recognizing the authority of people of color who are able to represent our communities, and allocate leadership roles at all levels of the policy and administrative processes will ensure that governments (including school boards) are poised to respond to rapidly changing demographics.³⁴

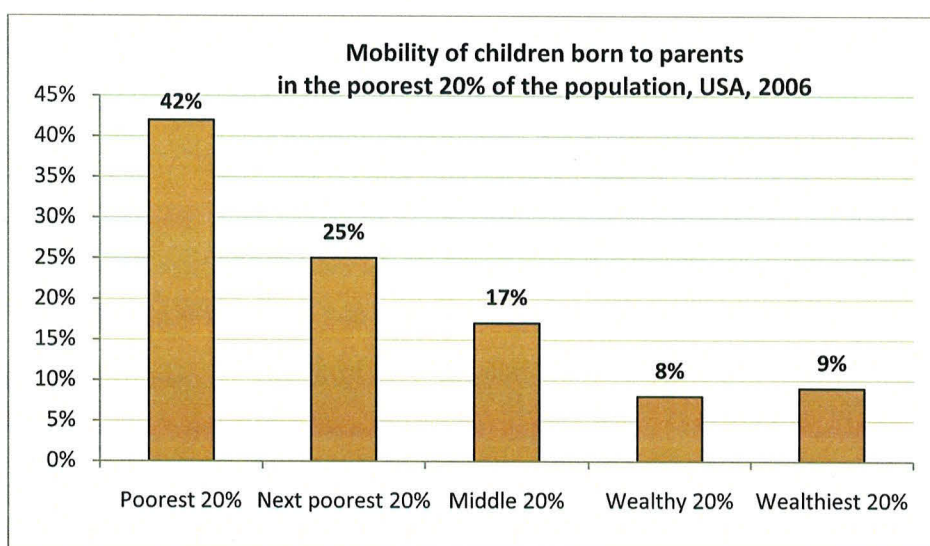
Return your attention to the graph on page 20 and note the relative “spike” in the population of communities of color. Efforts during Census 2000 to document less visible communities are believed to be responsible for the relative surge in population. Efforts are again underway to reach out to those who are fearful of participation and those who are excluded from documentation efforts. We anticipate another such “spike” in the county and highlight that there will be a growing impetus to address the needs of communities of color. It is time for policy practitioners to get in front of this changing demographic rather than lingering far behind.



Chapter 3: Institutional Disparities

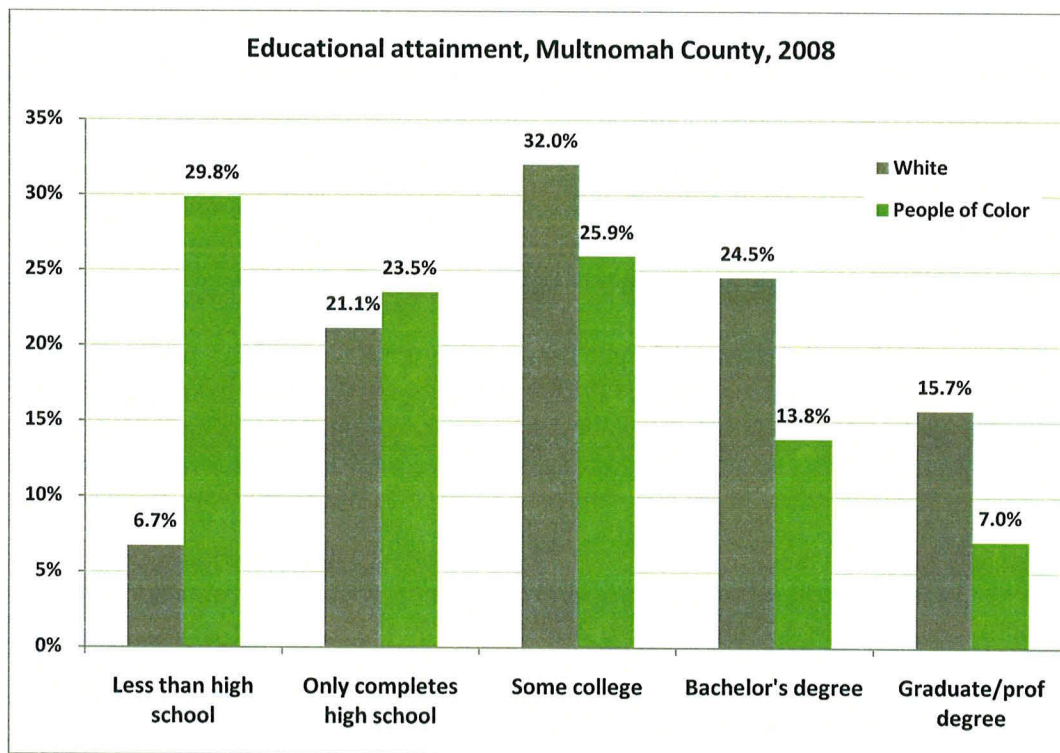
Educational attainment, achievement & discipline

There has been abundant research to illustrate that people of color fail to achieve similar academic standing as White communities. The reasons are numerous, and an abundance of local and state efforts aim to reverse these trends. But the achievement gaps are deep and the numbers of students of color who flee or are pushed out of schools are significant. Given that education strongly connects to access to good jobs, decent incomes and security for one's future, we should all be concerned with the ability of people of color to obtain excellent and complete education. And yet, concern with education reaches far beyond securing decent work and income. Education is the top priority of communities of color – we know that the future of our children depends on a robust education and high achievement. Educational success is a significant pathway out of poverty. And so too does the future of their generations to come. The single greatest predictor of one's income remains the incomes of one's parents. One example of this fact is the following chart that shows that there is little economic mobility when born to poor parents.



Source: Isaacs, Sawhill & Haskins (2008) from The Economic Mobility Project, using Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Census Bureau, with data averaged over 4 years.³⁵

While this shows that being born to poor parents is likely to render one poor or low income, there is still some mobility upwards, but significantly less so into higher economic groups. This is clear evidence that one's rank on the economic ladder is strongly tied to that of one's parents. Similarly, though not shown here, is that being born into high income is similarly reinforcing and reproducing of class divides in an intergenerational manner. The racial dimensions of these patterns are even more profound – those most likely, over the course of a generation, to move up the economic ladder are White children, but those most likely to move down to poorer incomes are Black children.³⁶ While this research has not been conducted with other communities of color, it is expected that similar patterns exist across these populations.



Source: Author's calculations using data from American Community Survey, 2008.

Know that the total for all Whites is 100%, and so too for people of color. This translates into an experience such as the following: If you are White, you have only a 7% (or 1-in-14) chance of not having graduated high school, while if you are a person of color, you are much more likely to have not graduated high school – almost a 1-in-3 chance of not having a high school diploma.

When considering how these compare with the national levels, we can see that overall, Whites in this county are successful in bettering the national averages, meaning that our educational systems really help them attain educational advancement. How do these same institutions compare for people of color? Not nearly as well, as the national average is better for people of color than in our county. While this is accurate, there is tremendous variation in success in post-secondary education. What starts to emerge here is a pattern that will continue throughout this report (and be expanded upon in the Coalition's community-specific releases in the coming months): All communities of color fare significantly worse than White communities (on average 50% worse) and the disparities are worse in this local region than they are nationally, and that this level can be as high as 55% worse. Translating this to a lived experience makes these data come to life: Today in Multnomah county, if you are White, you are twice more likely to have a university degree than if you are a person of color.

Total of those with degree, 2008		USA	Multnomah county
White		27.4%	40.2%
People of Color		23.8%	20.8%
	Latino	12.7%	14.6%
	African American	17.4%	18.1%
	Asian	49.0%	34.9%
	Native American	15.9%	15.7%

Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2008, selected population profiles

The above charts reveal a troubling set of disparities that shows that, on average, other communities have significantly narrowed the inequities between Whites and people of color in obtaining a degree. Not so in our local region.

To look at more contemporary educational experiences (and excluding those who were educated decades ago, as in the above chart), we look to school achievement measures to see how the school system is currently performing.

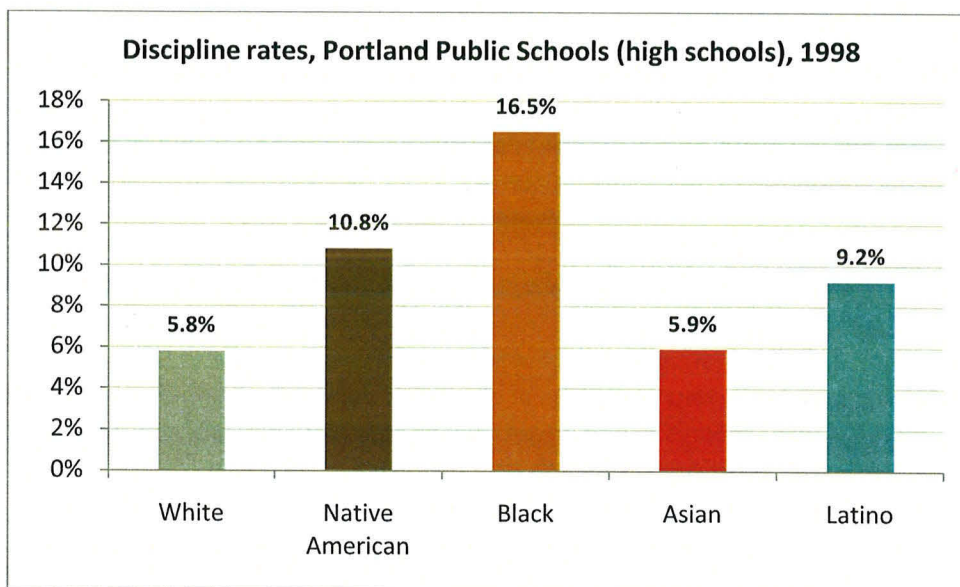
We begin with a review of the types of diplomas awarded to high school completers in 2007/2008. These data are currently only available for the totals in Oregon. Compiled below, we see that students of color lag about 10% behind white students in securing regular diplomas. The CIM designation was our State's effort to increase academic credentialing by testing students in more rigorous ways. These diplomas were awarded on a 2:1 basis to White students. We also see more students of color graduating with no diploma being awarded.

2007/2008	White	Students of Color	Black	Latino	Asian	Native American
All Completers	100%	100%	1,054	4,859	2,112	850
Regular diploma	88.5%	81.4%	830	3,849	1,811	725
with CIM	21.6%	12.6%	74	304	614	84
without CIM	66.9%	68.8%	756	3,545	1,197	641
Non-regular diploma	3.3%	4.1%	51	160	130	32
Honorary	1.0%	1.6%	4	40	102	1
Modified	2.3%	2.5%	47	125	28	31
No diploma	12.9%	14.5%	173	869	176	98

Source: Author's calculations of Oregon Department of Education's data on High School Completers, 2007-2008.

Note, however, that the chart above refers to students who begin grade 12 and complete grade 12. With no accounting here for those who do not get to the "completer" stage in education, we need to turn to other sources. More recent data shows that the magnitude of the drop out problem is higher than previously thought. Data released in June 2009 showed that only 68% of Oregon's students graduate from high school in 4 years. Worse still, Portland Public School graduated only 52% of students, Reynolds School District only 51% and David Douglas School District only 62% of students.³⁷ Data on the race and ethnicity of these non-graduates is not yet available.

One feature that is clearly tied to graduation is the experience of school discipline. Across the USA, students of color are suspended and expelled from schools at rates two to three times higher than White students.³⁸ This occurs despite the fact they are not more disruptive in class than White students – rather harsher discipline is given to students of color for the same or even less serious rule violations. At the local level, Portland Public Schools reported that in 1998 discipline rates for students of color were double those of white students – at 10.6% of students instead of 5.8% of white students. These numbers went as high as 16.5% for African American students in local high schools.

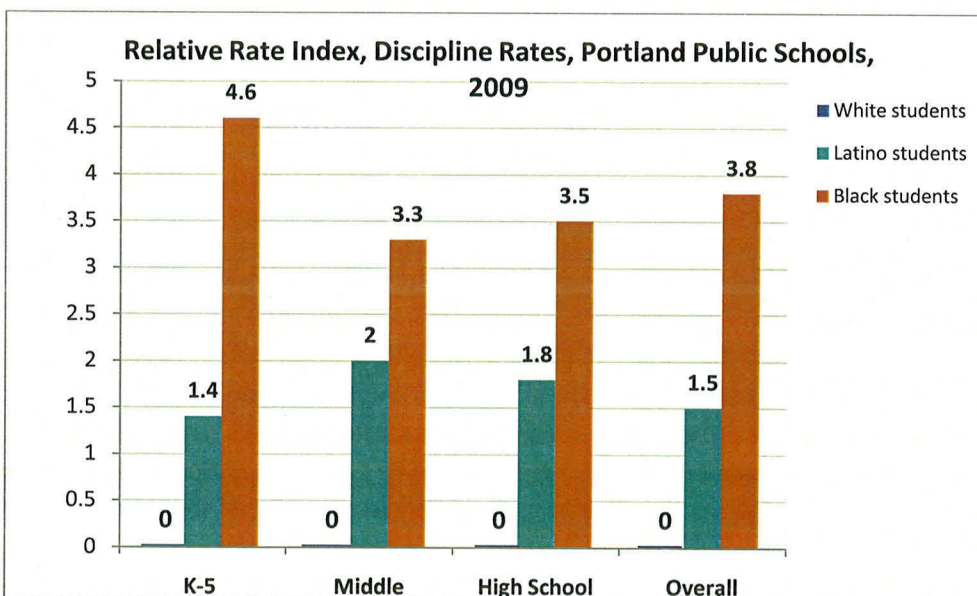


Source: Oregon Department of Education, High School Profiles, 1997-1998

Given that prior research illustrates that students of color are not more disruptive in class, we would expect similar discipline rates across all student groups. The data shows us that there is disproportionality among all students of color, although minimally for Asian youth. Here we believe that the prevailing discourse of Asian status as a “model minority” limits the disciplinary actions that might otherwise occur.

By 2007, one in four African American students in middle school had been suspended or expelled, while only one in fourteen White middle school students received such punishment. These findings existed regardless of the income level of the school.³⁹

Current discipline data has been difficult to obtain. It is not publicly available. Portland Public Schools has provided discipline levels for Latino and Black students, revealing a deep problem with disparities, as illustrated below.

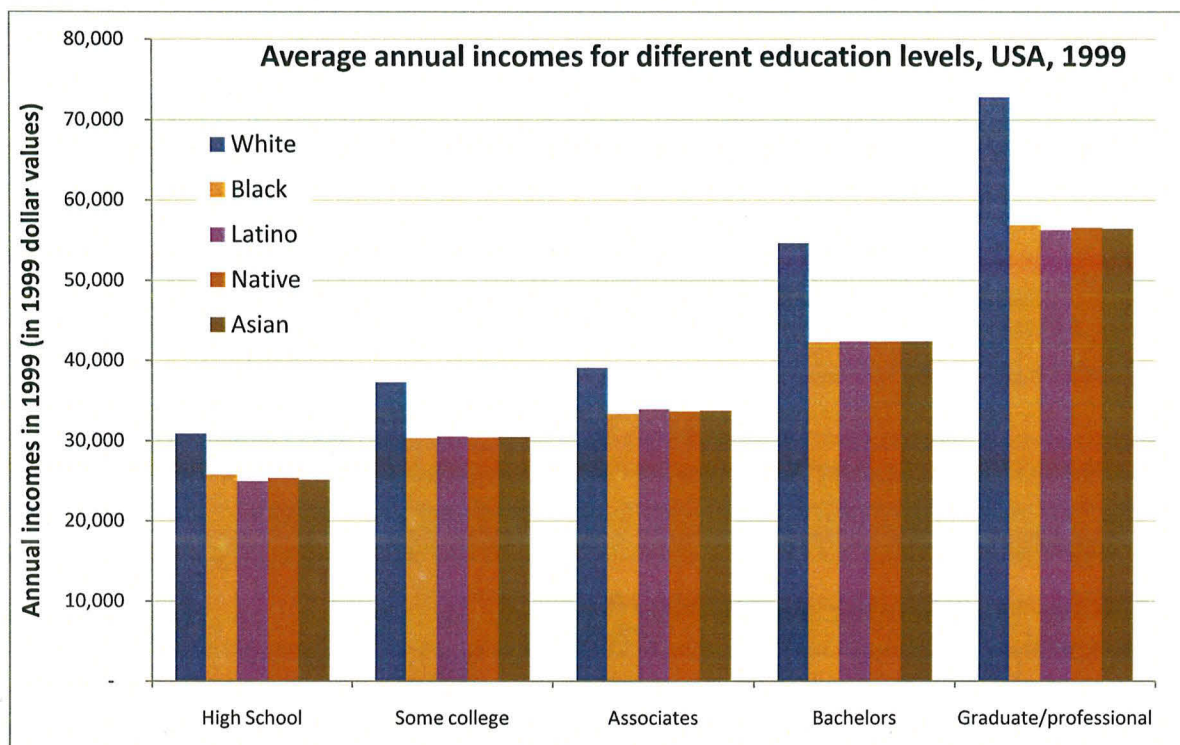


Source: Data released by the Research & Education, Data & Policy Analysis Department, 2010.⁴⁰

While data on Native American students and Asian students is not available, we can see that discipline rates are at levels revealing the same pattern as in 1998, but worsening for African American students. We aim to secure access to these data across Multnomah county school districts to more fully understand disparities in discipline patterns.

Addressing dropout rates is essential for equity issues – keeping children of color in school longer increases their chances for improved incomes, employment, health and quality of life. Incomes for those who do not graduate have, on average in the USA, stalled out at about \$20,000/year, and have not improved since 1975. Graduating high school increases incomes to about \$25,000/year. On average, there are significant income improvements in obtaining higher education. For those who obtain a university degree, these incomes rise to an average of just over \$50,000/year, while a graduate or professional degree takes one into levels that average \$73,000/year.⁴¹

But when we look closer at these data, and separate out the income experiences of Whites and communities of color, we find that one's ability to "cash in" on higher education is modified by race. There is a premium in being white that allows one to access the highest of incomes in each educational group, as one can see below. When we average the incomes of communities of color, and compare it with the incomes of whites, we find a significant improvement (or "premium") in being White which results in an ability to benefit more fully from higher education. This premium varies from a "low" of 16% for those with an associate's degree, to a high of 29% for all degree holders (bachelors, graduate and professionals alike), meaning that people of color are likely to suffer significant barriers to actualizing the full value of their education. The chart below illustrates the universal depth of these disparities and the accompanying benefit in being white.



Source: Adapted by the author from Kelly (2005) using Census 2000 data.⁴²

Despite the economic "hit" to people of color, the chart above also reveals the financial benefit of education.

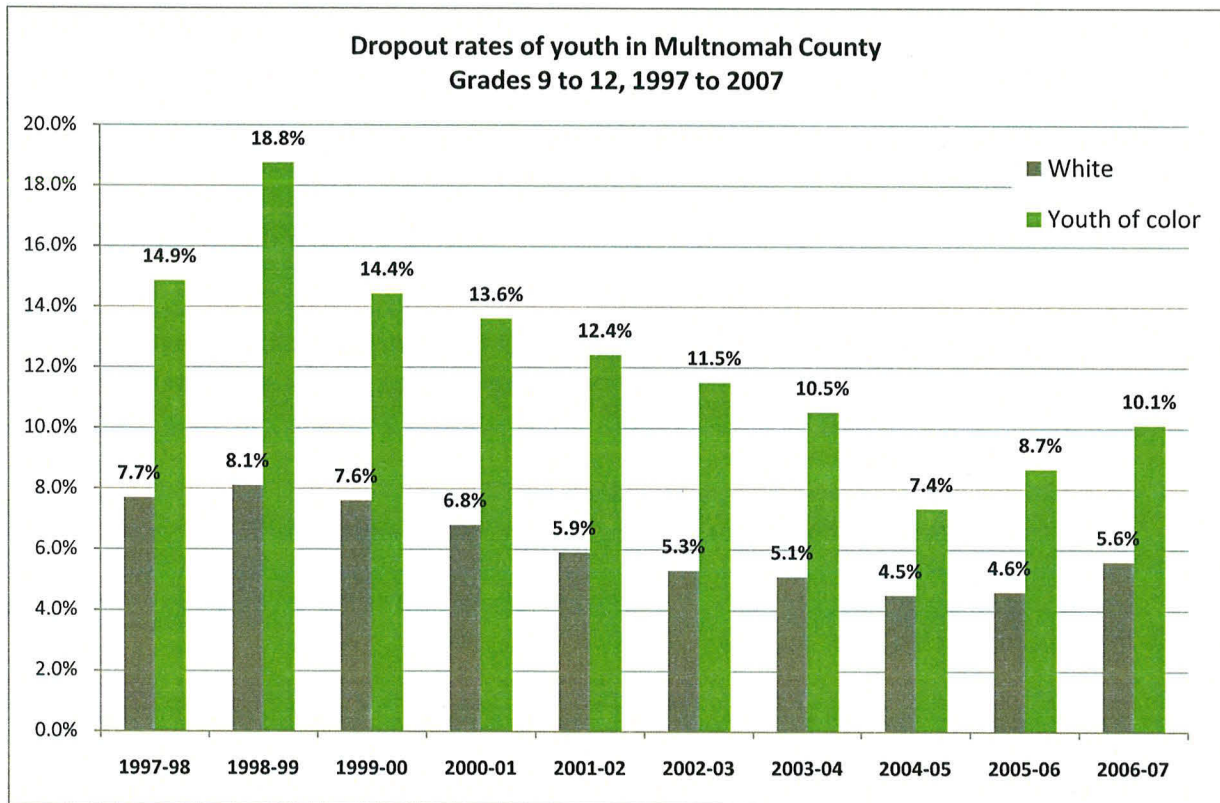
Staying in school longer lessens the likelihood of involvement in crime. Those benefits spread well beyond the lives of the individuals involved: research shows that “a 5% decrease in the dropout rate of male students across Oregon would decrease annual crime-related costs by \$21 million and would increase the annual earnings of this population by \$30 million.”⁴³ In addition, the benefits of reducing dropout rates in the Portland metropolitan area are very large, leading to the suggestion of numerous local leaders that increasing high school graduation rates should be our number one economic development strategy. The specific benefits of reducing dropout rates by 50% in the local region are assessed to be:

- \$38 million/year in increased earnings
- \$25 million/year in increased spending and \$9 million/year in additional investing
- \$108 million in additional home sales for these graduates, and \$4 million/year in vehicle purchases
- The creation of 300 new jobs
- \$4 million/year in increased tax revenue
- 61% of these additional graduates would pursue higher education⁴⁴

These figures are based on data that shows 27% of regional high school students do not graduate on time with a regular diploma, equaling 7,200 students in 2008.

Let’s now turn our attention to more in-depth, specific measures of equity and performance in educational attainment: dropout rates for students, current academic achievement levels in Multnomah County schools and graduation levels in regional higher education settings.

The dropout level of students of color is persistently twice as high as for White students. For the last decade, we have failed to sustain students in schools at quite alarming rates, and we have failed students of color twice as badly. The variation within these rates is quite wide when one looks at the details of specific communities of color. Hispanic and Native American youth have dropout rates that are persistently almost three times worse than those of White youth.

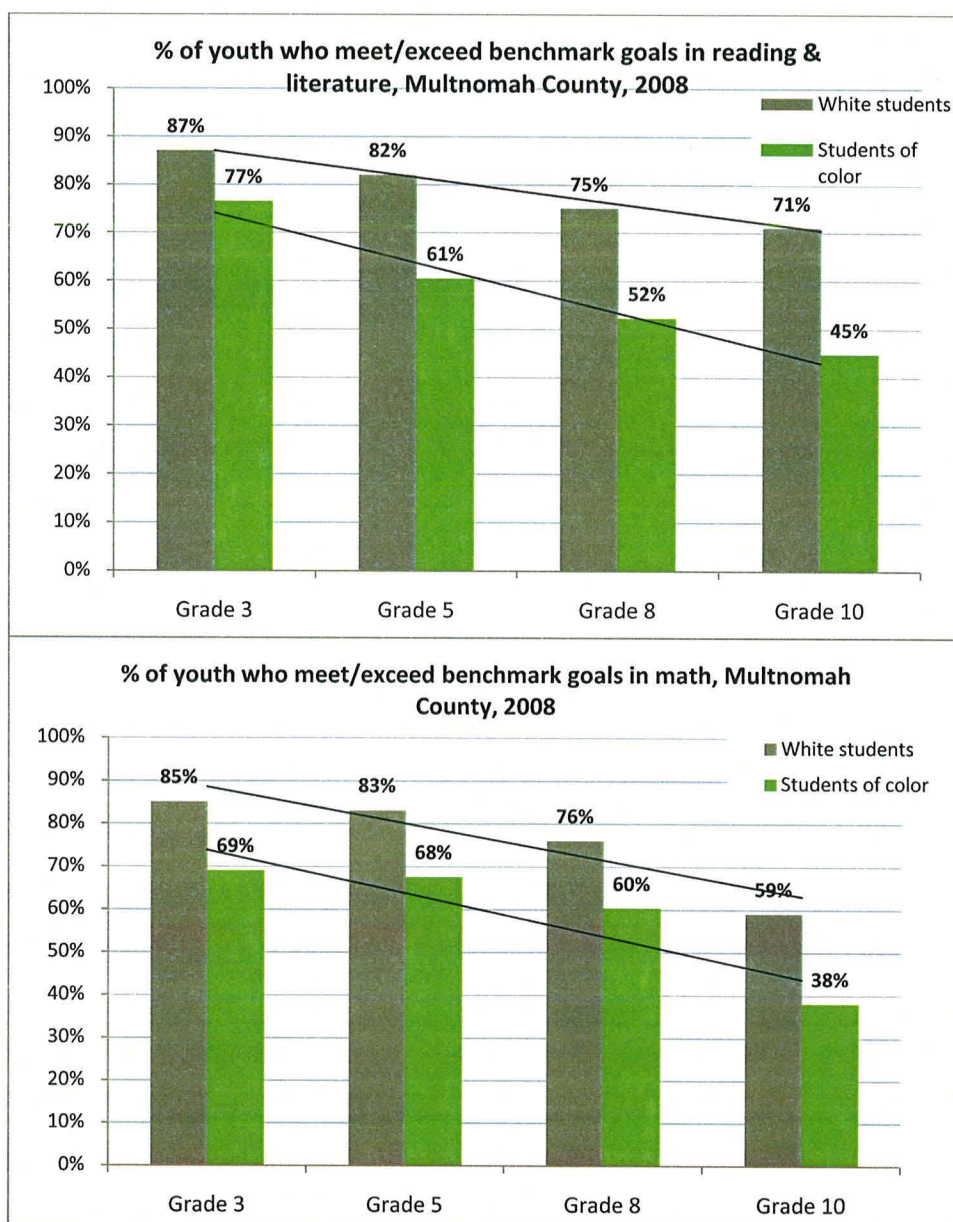


Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education, November 2008, tables by Pat Burk

Reading this graph belies the fullness of how we fail our children. Earlier we noted that in the three largest school districts in Multnomah county the graduation rates ranged between 51% and 62%. And yet, above we see that dropout rates average less than 10%. This incongruence calls for further review and explanation. For graduation rates to be approximately half of our students (and likely much worse for students of color), we must be losing an equivalent number of them throughout their educational experience.

While dropping out (or the often preferred term, "pushed out") is of significant concern, so too are the inequities in achievements. In every academic measure in grades 3 through 10, White students outperform students of color. The sole exception is Asian students in mathematics in grades 8 and 10. But lest we think that Asian students are faring well in the education system, we need to be aware that their overall educational attainment, occupational stratification, incomes and poverty rates very closely approximate those of other communities of color.

The two charts below display the most recent data available on student achievements (drawing on test scores from 2008), showing the disparities that exist between the achievements of White students and students of color.



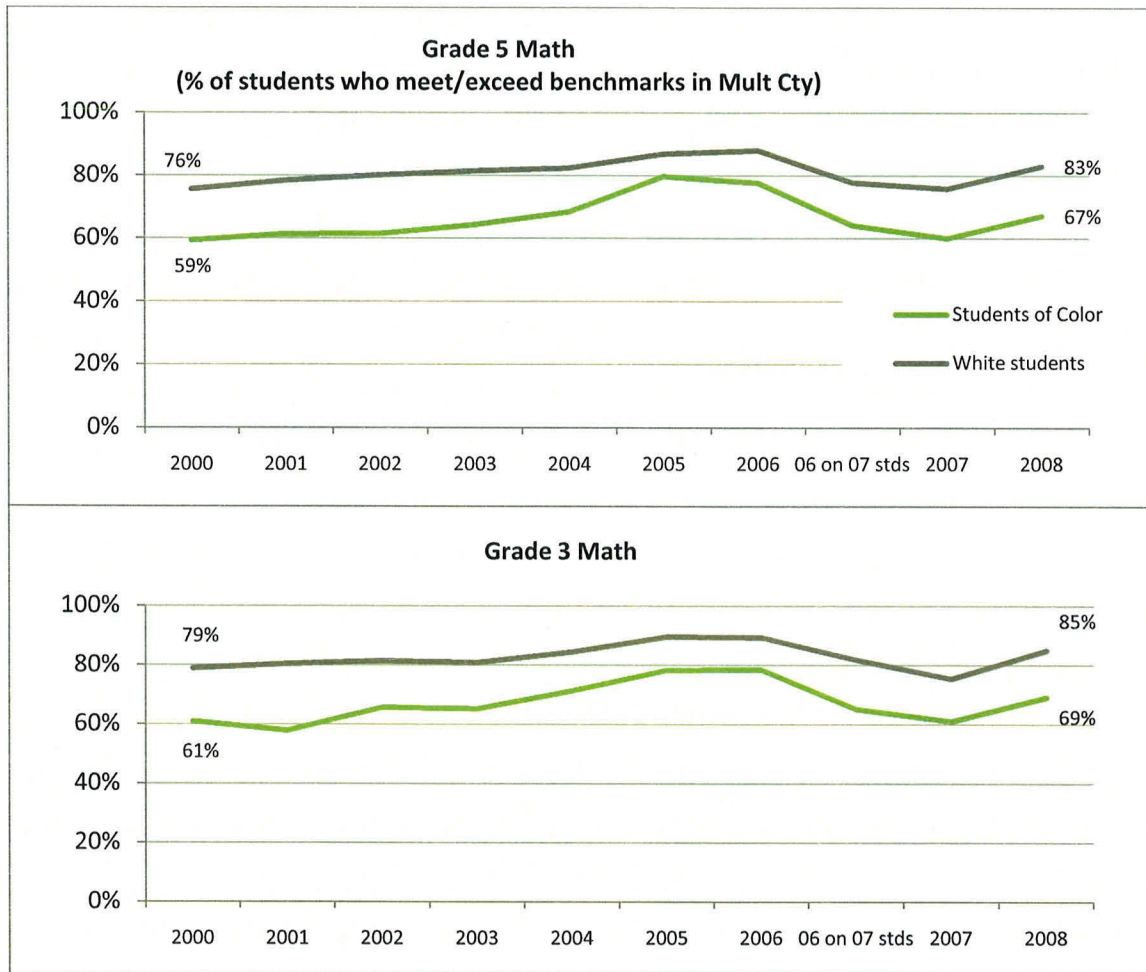
Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk

What we see here is a significant slipping of performance scores from students of color. The gaps are pervasive across subjects and grades, and worsening as one gets older. The final Grade 10 results in reading are that less than half of students of color are at passing levels, and almost $\frac{2}{3}$ are failing in math. Preparation for post-secondary education is compromised for most students of color. This indicates a high likelihood that the educational attainment profile for communities of color (as profiled in the second graph in this section) will not change in the years to come. While there may be post-secondary opportunities available through college, people of color are likely to be blocked from the choicest of jobs – management and professional positions.

Overall, the academic performance of our K-12 education system continues to fail communities of color. While researched heavily, outcomes continue to be disproportionately dismal.

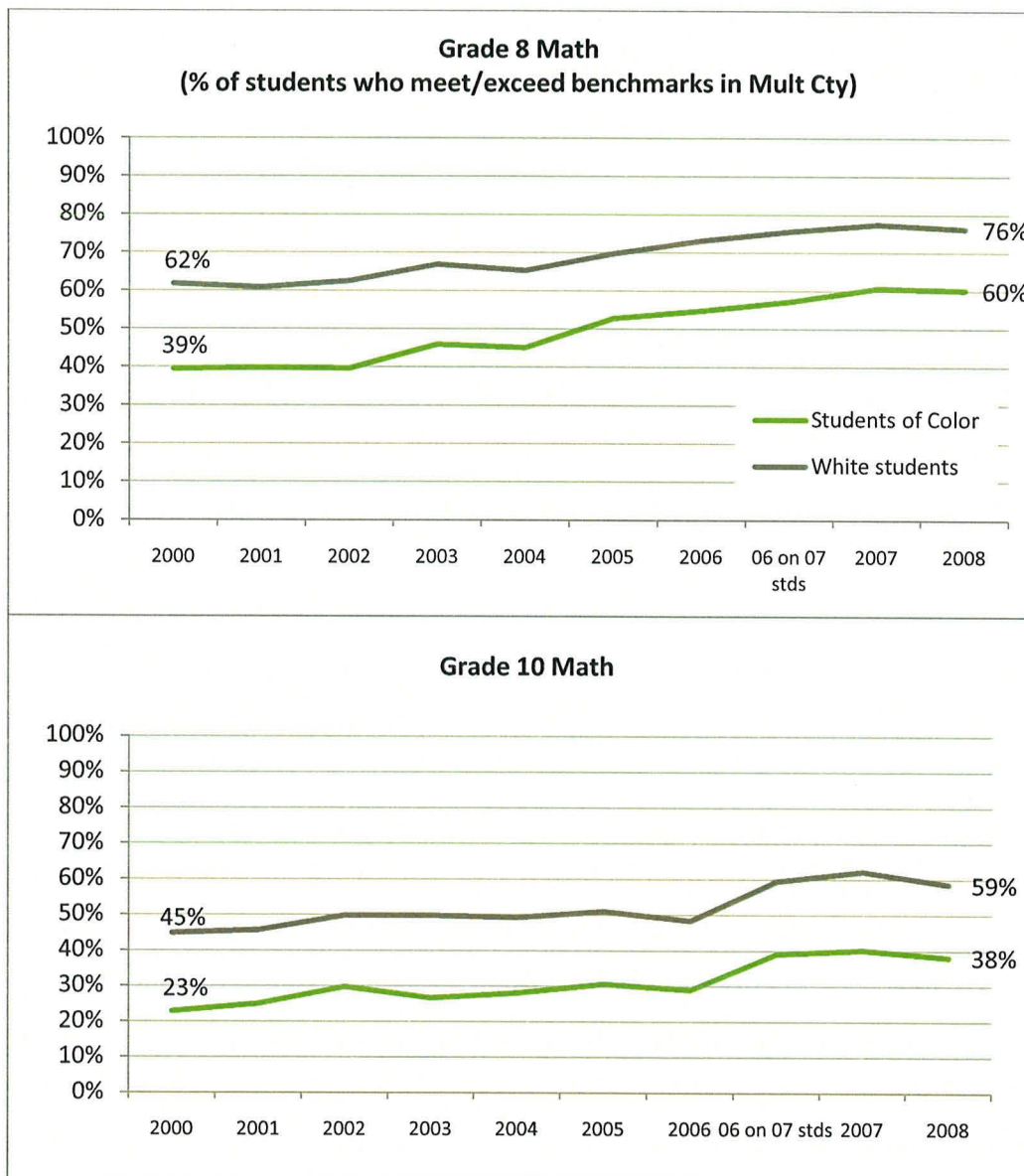
When one looks at these trends over time, however, there are some signs of improvement. These improvements are most pronounced in middle school, although the best narrowing of the gap

around 2006 has quickly unraveled. These disparities are best illuminated with the following graphs. We will look first at math performance and then turn to reading and literature.



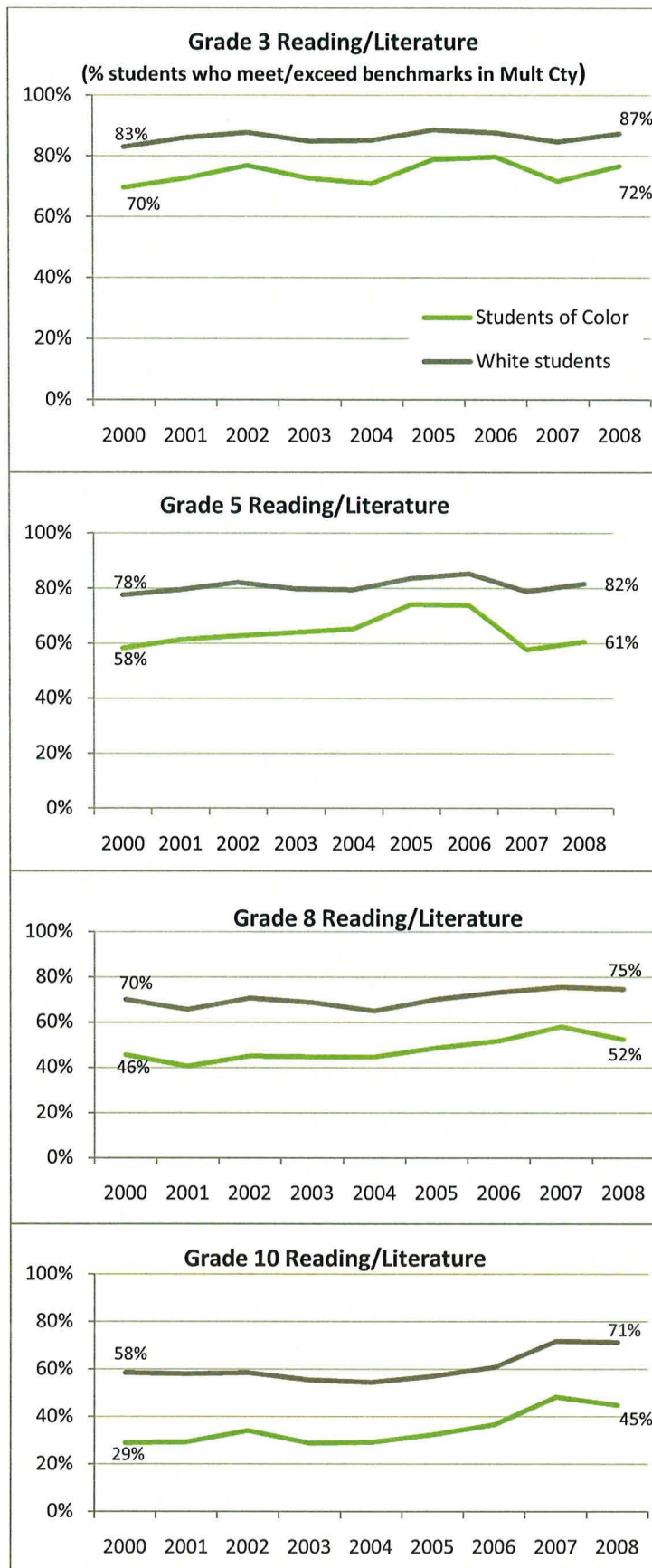
Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk.⁴⁵

The first observation is that the size of disparities is profound and only two-thirds of early grade students meet or exceed the "satisfactory" grades in standardized tests. The second feature is that in these lower grades, scores for students of color have improved, but they have not gained ground on white students, except for a brief period a few years ago. Widening inequality since 2006 is of tremendous concern to the Coalition. We are stuck in a pervasive achievement gap throughout the last decade. Let's turn attention to performances in higher grades.



Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk.⁴⁶

These scores show, again, that while improvements have been made, the magnitude of disparities remains relatively unchanged at the end of this decade as at the start. Grade 8 is, however, a place where some narrowing has occurred, and certainly tremendous gains have been made with students of color as their performance levels have risen from 39% meeting benchmark goals to 60% obtaining such successes. While the direction of student improvements has been positive, the grave situation of students of color in math is that only 38% of them are meeting the benchmark standards for achievement in math.



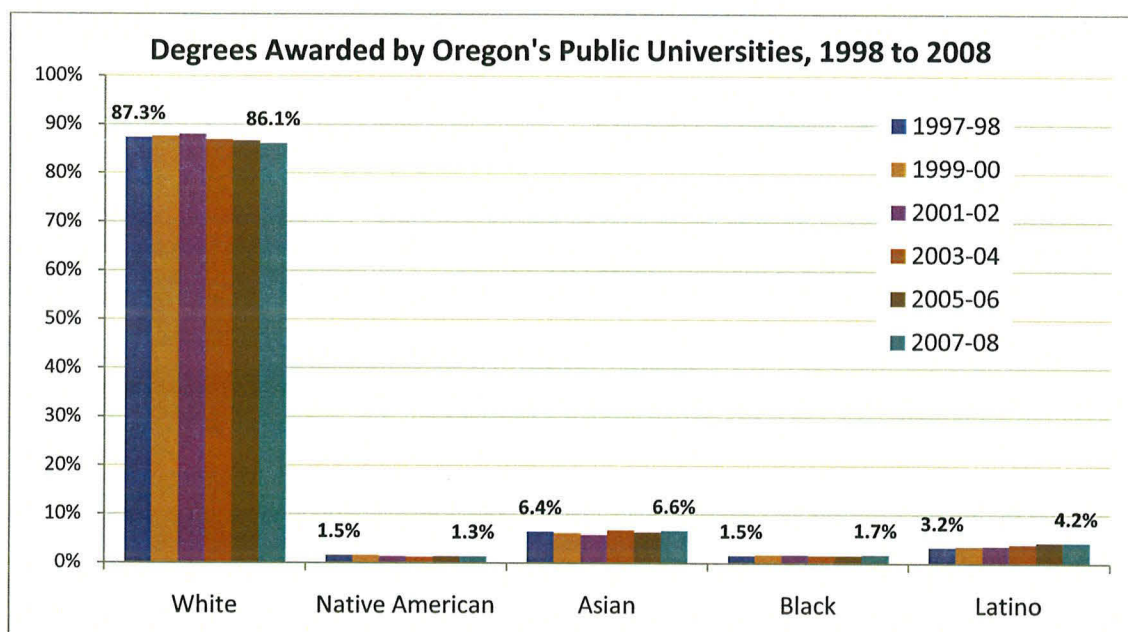
Source: Author's calculations from Oregon Department of Education data tallied by Pat Burk.

These charts show that there is a pervasive achievement gap stretching through the last eight years. While there have been significant gains, particularly in Grade 10, the gap is higher than it has ever been in the last eight years.

It is imperative that we as an entire community place the achievement gap at the center of our reform efforts. At the same time, we need to honor and affirm the efforts that charter and alternative schools like the ones at Self-Enhancement Inc., Native American Youth and Family Center and Azbuka Academy (serving the Slavic community). Similar models are encouraged for other communities of color to support the distinct social and academic needs of children of color, and to be embraced by a school that places their achievement as the highest goal of the institution. The failings of our schools to reduce disparities and successfully graduate more of our children means that our children are not prepared for the future and are thwarted from achieving the vision of becoming contributing successful members of society that we hold for them.

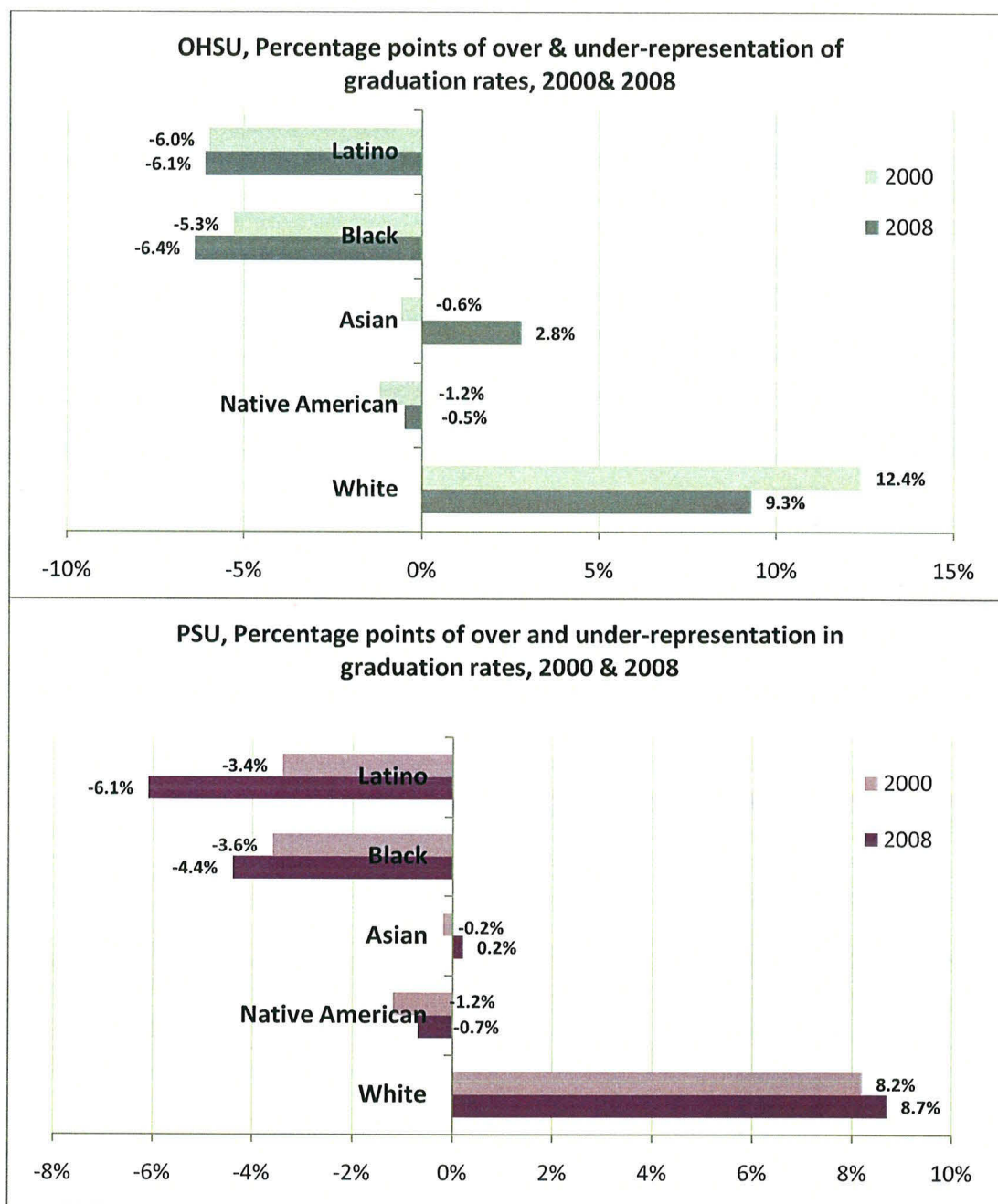
We must not let a generation go by on the hopes that it will just take more time to narrow the gap. We are stuck. The education systems and individual schools must work in partnership with communities of color to address the institutional racism that is reproduced in our schools. This includes everything from recruitment of teachers, their preparedness to practice congruently with anti-racism approaches, to increasing expectations for transparent and accountable schooling practices that will have zero tolerance for racism, and its corollary of whiteness. Reducing dropout rates, increasing graduation rates for students of color and reducing achievement disparities are the most urgent needs for educational reform today.

Turning attention to post-secondary education, we find that the performance of our state-wide institutions falls short on many levels. While there may be an improved array of recruitment and retention efforts for students of color, there has been no progress on changing the profile of students to better represent the population of the region. In the 10-year span profiled below, White students still make up the overwhelming majority of students graduating with degrees from public universities.⁴⁷ Their hold on these institutions has barely budged in the last decade. While raw numbers do look better, the proportionate access to higher education has stalled at dismally low levels.



Source: Author's calculations of data from Oregon University System Fact Books, selected years.

It is appropriate to narrow our assessments to local universities when considering the equity dimensions of higher education. We turn to look at admission and retention of students of color. The typical practice in assessing over/under representation is to use the geographic comparators in the same region. Two institutions in the Oregon University System are located in Multnomah county: Portland State University and OHSU. Narrowing the lens, the following graph illustrates the degree of over and underrepresentation of various communities of color and Whites across the last decade.

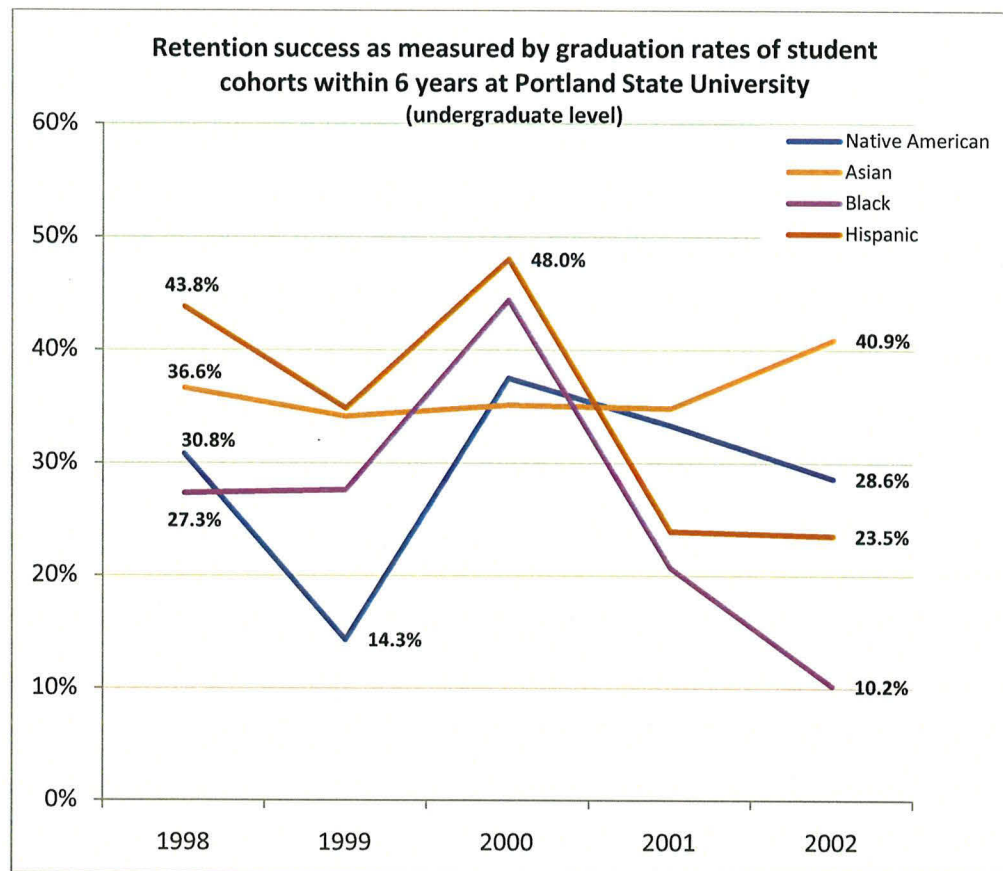


Sources: Author's calculations from Oregon University System Fact Books, selected years; Census Bureau statistics, selected years.⁴⁸

The two graphs above illustrate the patterns of over and underrepresentation at PSU and OHSU in 2000 and 2008. They were calculated by comparing the numbers of graduating students in each category to the

population in Multnomah county of each community. There is only one community of color that has gained ground over the last eight years (Asian/Pacific Islander), and this pattern is true for both OHSU and PSU. Underrepresentation of all other communities of color continues. For those in the Hispanic and Black communities, their representation in these local higher education institutions has gotten worse, with deterioration at PSU particularly notable for Latinos and African Americans. We do recognize that there has been a significant improvement in lessening the Whiteness of the graduating body at PSU (not shown in the above graph, but evident in the original data), but when the growth of communities of color is factored in, the overrepresentation of Whites in the institution is still profound.

Turning to retention rates of students of color, we find the following patterns to exist at Portland State University.



Source: Office of Diversity and Equity, Portland State University⁴⁹

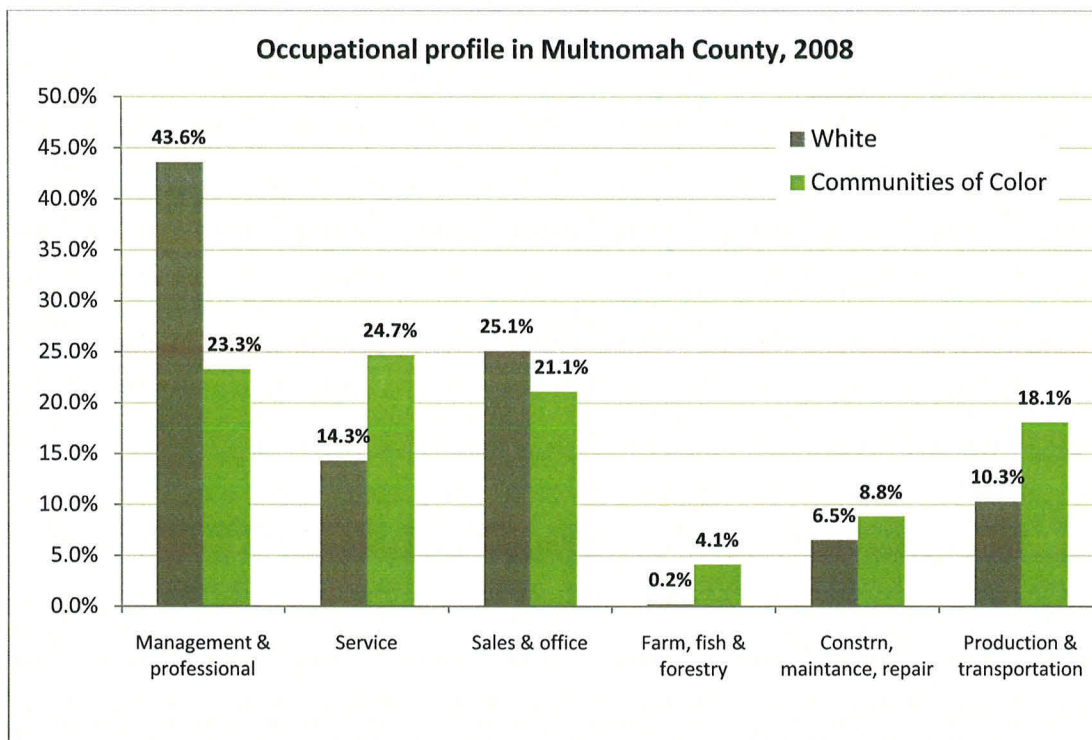
Students of color are clearly struggling to attain educational success at PSU. From a disastrous low of 10.2% of 2002 Black students who graduate within 6 years of entering, to a high of 40.9% of Asian students, we note the deterioration of graduation rates for most students of color. The levels of graduation are unacceptable and the deterioration of these rates is even more significant. The higher levels for most students who entered in 2000, show that better outcomes are possible.

Data are available that compares PSU with other institutions. The retention rates of students of color at both the University of Oregon and Oregon State University are markedly higher – PSU's composite rate (for graduates and undergraduates, transfers and non-transfers) is 37%, while the OSU is at 58% and the UofO is at 66%.

Whatever initiatives have occurred in higher education, they are inadequate to respond to changing local population conditions. While eligibility to higher education is conditional on secondary school success, equity initiatives are believed instrumental to attracting and sustaining students of color in higher education. The equity initiatives include affirmative action in hiring faculty and staff and in admitting students, retention practices that support students of color, lowering of fees to increase accessibility and scholarship/loan programs targeted at students of color, departmental and institutional equity plans to ensure that once students are admitted, the local programs do not push them out by tolerating a hostile educational environment (even if unintended). All of these initiatives need to be centered on the needs of students of color with the intention to improve educational outcomes for communities of color.

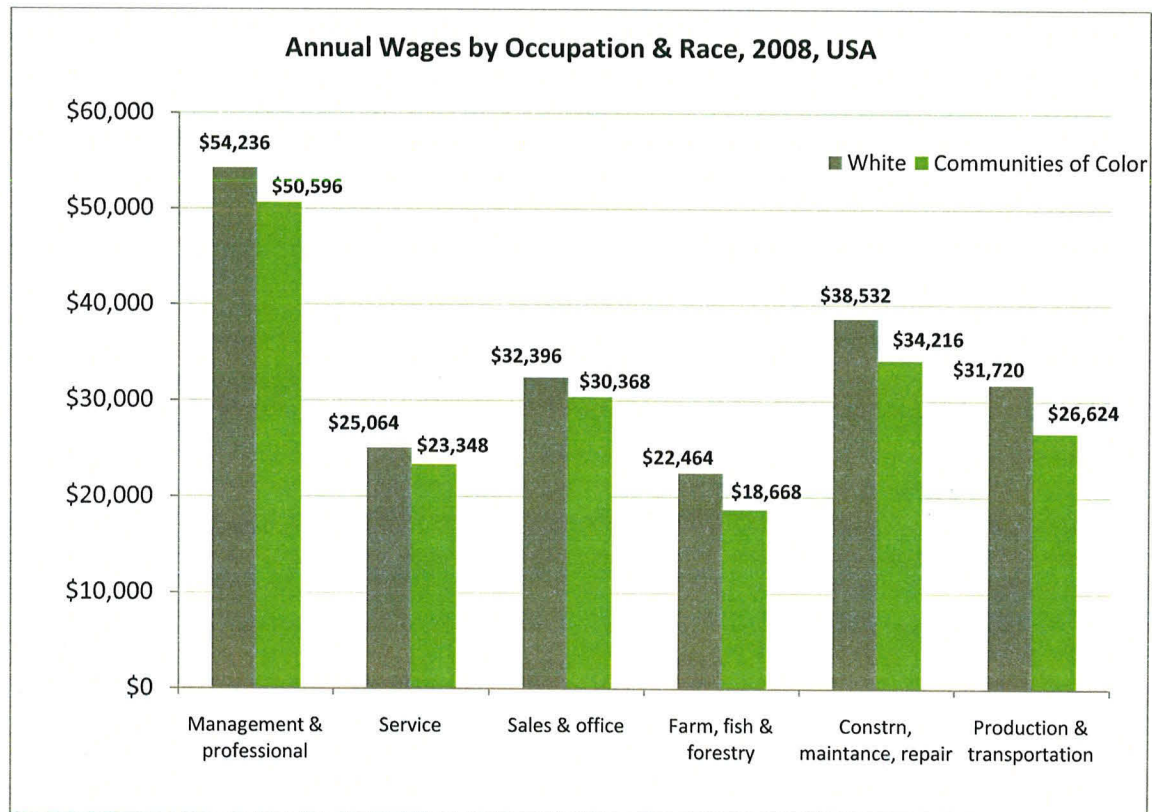
Occupational profile

The logical outcome of inadequate educational attainment is that employment opportunities shrink and access to better paying jobs, with better working conditions, is thwarted. Indeed, such is the result facing communities of color. From the sectors listed below, the “better jobs” in the county continue to be reserved largely for Whites. The distribution of our community’s occupations follows traditional lines. This means that White people continue to be the bosses and the professionals, and people of color continue to serve Whites, as their overrepresentation in service occupations reveals. In addition, people of color continue to feed and house Whites, and move stuff around (usually of service to stores where Whites are better able to shop and consume, since they have better incomes).



Source: American Community Survey, 2008.

The average income in each occupation is available at a national level. What we can see below is that despite holding similar positions in employment, variations of about 10% exist between workers of different races. The variance in wages between categories of occupations serves to explain why management and professional positions are most desired and most held by Whites.



Source: US Department of Labor, November 2009.⁵⁰

What are people of color more likely hired to do locally, compared to nationally? The results are troubling. We are much less likely to be the expert or the person in charge. Such people are more likely to be White here in Multnomah county than the USA average. This means that when you ask to speak to “the person in charge,” you are much more likely to face a White person. Today in Multnomah county, almost one in every two White people will become managers or professionals. But less than one in every four people of color get such jobs. In the USA in general, these results are much more equal, with 38% of Whites getting to be the boss, while 30% of people of color access such jobs. This means the stratification of our labor market is deeper with greater access barriers that are connected to race and ethnicity than exist nationally.

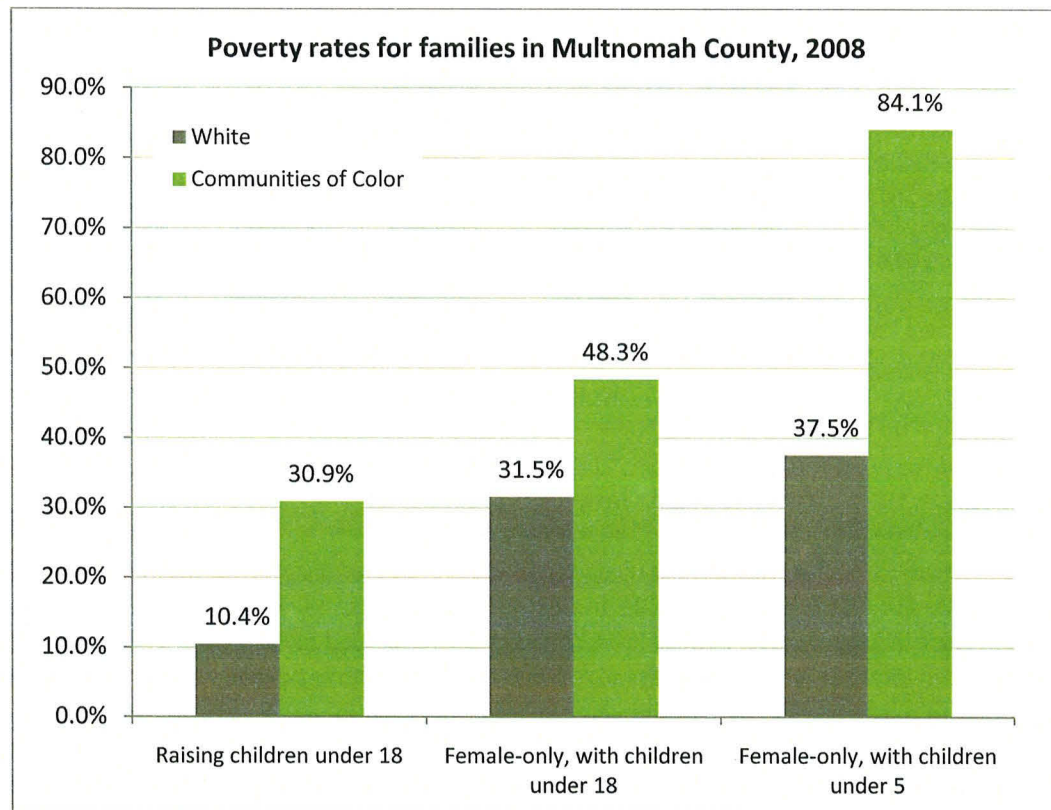
Occupation - 2008		White		People of Color	
		Multnomah	USA	Multnomah	USA
Management & professional		43.6%	38.3%	23%	30%
Service		14.3%	14.1%	25%	22%
Sales & office		25.1%	26.4%	21%	24%
Farm, fish & forestry		0.2%	0.5%	4%	1%
Construction, maintenance, repair		6.5%	9.3%	9%	9%
Production & transportation		10.3%	11.3%	18%	15%

Source: Author’s calculations from American Community Survey, 2008.

Poverty rates

As one might predict given the education and occupation profiles shown above, those overrepresented at the lowest end of the income ladder are people of color. Poverty rates are a significant measure of

desperation, and an illustration of the failures of the economy to provide adequate incomes for the community at large. While most of us accept that some amount of poverty is a regrettable consequence of any economic system, the rates illustrated below show how the patterns of poverty reveal something more than a consequence of the economic system. If this situation was purely economic, then the racial composition of people in poverty would reflect the population distribution. Instead, people of color are vastly overrepresented among those who have inadequate incomes. The reader will also notice that this is more than “just” a consequence of low education because the chances of being a poor single parent depend more on gender and race than they do on education.



Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey, 2008.

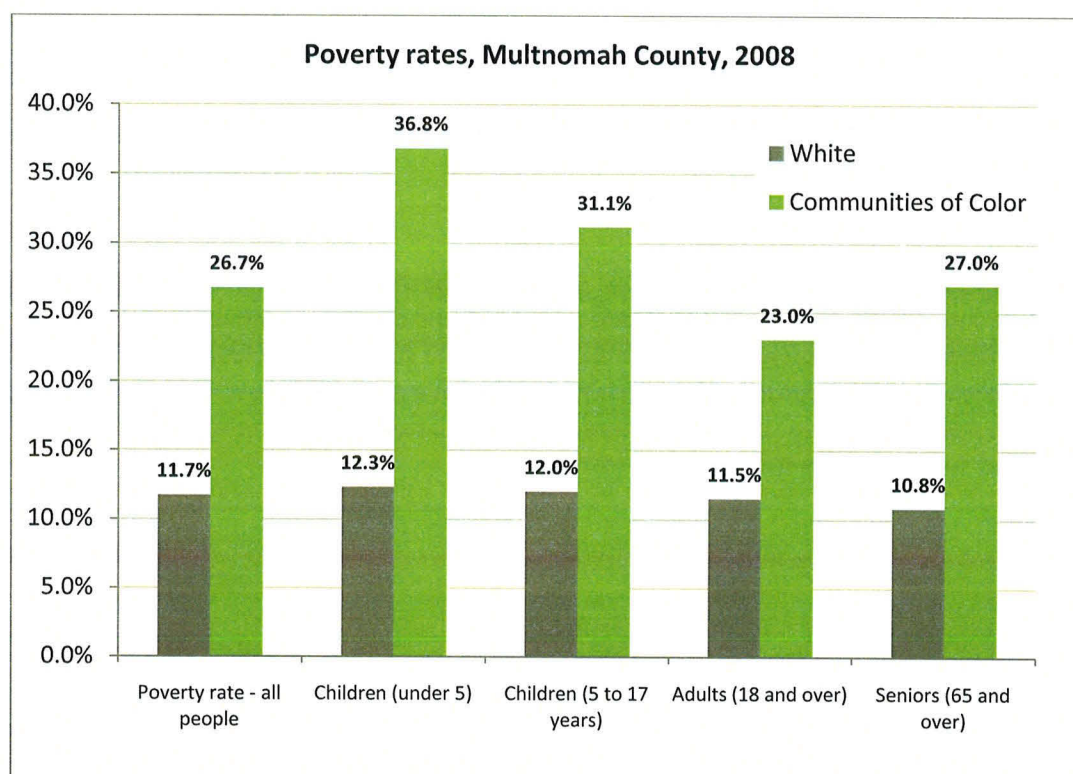
The dire situation facing families of color needs considerable and immediate attention. Consider the parenting predicament facing families of color, particularly single parent women-headed families. Imagine what it must be like to raise children and have to suffer the indignities of poverty. Poverty hurts – and harms children. Think of how many resources are tied to having money to pay for them. Today's school environment has few supplements, like sports, music and art. Housing is marginal and precarious, because poor families cannot afford safe and secure housing. And the expense of childrearing means children go without, adding stress, trauma and risk to vast numbers of families of color. No parent wants to raise their children in such conditions, yet we fail them year after year. These family poverty disparities are worsening over time (as illustrated in the later section “Summary table of disparities”).

Turning now to individual poverty rates, we see that poverty rates are significantly worse for communities of color. The table below illustrates the poverty rates for various age groups, and the details for specific communities of color.

2008	White	Communities of Color	Hispanic/Latino	African American	Asian	Native American
Poverty rate - all people	11.7%	26.7%	27.0%	32.6%	12.9%	34.4%
Children (under 5)	12.3%	36.8%	33.3%	42.3%	15.9%	55.7%
Children (5 to 17 years)	12.0%	31.1%	34.5%	40.2%	9.9%	39.9%
Adults (18 and over)	11.5%	23.0%	22.3%	27.8%	13.2%	28.8%
Seniors (65 and over)	10.8%	27.0%	31.1%	30.4%	25.3%	21.0%

Source: Author's calculation of data from American Community Survey, 2008.

When we combine the poverty levels for all children, we find that while the child poverty rate for White children is a dismal 12.5% (equivalent to 1-in-8 children), and this figure deteriorates dramatically to 33.3% of children of color. This means that 1-in-3 children of color live in poverty. The chart below highlights the differences of poverty between Whites and communities of color, illustrating that poverty rates are 200% to 300% worse among communities of color.



Source: Author's calculation of data from American Community Survey, 2008.

Being White continues to serve as a protective factor for poverty. Child poverty means our children are housed precariously, change schools often, go hungry, and are denied access to the fullness of society's resources available to most children. Child poverty is probably the most reprehensible of society's practices, and it strangles our children and their future. Their health, wellness, academic success and capacity to prepare for the future are placed at significant risk.

While Multnomah county may be a county that prides itself on its liberalism, it holds a dismal record on child poverty, particularly for communities of color. Whiteness, while not a guarantee of living outside of poverty, is certainly a protective factor to protect one's children from poverty, as "only" one in every eight White children is poor.

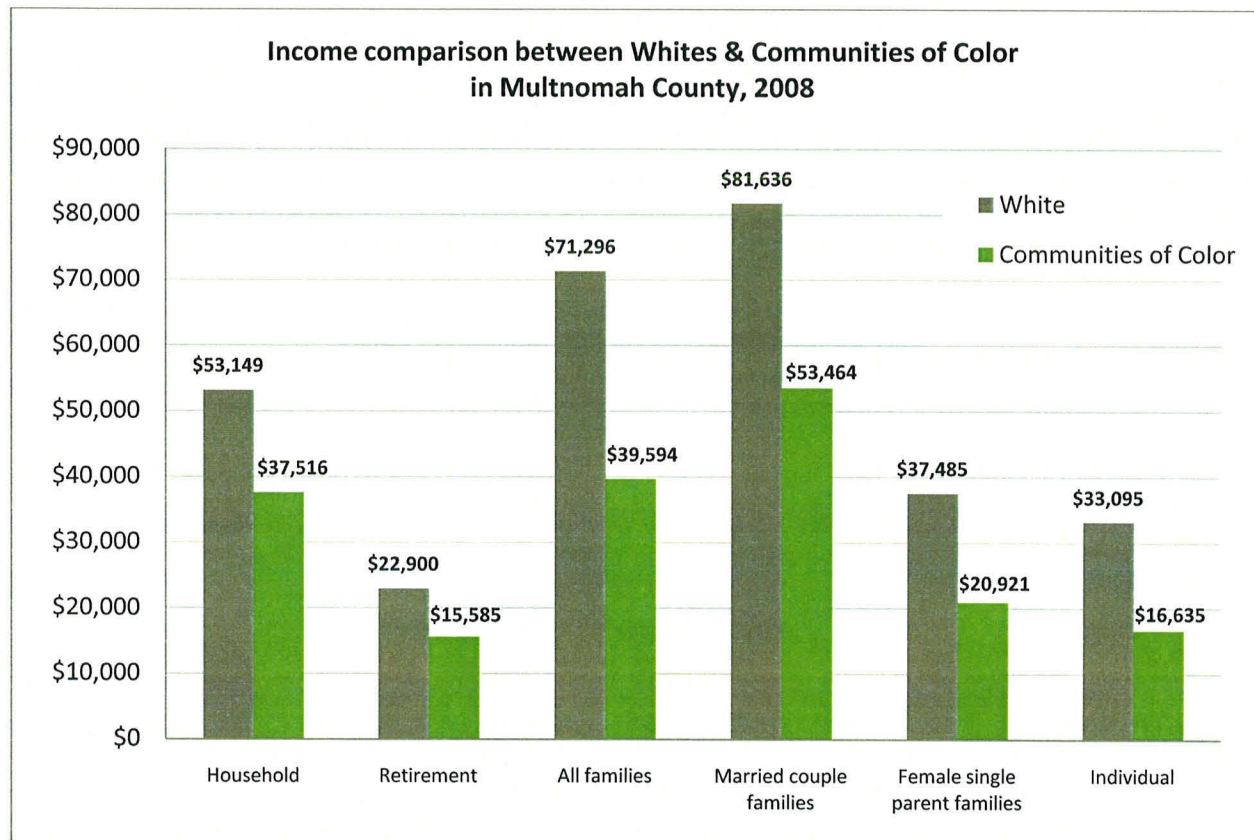
Every community of color suffers from child poverty at levels that are at least 12% worse than the national averages, and in one case (Native American) has 64% higher child poverty rates. Our collective pride in creating a niche of progressive practices must be held to account to ensure the lives of our children – all our children – are given top policy priorities. This comparison makes it possible to see that other pathways are possible, as the majority of children in the country live lives much less burdened by poverty. We can be heartened that there may be examples elsewhere in the country that do a much better job than we in the local region in keeping our children out of poverty.

2008	Under 18 poverty rate		% difference (local from national)
	Multnomah County	USA	
Child poverty rate (all children)	19.6%	18.2%	7.7%
White children	12.5%	10.7%	16.8%
Children of color	33.3%	25.1%	33.0%
Asian	11.9%	10.6%	12.3%
Black/African American	40.9%	33.7%	21.4%
Hispanic	34.8%	28.0%	24.3%
Native American	45.7%	27.9%	63.8%

Source: American Community Survey, 2008.

Incomes

Most national attention to the disparities reduction efforts have been in the institutional arenas of criminal and juvenile justice, child welfare and scholastic disparities. While essential, these efforts sustain focus on civil service workers who are obligated to work for the public interest. Notice, however, that non-public workers and institutions are left out of such a gaze. The most important omission is that of incomes and employment practices where, as we see below, communities of color are not sufficiently paid, and suffer massive inequities in incomes.



Source: Author's calculations using data from the American Community Survey, 2008.

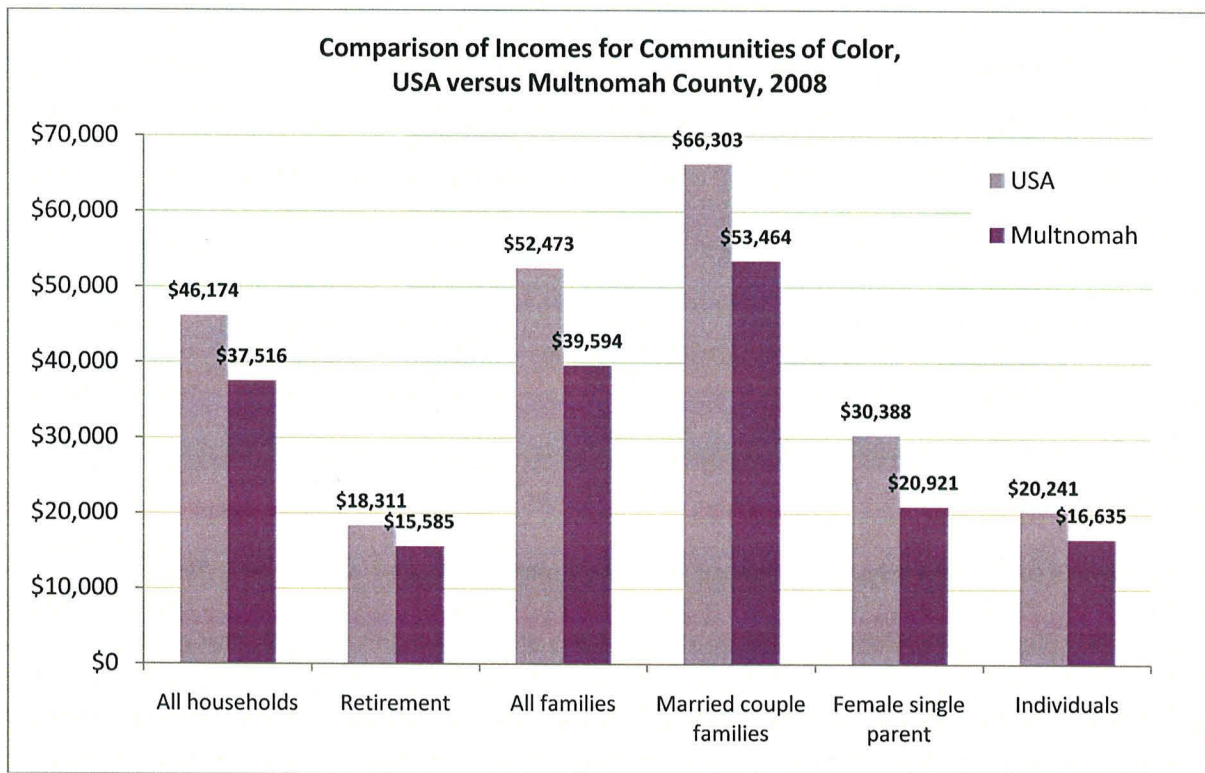
There is, however, a role for the state in the incomes of communities of color. Our elected officials need to add the elimination of income disparities to their racial equity objectives. Various levels of governments can leverage better jobs and better working conditions for communities of color. So too can they enact a policy environment that improves wages and benefits. Educational reform efforts that eliminate inequities facing communities of color are an essential companion dimension to this work, as education is an important pathway out of poverty.

As we have seen in the text until this point, people of color are disproportionately represented in poverty and low income, and relatively few in the ranks of upper income residents. Looking at the chart above, there is a significant variation in average incomes between Whites and people of color. The widest difference is for "all families" where the gap is almost \$32,000. The largest percentage gap is for individuals where the penalty for being of color is that one makes 50% less income than Whites.

If one remembers only one detail from the graph above, let it be the individual average, where Whites earn \$33,100/year while people of color earn \$16,600/year. This is half, resulting in the "bonus" for being White at almost 100% income improvements.

Incomes for people of color are a national disgrace. In today's era, one is shamed and demeaned for needing social assistance to survive. This spreads to children as well for they know hunger, envy and anger as they come into daily contact with those who have enough to thrive. Compromising the future of our children by shortchanging the parents' wages according to their racial identity should catalyze all of us to action.

There are dramatic comparisons between the local economic situation for people of color and the national averages for the same populations. Highlighted below are incomes for communities of color and their national equivalent. Here we see the marked fall for people of color who live in Multnomah county. Here we fare significantly worse than people of color in the rest of the nation. This “hit” is most dramatic for single female parents raising children. Here the “cost” of living in Multnomah county is 31.1%, up from 28.5% a year ago, meaning that such women of color are struggling much harder to raise their children than, on average, elsewhere in the nation and that this disparity is getting worse.



Source: Author's calculations using data from American Community Survey, 2008.

National comparisons on income levels for communities of color are terrible. Every income group in every community suffers by living in this region. Incomes for people of color are worse across every race and ethnicity than the national averages. The group that suffers most markedly due to their race are Asian families, whose local social and economic situation cause them to suffer a penalty of \$20,946 that they would not likely face if they lived elsewhere. Notice, however, that the same is not true of White families – they have incomes at roughly the same level as the national situation.