



# The African Immigrant and Refugee Community in Multnomah County: *An Unsettling Profile*

A partnership between



Coalition of  
Communities of  
Color

&



Portland State  
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about

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

mission

*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 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.*

about



mission

**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:**

*Thank You!*



Multnomah County, Oregon  
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**NORTHWEST HEALTH  
FOUNDATION**

*The Community's Partner for Better Health*

**United Way of the  
Columbia-Willamette**



**Portland State**  
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Dear Reader,

As members of the Coalition of Communities of Color, the African immigrant and refugee community is delighted to present the *African Immigrant and Refugee Community Report in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile*. This is the very first time in the history of Oregon, as well as of Multnomah County, that data specific to the African community has been brought to light, and the everyday lives of the invisible made visible. This report is a most eye-opening study for our local African community, as well as for city and county officials and other regional policy makers.

Several years ago, members of the Coalition of Communities of Color identified a common need to ensure that data adequately captures the lived experiences of communities of color. Data informs decision-making but that same data often excludes dimensions of race and is undertaken without involvement of those most affected by the decisions guided by the research. The impact of these practices is that the African community, along with other communities of color, is rarely visible at the level of policy.

The Coalition of Communities of Color decided to embark on a research project in which data could be used to empower communities and eliminate racial and ethnic inequities. The Coalition of Communities of Color partnered with researchers from Portland State University, as well as local community organizations, to implement a community-based participatory research project into the lived realities of communities of color in Multnomah County. The project will produce a total of seven research reports: one that looks at communities of color in the aggregate and six community-specific reports in the African, African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, Native American and Slavic communities.

This report serves to make visible our diverse African communities in Multnomah County. The continent of Africa comprises 54 countries representing a wide range of peoples, cultures and economies. Oregon's African communities reflect this diversity. We encourage residents of Oregon and especially those living in the Portland metropolitan region to try as much as possible to understand and make friends with members of the African communities.

We recognize that this report may in fact be unsettling as you learn about the depth and breadth of disparities facing the African immigrant and refugee community in Multnomah County. However, we ask that you also see the resiliency and strengths of the community and recognize the opportunity for the creation of a new policy environment that supports our community.

Our main priority is to advocate for policy decisions that improve the individual and collective outcomes of the African immigrant and refugee community and, in so doing, improve outcomes for all Oregonians. We hold an empowered racial equity advocacy coalition as central to addressing racial inequities. This report builds an important knowledge base from which to advocate and to educate. Educating our community and the community at large about the African immigrant and refugee community is crucial to achieving racial equity.





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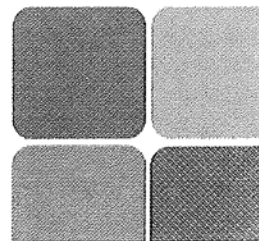
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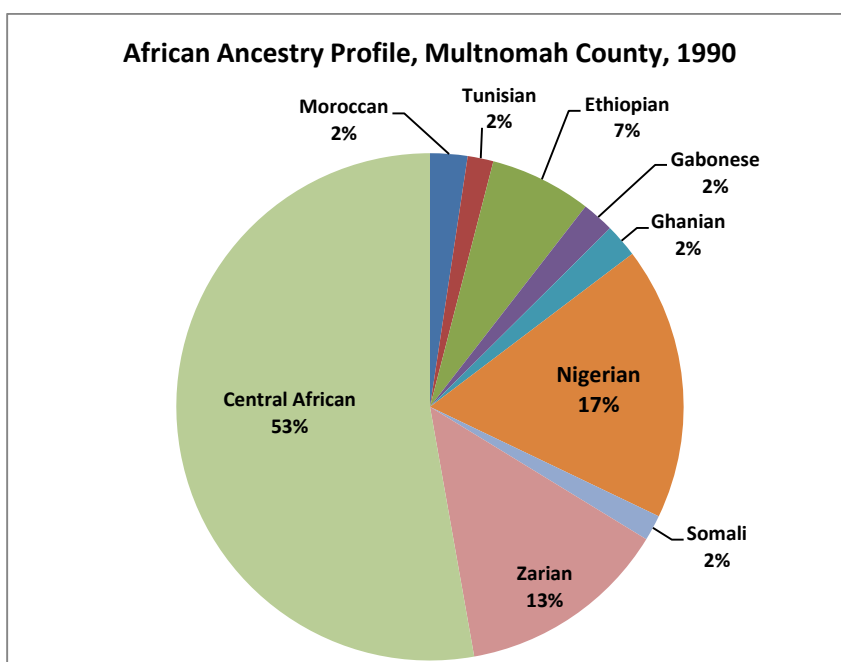
## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
A Note about Data .....	12
African History: The Context of Africans Arriving in the USA .....	14
African Immigrants and the Immigration Experience.....	23
African Refugees and the Settlement Experience .....	28
Discourse Changes Needed.....	34
Demographics of Local Africans.....	35
Community-Verified Population Counts .....	36
Age Distribution and Family Status.....	42
Education .....	46
Recommendations .....	56
Challenges for Adults with International Degrees .....	57
Recommendations .....	60
Occupations .....	60
Recommendations .....	65
Unemployment .....	66
Recommendations .....	72
Income Levels & Poverty Rates.....	72
Remittances to Family & Community in Africa .....	82
Recommendations .....	83
Housing .....	83
Recommendations .....	89
Health and Well Being among Africans .....	90
Recommendations .....	94
Advancing the Call for Culturally-Specific Services .....	94
Policy Recommendations.....	96
Closing Comments on the African Community.....	102
Appendix #1: Multnomah County’s philosophy and implementation of culturally-specific services .....	104
Appendix #2: Language definitions.....	106
Appendix #3: Detailing Sub-Saharan Africa .....	111
References .....	112

## Executive Summary

Since 1975, African immigrants, refugees and secondary migrants have been relocating to Multnomah County and now represent the fourth largest immigrant community after Latino, Asian, and Slavic immigrants. The African community here is incredibly diverse in its make-up, with over 28 different African countries and numerous ethnic groups represented. Estimates from 2003 suggest that African immigrants make up 2% of the foreign-born population in the Portland Metro (tri-county) area. Nearly half (45%) of the tri-county area's African foreign-born population is from eastern Africa, including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.<sup>1</sup> Other countries of origin include Sudan, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mali, Liberia, Togo, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, Mozambique, and Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2011 alone, the USA admitted around 15,000 African refugees.

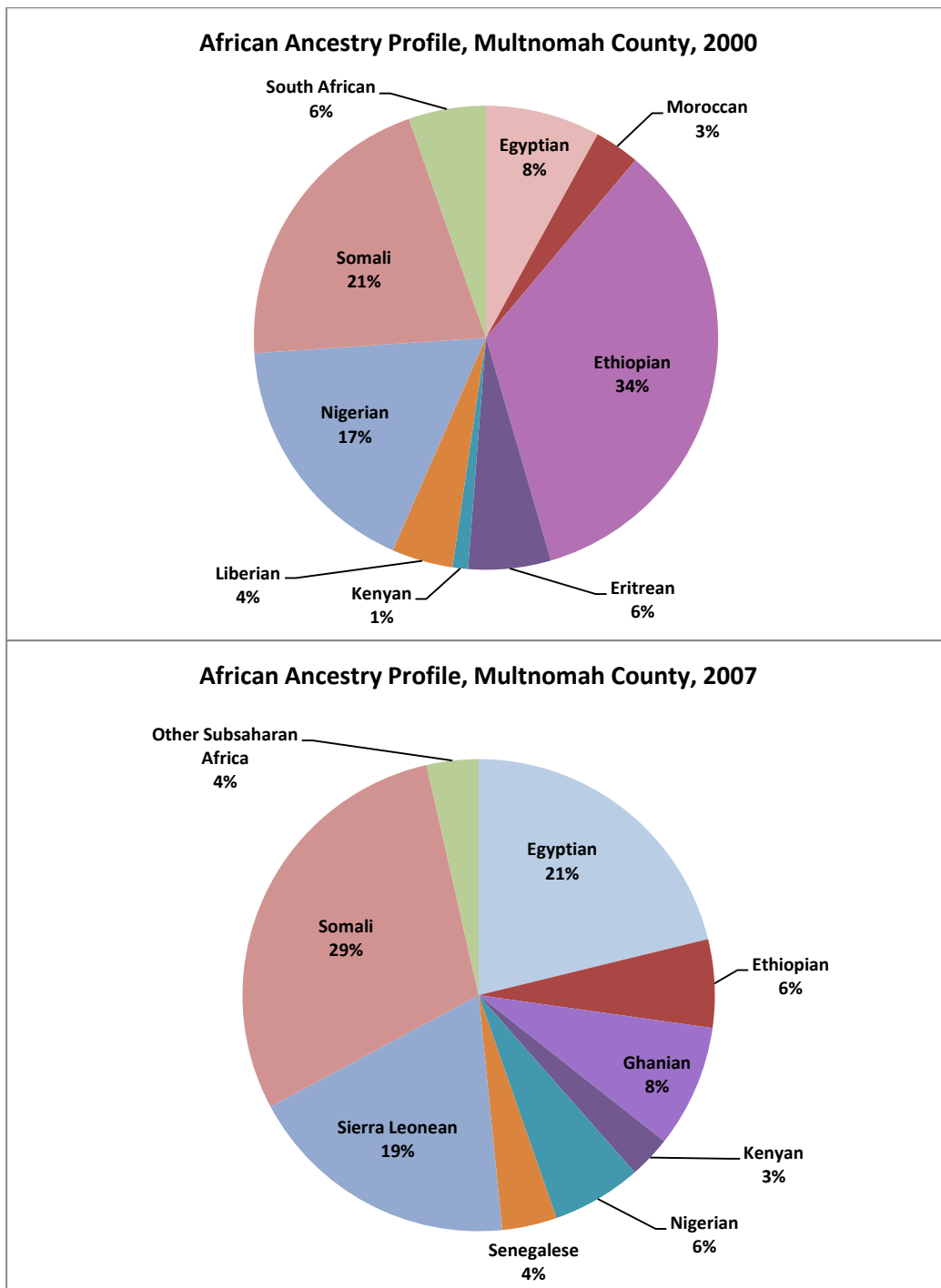
Very little research has been conducted on the experiences and challenges facing the African immigrant and refugee community in Multnomah County.<sup>2</sup> While we know that the official data sources are flawed for this community, we use these data to begin our understanding of this community and how it has changed over the years. Below is the ancestry profile contained in official sources from the Census Bureau, stretching back to 1990.



Source: Census 1990, drawing from customized data extractions by Joseph Smith-Buani, PSU.

More recently, the 2000 and 2007 data show a shifting pattern of African immigrants and refugees. Today we have an increasing concentration of the African community coming from Somalia, Egypt and Sierra Leone. There is a diminishment of the portion of the community from Nigeria and Ethiopia (as a portion of the entire African community). This does not mean, however, that their numbers are shrinking.





Source: Census 2000 & American Community Survey, 2007, drawing from customized data extractions by Joseph Smith-Buani, PSU.

In Multnomah County, African immigrants are mostly clustered in north and northeast Portland, though like other low income communities of color, are spreading further east and west in search of affordable housing.<sup>3</sup> The further reaches of the county also offer more available housing and sometimes close

proximity to settlement services<sup>4</sup> – although there remains a pronounced disjuncture between the location of service providers and where our communities of color are located, and service providers are slow to respond to these local needs.<sup>5</sup>

Our African social fabric is one of diversity and multiculturalism. We retain much of our national, ethnic and tribal distinctiveness and rarely combine our identities within a pan-African framework. We have built our own associations and tend to look inside our own cultures for support. While crises may send us into each other's communities, we retain a focus on building resources that are specific to our distinct communities.

And yet, while our differences may be pronounced, we hold a shared identity as African that results in a pronounced need for culturally-specific services for African immigrants and refugees. Africa House has responded well to this need, providing for us (and with us) a wide-ranging array of services. Features of this service that need replicating throughout the state of Oregon include: diverse language capacity, staff to have experienced being refugees, understanding what we have lost through moving away from our homeland, affirmation of our identity and our experiences of racism, cultural supports so that our heritage is not lost, education for our children to both support their US experiences (particularly in schooling) and also in learning their own native languages. The importance of culturally-specific services cannot be stated strongly enough – for issues of trust, understanding, compassion, and acceptance are the foundations of real help and support.

Universally, the community desires for others to know of our history and the legacy, and particularly of the experiences that carry with us as we arrive in the USA. This next section details the African context and experience with an effort to educate others who might better understand us and who might thus be able to be more sensitive to our needs, strengths and priorities. Know that this history is not complete, as there are many regional variations among us, and local heritage that is not shared. Think of this contribution as the larger and more holistic vision of our history and one that still needs to be supplemented by local histories and contexts.

Some of Africa's history shows community growth that is similar to the USA – with the development of robust and thriving urban centers, rich culture and heritage, and with the development of strong centers of industry, education and trade. Anti-colonial movements led to the expulsion of many colonial governments and recent history (post-1950) saw the independence of many African nations that stretched into the 1990s. Gaining independence, coupled with the rise of South African anti-apartheid and emancipation gains have been good for the dignity of us all.

With this growth and with independence movements, we have been developing our nationhood across the continent. It has not been an easy time, however, as this era has also been a time for a different form of profiteering on the backs of our peoples. Most African nations have faced pronounced increases in international debt – with debts soaring as lending practices and forced restructuring of many of our economies through “structural adjustment programs” of the IMF and World Bank have decimated many

of our economies. In the wake of impoverishment, lasting drought, new nation formation, and the emergence of AIDS, there have been crises in many nations, and in numerous countries leadership has been contentious as military regimes have often stepped into governance voids.

As a result, many countries have been infused with conditions that have been violent and persecutory for many of our peoples. The last generation has been characterized by much civil strife, violence, upheaval, illness and death. And many of our people have been forced to flee their homes and, ultimately, have had all paths towards the future curtailed by forces beyond our control. Forced into refugee camps and surviving much trauma, many among us have sought to find shelter and a new life in foreign countries, including the USA and approximately half of Africans in this region are believed to be refugees or former refugees.<sup>6</sup>

While we as a people are grateful to escape such strife, deprivation and violence, our settlement into US society has been difficult. Details of our settlement experiences help illuminate the ways we have been challenged in the USA. We have been supported by numerous organizations in the region, with the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) being the largest, and also with support from Catholic Charities and Lutheran Family Services. These services help us find housing, offer employment supports, provide English language training, skills recertification, translation services, transportation, and provide financial supports for our first 8 months in the country (available through the federal government's Office of Refugee Resettlement). The emphasis of these programs is to ensure rapid settlement, rather than secure and promising settlement – not due to the fault of our local service organizations, but through federal government policies which aim for self-sufficiency as quickly as possible.

As a result, we are required through policy to take the first jobs offered to us. Such practice forecloses our professional futures, as many of our African credentials are not recognized in the USA, including our non-USA work experience. It is time to modify these practices so that the best of what we can offer US society can manifest in our work and in our lives – continuing this practice of “take the first job offered” will take a huge toll on our social and economic inclusion in the fabric of American life.

Our African immigrant and refugee community is diverse, as the region routinely accepts refugees from approximately ten African nations, who join another ten African ancestry groups from around the continent. We are a community who are youthful, bringing with us very high levels of education and experience that are typically ignored by mainstream society in the region. For while we have graduate and professional degrees that are almost double the level of White communities, and four times that of other communities of color, we access much less than our fair share of good jobs and have alarming rates of poverty, particularly among our children. Furthermore, our incomes are very low, as our households attempt to make ends meet on incomes that are half that of Whites. Overall, our economic situation is grave and, in today's recessionary climate, precarious. When community members were asked about top priorities that must be acted upon by elected leaders, they universally said their priorities were jobs, education, housing and health care.

Data on our experiences are lacking, as all conventional databases subsume our identity within that of the African American community. While there may be strength in numbers and a shared legacy of oppression, our experiences are profoundly different and are overshadowed by the larger numbers within the African American community. Eclipsed are our experiences with settlement issues, language barriers, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and foreign work experience, health issues related to refugee traumas, lack of knowledge of American society, and under-developed networks and community-based organizations that would flourish if we had the time and resources to nurture their development.

Also missing from view are the racial disparities that exist within our institutions. It is impossible to gain information on our people, as it would require researchers to disaggregate the racial grouping of “black” by country of origin, length of time in the USA, ethnicity, language, and/or refugee status. It is essential that our research practices begin such disaggregation and allow our collective experience as African immigrants and refugees to be more clearly understood, for our racial disparities to be identified and for progress to be monitored. This omission in research practices means we cannot explore racial disparities in the following institutions: higher education (and several important dimensions of public education), child welfare, juvenile and adult justice, social services, public service, voting, health, public housing, and homeless services.

With this invisibility comes powerlessness. While policy makers turn to us for advice on immigration and refugee matters, we are left out of more conventional policy practices in mainstream health and human services. This culture of omission serves to leave our voices out of the debates and all of us lose ground when we engage in practices that center the needs of a more limited set of communities of color. With this pervasive pattern of omission comes a price – for as the reader will see, we are one of the most vulnerable communities of color, and failing to promote our inclusion and to build meaningful supports for our people will harm all of us. For our futures are intertwined, and success for the region will ultimately depend on success for all of our communities of color.

This report has drawn upon a customized data extraction from the 2008 American Community Survey by extracting data for those who have identified their ancestry as African (and excluding those who defined it as African American). These data include insights on education, occupation, housing, demographic composition, unemployment, poverty and income. Updating on some measures was recently conducted, allowing a limited set of experiences to be captured up to 2011. These include unemployment, health insurance, poverty and income levels. This report marks the first comprehensive address of these issues – as the standard practice is to integrate African experiences within the African American profile.

We are able to supplement these data with information about the sub-Saharan community. The American Community Survey has additional information on some social and economic conditions, and made these results available by averaging a full five-year spread of dates (2006-2010). We share these

data by infilling them into this report, filling in gaps in our knowledge with this more limited geographic region, and this five-year composite figure. These figures are to be used with some caution, as they include both a recovery and recessionary period of time. But, as noted above, such minimal data is available that we have elected to include these sub-Saharan experiences. On the positive side, these data points take us to 2010, even though the data are averages over five years. They are supplemented with a more limited set of data for 2011 (as noted in the prior paragraph). Appendix #3 details the countries included in this sub-Saharan region.

Here are the findings as to the nature of racial disparities facing our community:

- We are a highly educated community, with ¼ of us having attained a graduate or professional degree. Mostly, these degrees are earned overseas, and recognition of them here in the USA is minimal, leading to poverty and low incomes.
- We have the highest child poverty rate in the region – at 66.6% of our children. When we include all people in our communities, we have a poverty rate of 51.4%, more than one-in-two people. This rate is significantly worse than when we measured these rates three years ago.
- Our household income is half the size of Whites, at \$32,584 per year, compared with \$53,225 per year. For those of us able to find full-time, year-round work, we are able to bring home only \$28,888 while Whites in the region earn on average \$45,087 per year.
- One-in-three of us (who are employed) hold jobs in management and professional roles. While this is stronger than other communities of color, it is significantly less than the 43.6% of Whites who hold such jobs, and certainly not illustrative of the very high levels of graduate and professional degrees we hold. We are also over-represented in production and transportation fields, with the narrative here being that we are likely to be driving taxi cabs for a living, and likely to hold higher educational degrees than those who are passengers in our cabs.
- Our unemployment rate is 80% higher than Whites, at 13.5% compared to 7.5%. Unemployment levels have fluctuated significantly over recent years, with the community being hit hard in this past recession and recovery to prerecession levels still not in evidence.
- 82.7% of us speak a language other than English, and more than ¼ of us do not speak English very well. Given the limited availability of English language classes for adults, coupled with the emphasis on speedy self-sufficiency as refugees and immigrants, we have narrow opportunities for learning English. This poses an ongoing barrier for employment and also for engaging with our children's teachers and advocating for our children and ourselves when necessary.
- More of our community is unable to secure health insurance. The size of our community that does not have health insurance is 42% higher than Whites, at 13.5% compared with 7.5% for Whites.
- There are few of us able to purchase our own homes – at 38% of the community, while the level is 62% for Whites. Given that we have few assets since many of us arrived as refugees, and we have short credit histories in the USA, this is not surprising. But given that other communities of color have low homeownership levels as well, it is not likely that we are going to be able to access this wealth-generating asset in large quantities even as our length of residency in the USA expands. Remember as well that people of color are over-involved in the subprime lending

industry (at 55% of mortgages compared with 18% involvement for Whites<sup>7</sup>) meaning that we are at high risk for foreclosures and bankruptcy in today's economy.

- When we do own homes, 62.4% of us spend more than 30% of our incomes on rent, much higher than the 40.6% rate for White homeowners.

As a result, our legacy as a people who have migrated to the region within the last generation or two, coupled with the trauma that many of us bring as refugees, bringing with us racial and linguistic identities that are discriminated against, creates an unsettling profile of experiences. Our economic situation is precarious as noted above.

Policy barriers intersect with cultural barriers (such as knowing the local norms and conventions), linguistic barriers, and various dimensions of institutional racism, and a “perfect storm” brews that renders our foothold in US society precarious.

Our social situation is similarly dire. As refugees, many experienced deep trauma, violence and retain these experiences in their bodies. The following words of this community were prepared in 2003 by the Coalition of Communities of Color and these words retain power and significance today:

*Before coming to the United States, many African youth and families spent years in refugee camps living in unthinkable conditions. Many have been profoundly affected by the civil war, have lost family members, and now suffer from related adjustment and psychological disorders. Here in Multnomah county, African youth now find themselves in an unsupported environment faced with significant cultural and language barriers. For example, some African girls are negotiating around what they see as restrictive roles in the traditional family structure. Many youth are illiterate in English and their native language, are dealing with newly broken homes, and have accents that set them apart from the mainstream. African Coalition members unanimously agree that we have reached a crisis point with our youth. Recently, the school and criminal justice systems have expressed difficulty dealing with African youth ages 13-21. Many African juveniles are already imprisoned in Oregon. With this growing reality, the community is in a state of shock.<sup>8</sup>*

The evidence before us in this report must give rise to action. Simply, inaction is impossible in the face of injustice of this magnitude and this severity. Inaction will sentence us to a future of social exclusion, political isolation, and impoverishment that will not be good for any of us.

A total of nineteen African-specific policy recommendations are forwarded in the text of this report that are priorities for the African immigrant and refugee community to address the forms of marginalization that we experience in the region. Listed below, they hold potential to increase our community's wellbeing, the lives of our families and the futures of our children.

## **Education Reform**

1. We aim to end the inappropriate mainstreaming of our children and youth. We need to make an intensive year of support available for our youth, and to sustain them in a culturally-specific environment without the pressure to fit into a specific grade.
2. Accurate assessments of the achievements of students who come to the USA are needed. It is essential to determine the exact differences, in terms of credits, between various diplomas and certificates.
3. We need accurate and routine information on how our children and youth are doing in school. Accordingly, we ask all school boards and the Oregon Department of Education to ensure that our community can be differentiated from African Americans. We ask that these institutions be guided by the recommendations contained within the Coalition of Communities of Color's *Research Protocol*.
4. Our children need to enter schools where teachers and staff look like them and understand their culture and the conditions of their arrival in the USA. Improved recruiting and hiring of African teachers must be made a priority, as well as equity efforts inside each school board to retain and promote these teachers through the ranks.
5. All teachers who engage with our children need to understand the history, the challenges and the conditions in which our children encounter their world. Understanding will provide an important link to reducing the isolation and vulnerability of our students.
6. We press our school boards to build rapid systems for recognizing African professional and experiential credentials so that we can be hired into the schools to both increase racial equity in hiring, and also to create a more welcoming, affirming and culturally-responsive academic environment.
7. Finally, many of our children are in Limited English Proficiency programs. It is imperative that this program be of the highest quality and that we as parents and consumers be assured that all school boards will meet federal regulations in LEP programs.

## **Employment**

8. It is time for a robust, welcoming and easy to access system for recognizing foreign credentials. For the regulated professions, concrete, transparent, appropriate and low-cost equivalence measuring must be made available.
9. Provide paid skills training programs of short duration that prepare workers for specific occupations and/or jobs. These could be informed by local employers' needs and technological expectations.
10. Provide on-the-job training for the first month of employment for immigrant and refugee workers that subsidize employer's wages paid to workers and that would be rebated if the worker successfully transitions to become a regular employee. This would enable our community to be more rapidly employed (and not delayed for a training period) and provide supports for employers to hire our community members.
11. A workers' rights information campaign is needed to advise workers of their entitlements on working conditions, the rights to unionize, and the programs and services available to them for both prevention and for intervention when things go wrong.

12. To support employment, keeping public transportation costs low and routes accessible and convenient is essential.

### **Unemployment**

13. It is essential that employment be considered a human right. African community members are exhausted with lengthy job searches and low prospects for finding living wage jobs. Providing real options for a positive future is essential for improving the well being of the community.

### **Remittances**

14. It is well beyond time for international aid of sufficient size and quality that supports African development and peacemaking across the continent. Residents and policy makers in Multnomah county can advance a shifted discourse about the responsibility that those in the USA hold for real reforms in Africa. An end to exploitation, harmful structural adjustment programs, and mere crumbs of international aid are essential dimensions of such reforms.

### **Housing**

15. It is imperative that solutions be found to the African housing crisis that is unique for many features: the intersection of language difficulties, cultural norms of occupancy that differ so much from that in US society, low incomes, vulnerability due to poverty, racism and bias of those involved, and the absence of culturally-specific services to assist us outside Multnomah county with housing.
16. The supply of subsidized housing must be increased immediately. We also seek for an expansion to occupancy standards to better reflect our cultural norms.
17. We highlight the necessity for expanded access to translators and policy that requires landlords and housing managers to ensure that conflict and disputes are comprehensible to African tenants.
18. It is important that housing is understood as a human right instead of a consumption item to be purchased in the private market and vulnerable to the practices of landlords.

### **Health and Human Services**

19. All Africans need access to accurate information about the resources available, the conditions for accessing services, the pathways to citizenship, advocacy practices for supporting our children, and options for involvement in building social justice and racial equity for our community.

To advance racial equity for the community, and to continue solidarity among all communities of color, we also affirm these eleven priorities advanced in the earlier work of the Coalition of Communities of Color.<sup>9</sup>

- 1. 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 the State, County and City governments, including 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.

2. ***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. Culturally-specific services are the most appropriate service delivery method for our people.
3. ***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 or 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.
4. ***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.
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 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 to aim to 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.

The needs of our community are deep and profound. While only slices of data are available today on the experiences of the African community, we remain dependent on the narratives of experience to help illustrate that, indeed, racial disparities are pronounced across institutions and systems. It is imperative that we work together across the divides of race and ethnicity to build a positive future for all of us.

## **A Note about Data**

The conventions for data on the African community is to aggregate all those who define our racial identity as Black into the category of “African American or Black.” What this means is that our experience is subsumed under a larger category of people of color and, thus, our experience diffused. This convention means that uniqueness of our challenges disappears. The decision of the Census Bureau to drop the long form of data collection in Census 2010 narrows further the possibility to provide “hard” data on the experiences of Africans in the region.

Where we can seek customized data extractions from databases, we can only extract our community if questions such as, “country of birth” or “length of time in the USA,” or “refugee status” are also asked of those who fill out the forms. In the vast majority of cases, these questions are not asked. Sometimes they are asked, but then dropped by the researchers responsible for setting the standards for the elements of identity that carry through the database evaluation practices.

To remedy this challenge, we have drawn from a customized microfile extraction from the American Community Survey (ACS) for 2008.<sup>10</sup> To achieve this, we contracted with the Population Research Center at Portland State University to generate these data on our behalf. The construct used was those respondents (to the survey) who indicated that their first or second ancestry definition was “African” or a specific African nation. Furthermore, we excluded those who define their first ancestry as American from this dataset as it was assessed to be a proxy for the way in which African Americans are likely to define themselves. This dataset numbered a total of 9,335 in Oregon, and 7,683 for Multnomah county. When we examined important variables within this dataset, some elements had a sample size that was too small to extract a reliable finding, such as individual incomes, or the poverty rate for single parents. We thus have a limited set of variables to unveil in this report.

Additional data on the sub-Saharan community is available for an amalgamated measure of a five-year period (from 2006 through 2010). We use these data to fill in more experiences that are not available from the ACS, thus allowing us to report on additional poverty rates, housing, transportation, income, unemployment and family status.

We have supplemented these data with our own survey of the African community. A total of 72 surveys were completed in 2011, and is somewhat smaller than the 99 surveys that would have generated a precision level of  $\pm 10\%$ , within a confidence level of 95%.<sup>11</sup> This survey was developed by the author of this report, in consultation with leading members of the African community, and administered by the staff of Africa House in the course of their regular staff and community activities. This supplemental source of information provides us with concrete indicators of additional struggles faced by the community. These data are included in the relevant section of this report.

Missing from this report are the findings on racial disparities at the institutional level, such as child welfare, policing, juvenile and adult justice, education (with the exception of the achievement gap), higher education, health, early childhood programs, voting and participation in public service. It was impossible to extract information on these institutions for the African community. Quite simply, in each system, African experiences have been permanently subsumed within that of African Americans.

This research report also draws from the experiences of our community members who live in Multnomah county. Four focus groups were conducted with community members between 2008 and 2011. Transcripts were analyzed by the principle investigator, Dr. Ann Curry-Stevens and the findings incorporated into this report. Given the scarcity of data on the African community, it was deemed

important to gather experiences through qualitative research to provide for greater context and for beginning to identify key areas that are essential for quantitative data to be gathered.

As one can imagine, we strongly advocate for enhanced data collection and research practices to ensure that our experiences can be examined, and policies, practices and standards developed that will ensure that progress towards racial equity is ensured for our community. Full details about the nature of reforms required are currently in development by the Coalition of Communities of Color.

## **African History: The Context of Africans Arriving in the USA**

The earliest African contact with the USA dates back to mid-fifteenth century with slave trade on the West to mid-southwest coast of Africa. The modern migration from Africa to the USA began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Over the past thirty years, more Africans have come voluntarily to the United States than came during the entire era of the transatlantic slave trade, which transported an estimated half million men, women, and children to these shores. But this contemporary migration forms only a trickle in the total stream of immigrants to the United States.

Nevertheless, small as it still is today, the African community has been steadily and rapidly increasing. Sub-Saharan Africans have recently acquired a high level of visibility in many cities. Close-knit, attached to their cultures, and quick to seize the educational and professional opportunities of their host country, African immigrants have established themselves as one of the most dynamic and entrepreneurial groups in the country.

A small number of African students were sent by Christian missions and churches (notably Seventh Day Adventist Church) to historically black colleges like Oakwood College and universities such as Andrews University beginning at the end of the nineteenth century. The trend continued in the early twentieth century. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first president of Nigeria, and Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, both studied at Lincoln University, and pursued graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Immigration was insignificant until the late 1960s. Traditionally, Africans had migrated primarily to their former colonial powers: Great Britain, France, and Portugal, and more than a million sub-Saharan Africans currently live in Europe. But beginning in the late 1970s, these countries froze immigration because of economic slowdowns. Immigration to the United States became an option. At the same time, increasing numbers of students and professionals decided to remain in America owing to difficult political and economic situations on the continent.

Emigrants were not only pushed out of their countries, they were also pulled to the United States. A number of favorable immigration policies enabled them to make the journey in much greater numbers than before. For instance, tens of thousands of political refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea, living under a Marxist regime, were allowed entry in the mid-1980s, and when the Immigration Reform and Control

Act of 1986 legalized the status of eligible undocumented individuals, more than 31,000 Africans applied. In addition, the Immigration Act of 1990 established a lottery system that favors underrepresented nations, a category that includes all the African countries. Since 1995, an average of 40,000 African immigrants have entered the country legally every year, but the number increased to more than 60,000 in 2002.

For a significant number of Africans, the United States is not their country of first migration; many have come from Europe, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and other nations in Africa. These are motivated expatriates, adaptable risk-takers in search of better opportunities and with a wealth of experience acquired at home and in their countries of first immigration.

Besides their "migration experience," the most significant characteristic of the African immigrants is that they are the most educated group in the nation. Almost half have bachelors or advanced degrees, compared to 23% of native-born Americans.

Yet today, we enter the USA as immigrants and as refugees, hoping for a better future and hoping for respect and dignity, aiming to take part as equals in the American way of life. Africans have several layers of identity - national origin, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion. At home, their color or "race" had no relevance. But in the United States, they find themselves defined by that specific criterion, and have to live as a racial minority in a country with a long history of exclusion and discrimination against black people. Encounters with racism are often baffling and evoke feelings of shock, indignation, and humiliation in people who have grown up in societies where their intellectual, physical, social, and even human qualities were never questioned on the basis of color.

What does it take for someone to leave one's country and travel 9,000 miles to Portland, Oregon? Among arrivals to Portland, those from the African continent leave our home countries for two major reasons: as immigrants seeking a better life for oneself and one's children, or as refugees fleeing violence, persecution and the threat of immediate personal harm. To understand the conditions of those who arrive in the USA, we must first trace back the legacy of slavery, colonization, international debt, structural adjustment, civil war and the ways in which these experiences impoverish African nations, and tie moral and ethical responsibility to those in the USA.

The African continent has long been perceived as a region to pillage and exploit by imperial countries. Slavery resulted in the forced and enticed abduction of approximately 25 million Africans over about 450 years between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>12</sup> This "slave trade" served to build the power and affluence of imperialists in Britain, Europe, the USA and the Middle East who were joined by some African traders that resulted in millions of Africans being seized from their homes and moved into the USA (and out of Western Africa), and millions more abducted by Arabs and Africans from across the continent and enslaved in the Middle East. Millions too died in transportation to slave ships and in the journey across the seas, with death rates in passage being in the arena of 15%.<sup>13</sup>

This destruction of communities was profound on many levels. To begin, men and women in their prime of life were stripped from communities leaving those behind with grave challenges in feeding and caring for each other.<sup>14</sup> These were early agrarian days when the survival of the family and tribe depended on the strength and numbers of its members – without robust communities, starvation and great hardship resulted. As communities deteriorated, so too did networks of information sharing, political organization and local trade. Such conditions are believed responsible for the agrarian and industrial revolutions largely passing by Africa.<sup>15</sup> Without local agricultural development, there was little opportunity for rooting more expansive industrial and agrarian growth.

Another feature of the impacts of slavery was that networks between communities were devastated as remaining people turned inwards to each other, trust between communities deteriorated and local trade networks were severed. Slave traders paid Tribal leaders for selling members of those who were conquered through local wars. Such practices promoted civil unrest, and traders and their home nations were invested in sustaining local conflicts as peace and local harmony served to protect residents from being sold into slavery. The scope of enslavement is believed to be approximately 20% of the adult male population, and 10% of the female population of Africa. Seizing more men than women resulted in an unbalancing of the genders that is believed to be responsible for the prolonging of polygamy in Africa. Distribution of numbers seized, gender impacts and polygamy practices are uneven across the continent.

At a community level, trust is essential to creating economic development, political institutions, political leaders and public goods and services.<sup>16</sup> Today, we know that community-wide distrust is the result of the slave trade and that the consequences of this distrust have been profound across African history as cultural heritage has been weakened by slavery and the coerced practices of neighbors and even family members selling each other into slavery.<sup>17</sup> Memories have stayed alive through oral histories with remnants continuing today.

It is important to not lose sight of the differential experiences of slavery – that of devastation in Africa was correlated with affluence in Europe, England and the USA. Exploitation of the labor and lands of Africa allowed imperial nations and White merchants to become very affluent, without compensation, without just treatment of community members, and with long-lasting impacts on African nations. This violence destroyed communities, families, and damaged the long-term vitality of the continent.

Looking more deeply at the conditions that allowed for slavery to thrive, we see that slave traders and the countries that authorized such practices needed to justify this practice. In order to achieve tolerance for slavery, White imperialists advanced a notion that Africans were subhuman.<sup>18</sup> Evidence of this is seen in the US Constitution where all non-free persons (meaning African slaves) were deemed to be three-fifths human. So too is this reflected in practices that aimed to keep religious advocates and missionaries outside of Africa in order to abate the influences of notions of equality as humans outside the slave trade industry.<sup>19</sup> And so too is the practice of the “one-drop rule” that deemed anyone with any African heritage to be subjects of segregation in the USA.

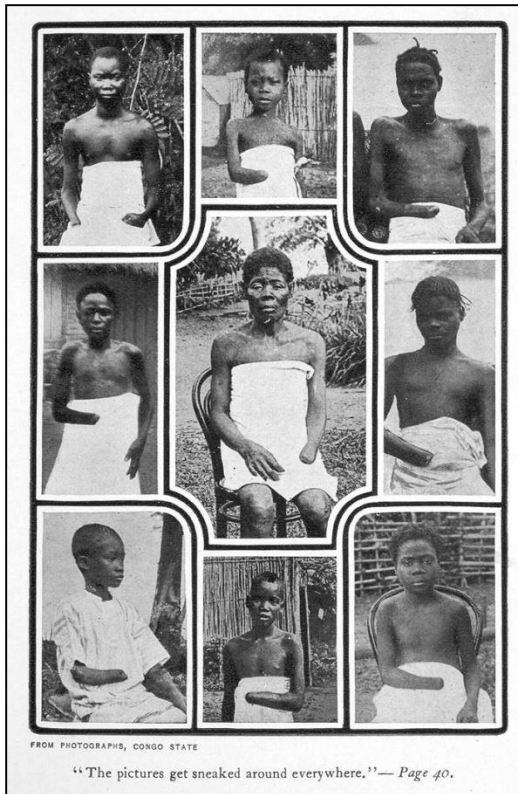
This portrayal of Africans sets the stage for colonization through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and for structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Africa was the subject of colonization by numerous imperial powers with the largest being England and France, with additional regions being colonized by Italy, Germany, Belgium, Portugal and Spain. Colonization in Africa was primarily an avenue for economic exploitation, made more powerful by the advent of weaponry (as a product of industrialization and that bypassed Africa) and the sustained notions of Africans as subhuman, and made possible by the earlier impacts of slavery which had destroyed communities, nations, and economic and political progress.<sup>20</sup> Resistance, though prominent, was unsuccessful in all but Ethiopia, and temporarily in Somalia.<sup>21</sup> Slavery had made colonization easy, as “Africa’s ability to defend itself was seriously compromised.”<sup>22</sup> The reach of colonization by 1914 is all but universal, as shown below.



Source: Graham (2006).<sup>23</sup>

Colonization precluded the development of local wealth and resources, as ruling nations withdrew natural resources, financial profits and frequently exploited local residents for labor, including violence for not meeting production quotas. The example of discipline in the Congolese rule by King Leopold (from Belgium) is shown below – but not shown is that approximately half of the population (as many as 8 million people) died or were killed as a result of this colonization, circa 1895 to 1908.



Source: Twain (1905).<sup>24</sup>

While some benefits were invested in local regions, sovereignty and an orientation to growth that created durable benefits for the region and its inhabitants were lost. Colonizers retain primary obligation to their own nations, not those that are colonized. In this era from 1881 to 1936, millions lost their lives, and the continent was again pillaged to advantage European growth and imperial control.

Decolonization began at the start of World War II, as European nations retrenched their political forces to promote their chances of success in the war at home. Coupled with powerful resistance movements and wars for independence in an array of African nations, African sovereignty is regained in the years between 1951 (for Libya) to 1993 (for Eritrea).

But a new form of colonization has ravaged the continent. As one can imagine, for a continent seen for generations to be ripe for exploitation, and where slavery, colonization, violence and genocide have been the tools of the aggressors, and where long-term depletion of human, political and economic resources have been imposed, the impact is deep and widespread vulnerability across African nations. To cope with these challenges, African nations have borrowed from all-too-willing lender nations who are primarily the USA, Canada, England, Germany, and Japan. When leading nations organized themselves into the economic powerhouses that are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, they began to impose expectations on the nature of international aid, loans and development. Formally, the World Bank created the “structural adjustment” policy which requires debtor nations to reform their economic practices and ensure development happens in “market-oriented” directions, and



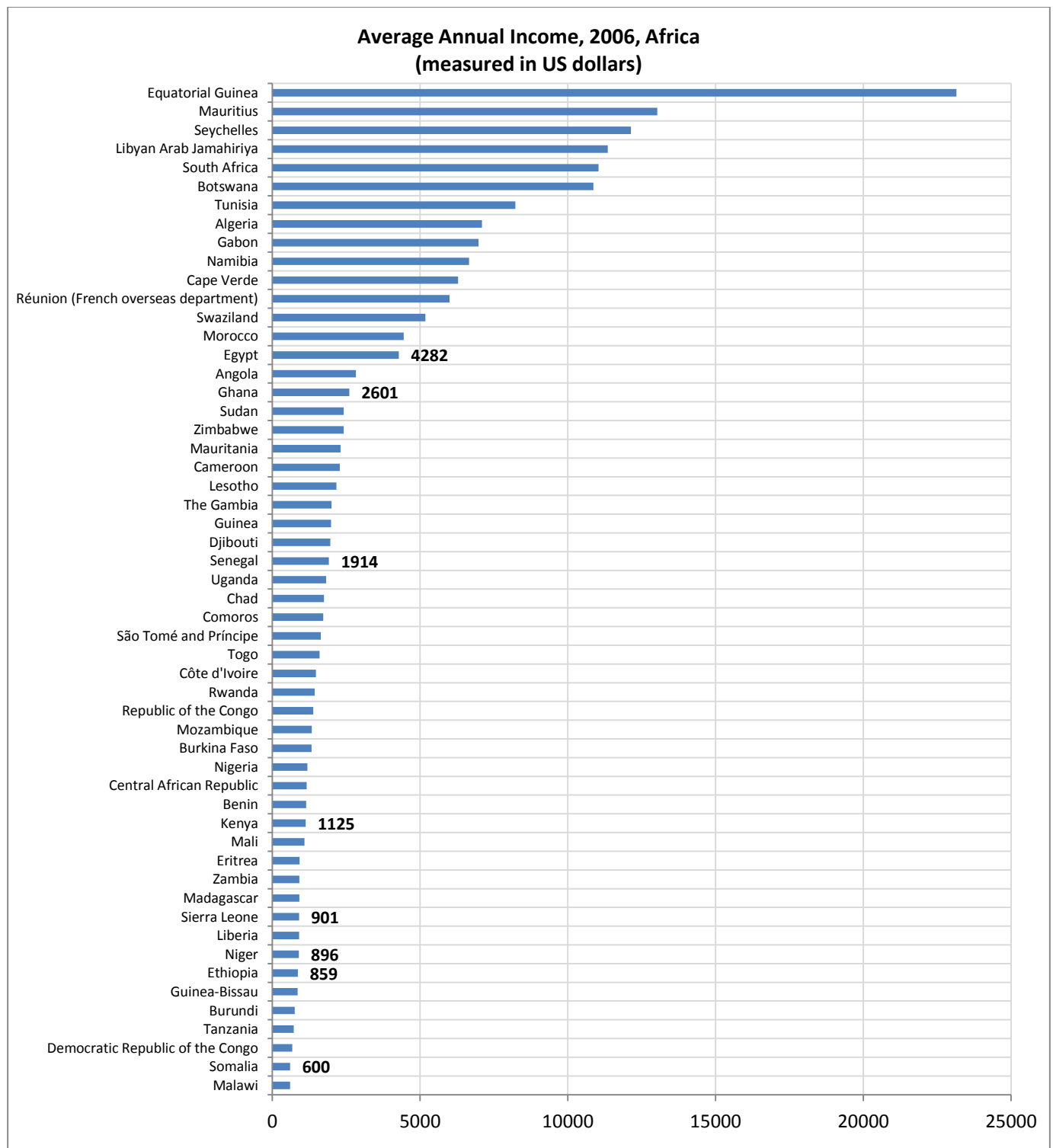
which hold the promise of restoring economic sustainability for the nation.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, these requirements are biased towards a particular orientation of economic development – one that happens at the expense of robust supports for the local economy and giving distinct preference for economic activity that benefits foreign lending countries. The specifics of these policies include:

- Raising interest rates
- Cutting government spending
- Privatizing government services and enterprises
- Liberalizing trade (meaning eliminating protections for national industries)
- Increasing export production
- Increasing the rights of foreign investors in national legislation
- Devaluing local currencies (making it very expensive to purchase imports)

Despite the rhetoric that such a policy environment will stabilize national development (by balancing government expenditures and income), these measures are widely understood to “result in a widening income gap, undermine local industries, reduce access to credit for farmers and small businesses, greater unemployment, and increased poverty.”<sup>26</sup>

The specific impact of structural adjustment programs in Africa have included “popular discontent, riots and political instability”<sup>27</sup> in the face of imposed cuts to programs and increased interest rates, which unfortunately was coupled with widespread drought. The net impact of these austerity measures has been profound: “the World Bank and the IMF had admitted that the “shock effect” of SAPs would be painful, but insisted that the bitter medicine would bring economic health within a few years. The bitterness was tasted to the full but economic health was nowhere in sight.”<sup>28</sup> It has taken a global activist effort to support some measures towards debt cancellation and reworked conditions of loans.

According to the World Economic Forum, ten percent of the world's poor were African in 1970; by 2000, that figure had risen to 50 percent. Between 1974 and 2000 the average income declined by \$200, which is equivalent to a 5.6% drop in annual income across the continent, and equivalent to a 25% drop among the continent’s twelve poorest nations. Below are profiled the annual incomes per capita in the countries of the African continent; the average annual income in 2006 across the continent was \$3,579.



Source: Adapted by the author from International Monetary Fund (2006).<sup>29</sup> Highlighted are those countries from where high levels of African residents in Multnomah county originate.

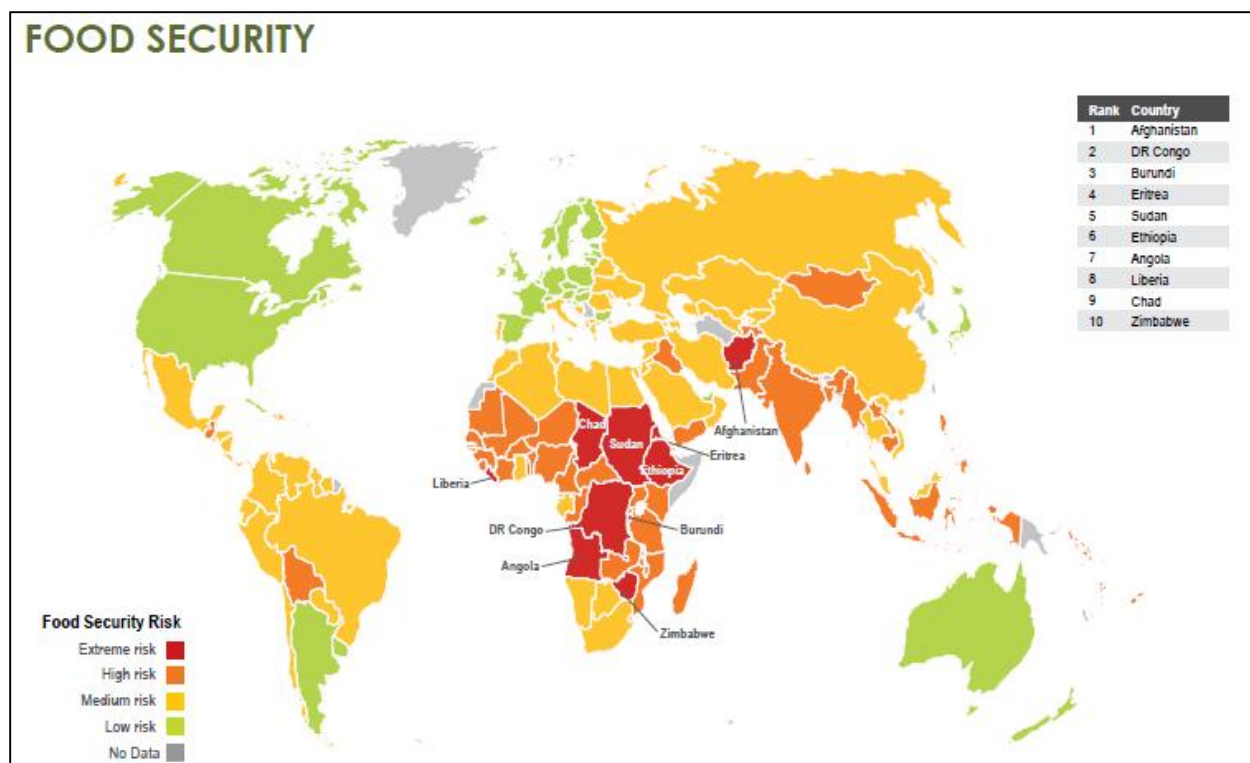
The HIV/AIDS crisis has further challenged the continent, with sub-Saharan Africa most deeply harmed, as an estimated 22.5 million people are living with AIDS and 14.8 million children have lost their parents

to the disease.<sup>30</sup> Those countries most deeply harmed include Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland where rates are at or above 25% of the population infected with HIV.<sup>31</sup> Levels in South Africa are 18% and in Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, about 15% of adults are infected with HIV. Levels are fortunately on the decline as new cases are lower than in the late 1990s.

The impact of this disease is far-reaching as poverty deepens, families cannot support themselves, and national revenues similarly deteriorate. Expenditures on health increase and reliance on state supports expands. In total, the HIV/AIDS crisis is believed responsible for rolling back “decades” of development efforts in the continent, and specifically cutting life expectancy in numerous sub-Saharan countries to levels not seen since the 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

Africa is today the world’s poorest continent. Current conditions show that the economic and social situation is troubling. The economic conditions imposed by the IMF and World Bank have indeed led to increased economic growth – but only as measured by total economic output (with growth rates at approximately 6% this year and next). As predicted, poverty and inequality have surged, and many still need basic housing, water and health, and economic growth does not provide sufficient stability to create robust democracies in Africa.<sup>33</sup> These are problems that have long-plagued the continent, leading the United Nations to establish Millennium Development Goals in order to set development objectives to address extreme poverty and other social indicators and to simultaneously demand supports from developed nations to finance such efforts.

Progress on the UN’s Millennium Development Goals has been slow, with inadequate achievements on extreme poverty and hunger being attained in 56% of African nations (and regression happening in 30% of nations), and reductions in child mortality also failing to reach 56% of nations.<sup>34</sup> The worst performance in Millennium Development Goals is experienced in maternal health, with 87% of nations failing to meet targets, and 27 nations regressing in maternal health. Overall, achievement of Millennium Development Goals averages about 28%, meaning that, overall, targets have not been met in more than 70% of countries. While sub-Saharan unemployment is at a disastrous level of 23%,<sup>35</sup> so too is Northern Africa challenged by unemployment (with current levels as high as 20%).<sup>36</sup> Hunger and food security is deeply challenging, with the figure below showing the magnitude of this problem in Africa, particularly in comparison with other regions of the world.



Source: Maplecroft Food Security Index, 2011.<sup>37</sup>

Gains have, however, been made in an array of countries. On redress of hunger and poverty, real gains have been made in Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique. Guinea, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Malawi, Madagascar, Tanzania and Togo have made gains in primary school graduation rates. Improvements in child mortality have been achieved in Mozambique, Malawi, Niger and Ethiopia.

Within these countries, greatest distress typically exists in rural regions. Over the last decade, sub-Saharan Africa's poverty numbers have surged from 268 million to 306 million people. But so too urban areas struggle, for rapid growth, low incomes and high infrastructure needs have resulted in 62% of urban residents living in slums.<sup>38</sup>

Barriers to a thriving economy are understood to include very weak infrastructure, as "the continent remains plagued by a crippling lack of energy, transport and telecommunications infrastructure."<sup>39</sup> So too are human development conditions, for when extreme poverty, lack of access to water, low education levels and poor maternal health exists, communities are deeply blocked from health, opportunities and well being. Conflict and civil war – often incited by low economic opportunities – now directly affects 20% of the continent's population. Turmoil itself then further depletes infrastructure, institutional and political capacities, and deepens poverty, ill health and human suffering.<sup>40</sup>

The reach of conflicts and civil war is wide, with sub-Saharan Africa holding the status as the world's region least likely to be at peace, with Somalia taking the bottom position across the globe slipping below Iraq who held the position in 2010.<sup>41</sup> The Somali conflict had abated somewhat with constraints

on military spending and a somewhat more stable political situation, but the cumulative effects of six years of drought now has plunged the region again into a deep humanitarian crisis. On the positive end of the spectrum, Chad has achieved the most positive movement towards peace as relations with Darfur and the Sudan have improved.<sup>42</sup>

## **African Immigrants and the Immigration Experience**

The African continent generates many immigrants and refugees – the former choosing to escape poverty and conflicts seeking a better life for ourselves and our families, and the latter without even the choice of escape and who instead flee persecution and the prolonged privation of life in refugee camps. Reflecting on the impact of African living conditions on both these groups is our next task, first looking at the situation facing immigrants.

Professionals in African nations typically are underpaid and vulnerable to what has been called the “brain drain.”<sup>43</sup> More than 20,000 professionals have been leaving the continent annually since 1990, with goals shifting from the 1960s and 1970s when resettlement was seen as temporary with the plan to return as democracy and opportunity were rebuilt as independence settled into the region. Increasingly, however, these moves are permanent as immigrants seek a better future, including pay, economic opportunity and relative freedom from repression and civil strife.<sup>44</sup> Remittances from immigrants are an enduring commitment that many Africans make to support families, relatives and community members at home. A national study in 1991 indicated that 57% of Africans make remittances to Africa<sup>45</sup> – and these numbers are a little higher in Multnomah county at 60%,<sup>46</sup> despite the much higher poverty rates in the region (as illustrated in this report).

Remittances are an important part of Africa’s economy, and estimated to be approximately \$40 billion per year, which is equivalent to 2.2% of the continent’s economic activity, and a level that roughly is equated by development aid into the continent which is approximately \$50 billion annually, but the net impact is worse, as African nations pay approximately \$20 billion per year back to loan repayments to industrialized nations.<sup>47</sup> For Africans in Multnomah county, remittances are an enduring and often difficult responsibility, for affluence is missing and the capacity to carry such duty stretches an already tight budget – particularly when unemployment, high housing costs, lack of income supports and debts already are tough to carry. In the midst of negotiating these duties, Africans share stories about the latest call or letter received from home, and occasionally laugh to disrupt the pain that flows from the correlated angst in trying to stretch resources even further. We are a people who carry such responsibility as part of our heritage and our obligation. Such is not without duress, but nevertheless, we make sacrifices for our kin in Africa.

Our decisions to move to the USA were difficult, costly and with high stress. To begin, there has been perpetual discrimination against immigrants with dark skin, and ours is often the blackest on the globe. Severe prohibitions on our immigration existed from 1750 to 1952, when citizenship was limited to those with White skin and prohibited for people of color. Following World War I, substantial preference

was given to applicants from Europe and constrained quotas existed on those from Africa. Formally, in 1965, the quota system ended with the introduction of the Immigration Act of 1965, and allowed family repatriation and those with specific job skills to be given priority. This era marked the opening of the USA to African immigration. Still, however, access was constrained as informal systems of prejudice prevailed including border practices, skills determination and interpretation of “exceptionality” that was written into employment-based immigration legislation. But access was possible although time limits, costs and prejudice limited our access.

To address conditions for constrained access and to advance a humanitarian agenda across the globe, the USA introduced the “Diversity Immigrant Visa” in 1990 to make 50,000 permanent visas available annually to countries which have had low immigration rates to the USA, and that required a high school diploma or two years of experience coupled with two years of training to be eligible for applying for the visa. This legislation has supported many of us to enter the USA. Despite commitment to diversify entry into the USA, access is uneven. As one can imagine, there are many more applicants than available visas. Further stratification by region has created some possibilities for African immigration into the USA. Here are the data for the last few years:

- In 2007, 9.1 million applications for 50,000 spaces, meaning 1 of every 182 applicants were successful. Among fully eligible applicants, 1.31% of African applicants were successful.
- In 2008, 13.6 million applicants for 50,000 spaces, lessening success rates to 1 of every 272 applicants. When filtered to only eligible applicants and stratified, Africans were successful at a rate of 2.4%.
- In 2009, Africans achieved success in 2.3% of applications.

Despite these limited odds, the Diversity Visa system has been an important addition for access to move to the USA. In 2009, entry through the Diversity Visa system for Africans outstripped entry through conventional immigration systems by a margin of more than four-to-one.<sup>48</sup>

The costs for entry are high, when annual incomes for Africans averages \$3,579, but are typically impossible among poorer nations such as Somalia where the average annual income is \$600.

<b>Fees for Visa Services, 2011</b>	
Visa petition for a relative	\$420
Family class application	\$330
Employment-based application	\$720
Diversity visa application	\$305
Diversity Visa Lottery fee (if successful)	\$440
Immigration visa security surcharge	\$74
Documentation review for family class & some employment applicants	\$88

Source: US Department of State (2011).

The total cost of visa fees for entry through the Diversity Visa is \$745. This is on top of travel costs and resettlement costs. It is estimated that the cost of immigration into the USA totals over \$2,000. Waiting times can be very high – at 6 to 9 years for skilled workers and professionals, and 4 years for spouses and minor children, and 7 to 18 years for unmarried adult children. Among investors (who need to enter with \$1 million, or a lesser amount of \$500,000 if willing to locate rurally or to areas where unemployment is over 150% times the national average) and priority workers, there is no waiting list.

Upon arrival into the USA, immigrants are not eligible for any form of income support, as status as an immigrant is that of outsiders and precludes access to most income supports.

Citizenship requirements are expansive, including the requirement that we have lived in the USA for a minimum of 5 years (reduced to 3 years if one is a spouse to a US citizen), speak, write and read basic English, pass a test on US history and government, be at least 18 years old and be of “good moral character.” In addition, one must have the \$680 fee to begin the process. This fee is not refundable should one withdraw or be denied the application. The two biggest barriers are English skills and the fee. Learning English is limited by opportunity, literacy, and ultimately by government investments in such programs.<sup>49</sup> The application fee most deters those of us in poverty and in low income. Waiting lists abound for English language training, with a recent study of 184 providers across the nation revealing that the majority have waiting lists that can be as long as three years. Additional difficulties are created by access – the majority of immigrants want night or weekend classes, but such availability is very limited. A recent study showed only 6% of such classes were available during these preferred times.<sup>50</sup> Cost is another limiting factor with all government-operated programs running at capacity, and private providers are usually too expensive for new immigrants.

If one is able to navigate these barriers, citizenship is an important feature of living in the USA. Gaining citizenship is an important act of patriotism and civic duty, but perhaps more importantly it provides automatic citizenship to one’s children (if they are under 18), improves access to employment and education, allows us to travel (if one can afford it) to visit relatives in Africa, allows us to sponsor family members into the USA, and protects us from deportation should we be unlucky enough to get a criminal conviction. For those of us in poverty, gaining citizenship means we are protected from the limits on income supports that are imposed on non-citizen residents in the areas of supplemental security benefits, food stamps, and Medicaid. There is a seven-year limit on non-citizens for benefits resulting from poverty when coupled with disability, being over 65 years of age, or being blind. This seven-year limit is also applied to Medicaid access. Food stamps access may be limited for those who receive supplemental security benefits – as SNAP is automatic for those receiving supplemental income supports, and thus needs to be separately applied for when these supplemental benefits are withdrawn.

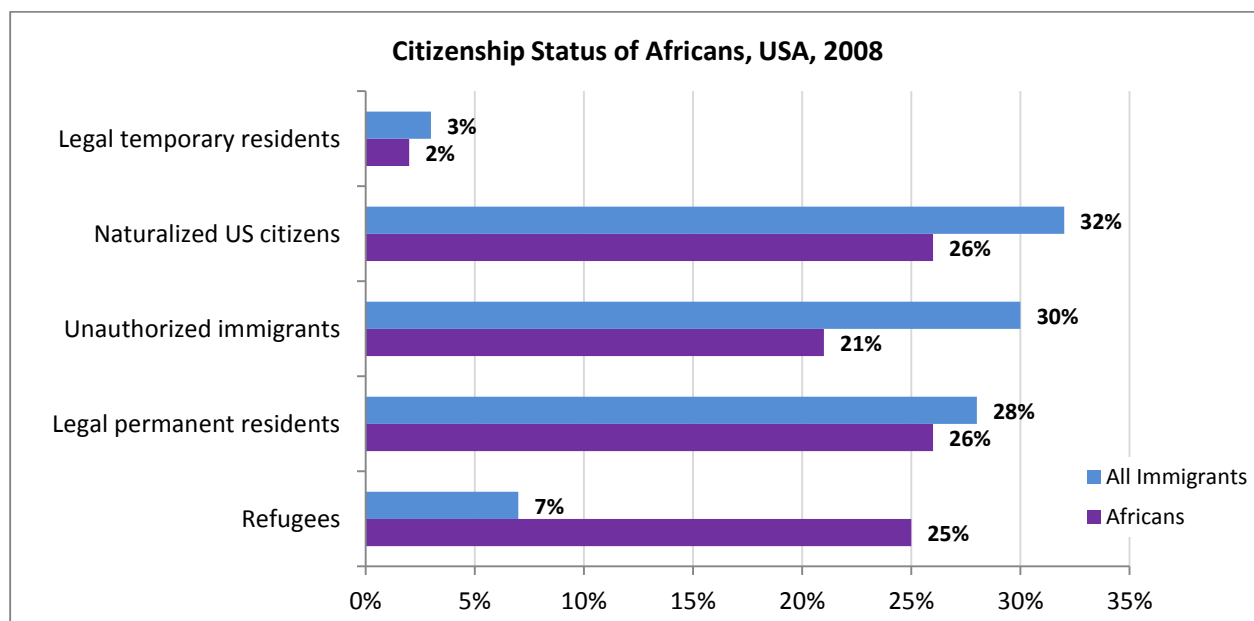
The recentness of immigration and immigration status for sub-Saharan Africans in Multnomah county is profiled below. We can see that almost ½ of Africans are not yet citizens and that this group is the most recent arrivers to the USA. This shows us that length of residency is tied to becoming a citizen and that the bulk of our newer arrivers can anticipate becoming citizens. Concern remains, however, for what

seems to be a high level of residents who have been in the USA for at least ten years who have not become citizens – as almost one-in-four of the community have lived here for more than ten years yet not established citizenship status that would secure access to government programs and particularly to retirement supports.

USA Citizenship of those from Sub-Saharan Africa		
	<b>USA citizens</b>	<b>52.3%</b>
	Entered 2000 or later	8.2%
	Entered 1990 to 1999	26.3%
	Entered before 1990	17.8%
	<b>Residents but not yet citizens</b>	<b>47.7%</b>
	Entered 2000 or later	25.0%
	Entered 1990 to 1999	16.2%
	Entered before 1990	6.5%

Source: American Community Survey, 2008. Sub-Saharan origin removes Africans from the data who are from Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Western Sahara.

At the national level, the profile of Africans living in the USA shows that the community has many refugees – at levels more than three times that of the general immigrant population. The community also diverges in the level of access to US citizenship – at approximately one-in-four, instead of one-in-three that exists for the general immigrant population. A final note is that the African community has smaller numbers of unauthorized residents – at one-in-five, compared with one-in-three for the overall immigrant population. The chart below illustrates these national patterns.



Source: Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2011.<sup>51</sup>

Unauthorized residency is a significant burden for those without official papers, as they are:

*The African Immigrant and Refugee Community in Multnomah County  
Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University*

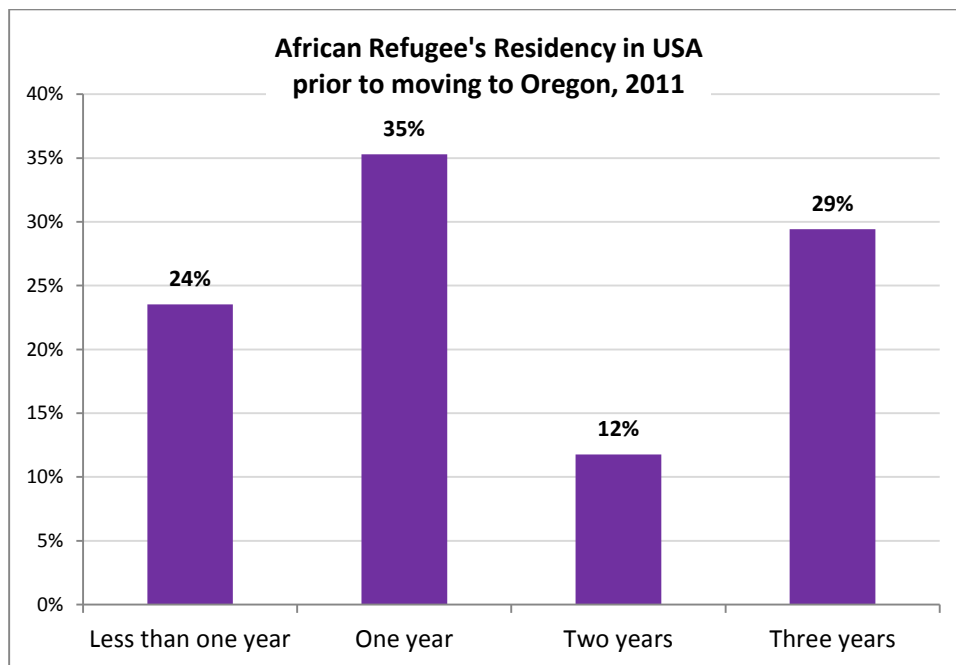


...generally barred from major government benefits and services, and have been increasingly subject to immigration raids or arrests by the police as well as the risk of deportation. A lack of legal status is also associated, generally, with more precarious employment, lower wages, and the lack of private health insurance coverage.<sup>52</sup>

Temporary residents typically enter the USA as students and those with temporary work permits.

While refugee experiences are covered more explicitly in the next section of this report, it is important to detail that local Africans are more likely to be refugees than the overall US average.

Multnomah county is a magnet for the African community across the USA with a high level of refugees arriving in other regions and then moving to Multnomah county (at 27% of the community). The average length of US residency prior to moving to Oregon is 1.53 years.

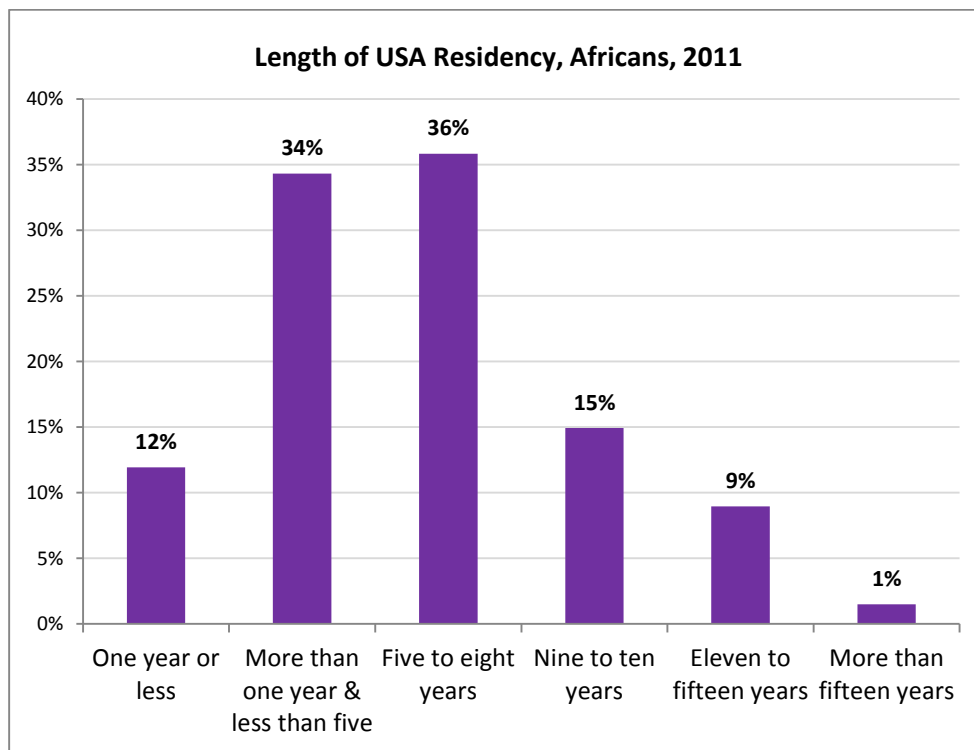


Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

Related issues are the ability to communicate in English. Among those Africans born in Africa (and thus not claiming it as an ancestry of their forefathers), more than one-third do not speak English very well (36.5%), a figure that would significantly reduce the likelihood of becoming a US citizen. Languages are versatile and 82.7% speak a language other than English.

Finally, we turn our attention to the length of time that those in the African community have been living in the USA. These figures vary dramatically with the table above titled "USA citizenship of those from Sub-Saharan Africa." In that chart, a total of 67% of local Africans are deemed to have been living here for at least ten years – from our community survey (as shown below), we find that only 10% of Africans have lived here for at least ten years. The variation can be from a number of factors: the local survey

holding less reliability as a result of the small size of the sample, but it may actually be more reliable than the ACS data as it was administered in a culturally-specific context. At this juncture, it is not possible to reconcile these two sources of information. The residency pattern of Africans is still unclear but the context of each study has something valuable to inform our understanding of the community.



Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

In summary, the local African community is more likely to have arrived in the USA within the last ten years and is more likely to have arrived as refugees compared with US averages.

### African Refugees and the Settlement Experience

Numerous African nations have been at war and have encountered deep strife in establishing governing institutions since the end of colonization. Drought has added much hardship to these experiences as inability to feed one's family has contributed to much destruction of civil order and civility. Desperation has led to violence, rape, torture and thievery – and to flee has often meant moving from one horror to another. Today, one refugee camp in Kenya was built to house 90,000 Somalis fleeing civil war twenty years ago, but now houses 380,000 Somalis.<sup>53</sup> The situation is dire, and these words amplify the experience. Know that such depths of horror are not unusual across the African continent's refugee generating nations:

*Desperate for food and water, many have spent up to three weeks walking across the drought ravaged northeast corner of Africa searching for help. Their crops have withered, their cattle and children have died. In fleeing their homes, some families have been robbed of what little they have*

*left. Women have been raped by bandits and sick children have been hunted by packs of wild hyenas. Some of the ill and malnourished were left to die alone in the open. It has become the "worst humanitarian disaster in the world," said the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres. An average of 1,400 people a day are arriving at Dadaab, the world's biggest refugee camp, located 100 kilometres from the Somali border in Kenya's arid North Eastern province.<sup>54</sup>*

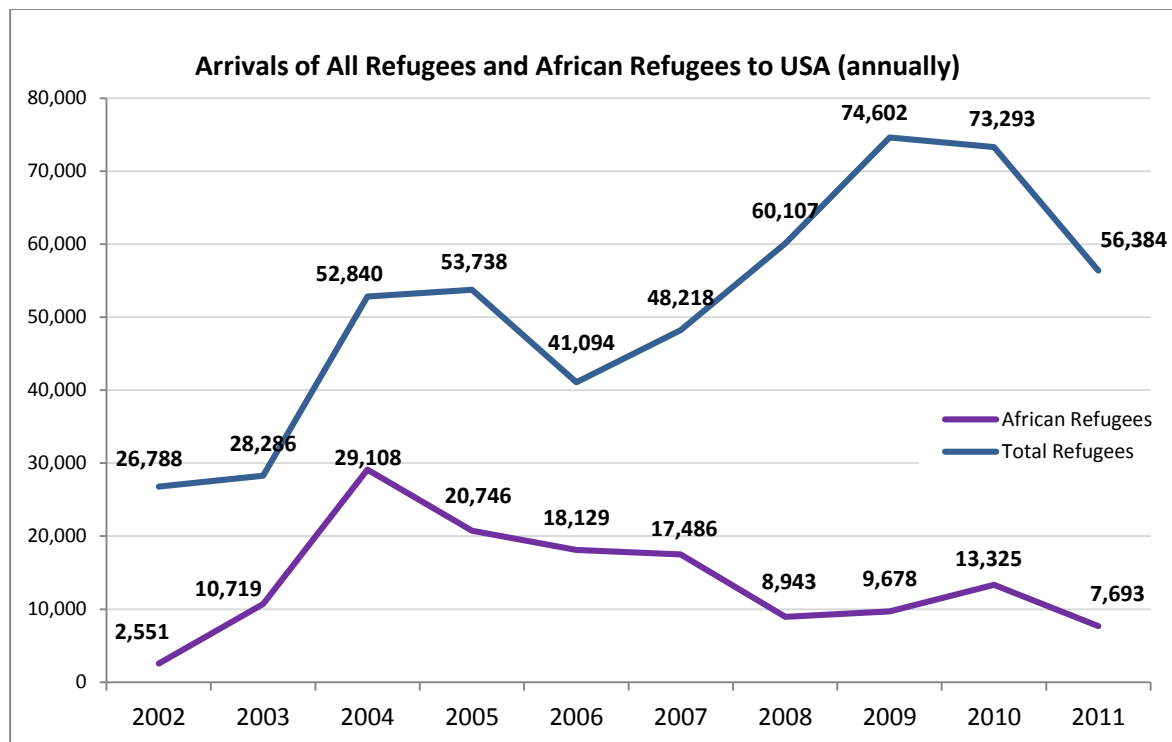
As refugees, many experienced deep trauma, violence and retain these experiences in their bodies. Current estimates reveal that while 20% of immigrants worldwide suffer from depression, more than double levels (as many as 44%) are found among refugees. So too are found high levels of anxiety disorders (at 40%). One study of Somali youth found the level of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to be at 20%.<sup>55</sup> Triggered by terrifying events, survivors of trauma can encounter unpredictable anxiety that may include flashbacks, irritability, irrational fear, concentration difficulties, relationship troubles and self-destructive behaviors.<sup>56</sup>

Conditions of arrival are thus deeply traumatic with significant residual impacts that may last for many years. To gain a sense of the expansiveness of these conditions across the globe, we share the numbers of refugees who are from Africa at the close of 2010.

Global Number of African Refugees, by Origin, 2010			
Algeria	6,689	Madagascar	270
Angola	134,858	Malawi	171
Benin	442	Mali	3,663
Botswana	53	Mauritania	37,733
Burkina Faso	1,145	Mauritius	28
Burundi	84,064	Morocco	2,284
Cameroon	14,963	Mozambique	131
Cape Verde	25	Namibia	1,017
Central African Rep.	164,905	Niger	803
Chad	53,733	Nigeria	15,642
Comoros	368	Rwanda	114,836
Congo	20,679	Sao Tome and Principe	33
Côte d'Ivoire	41,758	Senegal	16,267
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	476,693	Seychelles	49
Djibouti	566	Sierra Leone	11,275
Egypt	6,913	Somalia	770,154
Equatorial Guinea	305	South Africa	380
Eritrea	222,460	Sudan	387,288
Ethiopia	68,848	Swaziland	36
Gabon	165	Togo	18,330
Ghana	20,203	Tunisia	2,174
Guinea	11,985	Uganda	6,441
Guinea-Bissau	1,127	United Rep. of Tanzania	1,144
Kenya	8,602	Western Sahara	116,415
Lesotho	11	Zambia	228
Liberia	70,129	Zimbabwe	24,089
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2,309		

Source: Author's adaptation from UNHCR, 2011.<sup>57</sup>

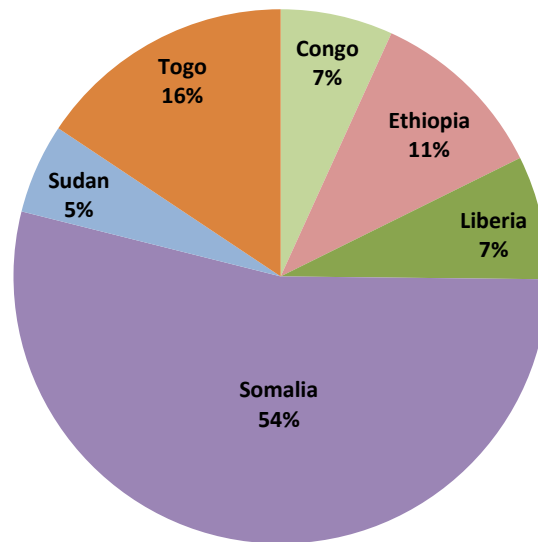
Africans continue to face some horrendous experiences of persecution and violence, and Africa remains a large refugee-generating continent. The chart below shows the numbers of African refugees arriving in the USA on an annual basis, and while the numbers of African refugees accepted into the USA have been declining since 2004, the numbers remain significant in the landscape of newly arrived refugees into the USA, numbering 13.6% of the total numbers accepted into the USA in 2011.



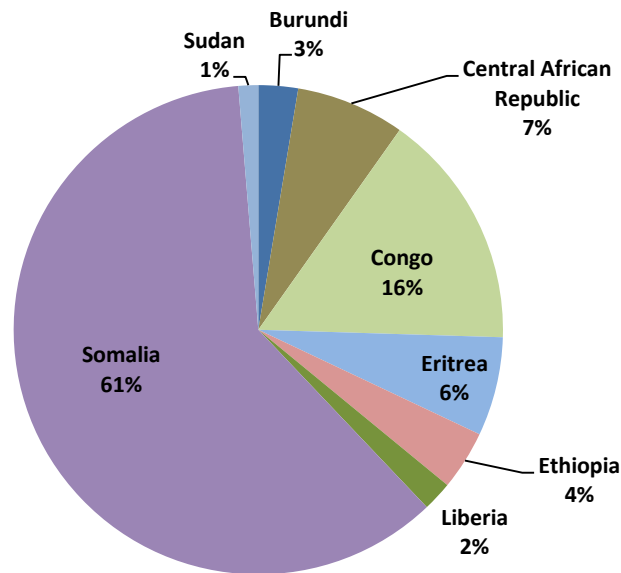
Source: US Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2011.

Refugees continue to arrive in Oregon from an array of African nations, with Somali refugees continuing to make up more than half of such arrivals over the last ten years, a pattern that reflects the global situation whereby Somali refugees are the largest African refugee group. The figures below show the pattern of formal arrivals into Oregon, but miss the secondary migration patterns of those refugees who move to other parts of the nation but then opt to relocate into the Portland area. Such estimates of secondary migration are unknown but through our experience are believed to be pronounced.

**Official Refugee Settlement from African Nations, Oregon,  
2000 (N=147)**



**Official Refugee Settlement from African Nations, Oregon,  
2009 (N=153)**



Source: Author's calculations from Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2010.

Above we see that numbers of refugees have slowed from Togo, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Liberia, and have increased from Burundi, Eritrea, Congo and the Central African Republic, and Somalia.

Refugees typically arrive in the USA with little more than the clothes on our backs. We have fled from our home countries unable to gather our key documents, including evidence of education, employment or even birth. We come without assets as they have been stolen from us by those seeking our death and

the destruction of our communities. We arrive in trauma that can last decades. We arrive in fear, with uncertainty, and with worry for our children and our ability to make a life for ourselves. And we arrive often with years and sometimes decades in refugee camps where our survival needs may have been addressed but our education and employability not addressed.

We arrive in the USA with images of this country being affluent and with abundant opportunity. We deem ourselves to be the lucky ones to have survived and to have landed in the USA. We know too that income supports are available to us – with the “Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance” program available to us for 8 months, which at the onset seems more than adequate and more than generous. In addition, voluntary organizations (like the Immigration and Refugee Community Organization, or IRCO, here in Multnomah county) help us settle quickly, picking us up at the airport, helping us find accommodations and furnishings and helping us learn about how to access services and navigate the local community. IRCO also provides English classes, job search skills and acculturation in workplace expectations, but only for 8 months. IRCO is also able to provide some additional resources, up to \$2000, for help with housing, food and transportation.

Quickly, however, we learn that this idealized land is not so welcoming and not so generous. The Office of Refugee Resettlement provides reimbursement to states or public and private nonprofit agencies for any cash and emergency medical assistance they provide to refugees within 8 months of our arrival. But four harsh surprises come quickly:

- Refugees are required to accept any employment opportunities offered to qualify for the program – this means we cannot take time to find better jobs, nor those which we are credentialed, nor to access certification programs that transfer our prior experiences to the USA context.
- The maximum benefit level of income support is \$506/month, but average monthly rents are \$750/month, and still even \$616/month among very low income residents. Cheap housing is next to impossible to find in the region.
- Finding decent employment is very difficult, as we are challenged by limited English skills, less education, reduced family and community networks for informal support, challenges with poorer mental and physical health and have significant trouble finding affordable and secure housing, needing to move often.<sup>58</sup>
- If we move away from Portland where rents are cheaper, we lose connection to any formal supports provided by and for Africans. The only such services are in Multnomah county.

Achieving success is very difficult, and our stressors are created through an array of factors including the trauma we have experienced, worry for our kin who remain in violent situations, the tough economic conditions we face in the USA, and ongoing discrimination and isolation we experience in the USA. Minimal but important extended supports are available through IRCO with funding up to five years of employment supports through referrals and for some vocational training in child care and nursing.

Also helpful has been a local initiative designed to overcome the painful remnants of the history of conflict between Africans of different identities and origins: the African Diaspora Dialogue Project.<sup>59</sup> A

partnership between Portland State University and Africa House, the work (now ended) aimed to reconcile Africans across differences between people who were historically enemies. Such work is perceived as essential to support refugees and immigrants building success in the USA. It is not easy work when warring Somalis gather, or when Rwandans at both ends of the genocide need to live in the same apartment complex. Community members were offered a chance to be peace makers and to help people build understanding of each other, and separate the people from the legacy. The project has helped build more fertile soil for Africa House's ability to resource communities effectively. While not an easy answer to strife that carries over from one's home tribe and nation, it has offered community leaders the skills and insights to bring people together and to address conflicts as they emerge.

## Discourse Changes Needed

The general discourse about African immigrants and refugees is that we should be grateful to our new host countries, as surely anything here is better than the conditions we faced at home. While we are grateful for the supports we receive and grateful to have our lives spared and for opportunities to gain education and careers outside of the wars, conflicts, and devastating levels of poverty in our home communities, our experiences need to be understood in the broader context of the centuries of exploitation that our homelands have suffered at the hands of slave traders and the countries that sanctioned such behavior, and colonizers, and those that advance the current neo-liberal policy environment that has beleaguered our nations through debt and structural adjustment policies. Our success and ability to create a thriving community has been, effectively, sold to those who wanted to make money and to gain political power from our exploitation.

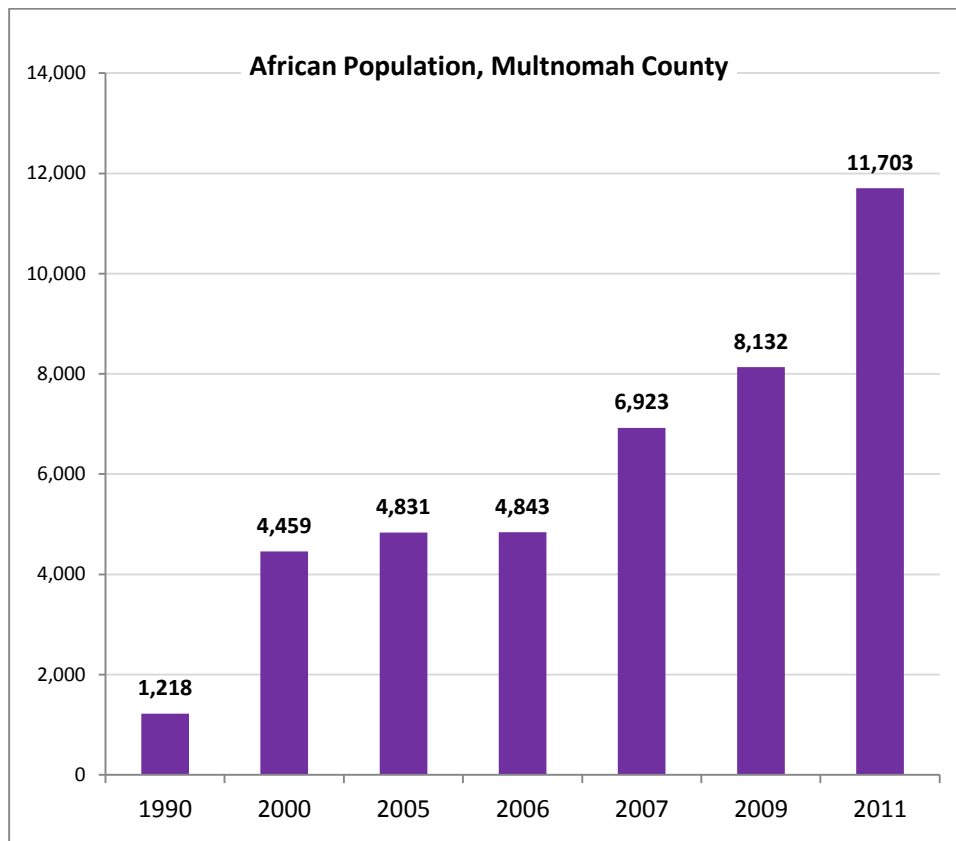
Had we been afforded independence, sovereignty and the rights to develop our own resources and our own economies throughout history, we would not be knocking on the doors of the USA seeking a better life. And still we are expected to embrace a stance of self-deprecation and gratitude.

It is time to change this discourse. We recognize that a portion of American affluence has been made possible through our ongoing exploitation. While we cannot achieve success with a reparations agenda (not even the African American community has been successful with such an agenda, even when one's lineage can be directly traced to being a slave), we do aspire to the prideful status as a people in recovery from colonization and forced servitude, and join with our brother and sister communities to advance racial justice and to change the discourse around being "second class citizens" and outsiders to the US culture.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, we aim to build political and social capital to ensure that our needs are met. This includes the development of strong social movements, advocacy practices and increased involvement in the political and legislative process. Support for leadership development among our people, alongside the expansion of culturally-specific organizations, offers us a path to gaining skills and confidence and builds community capital.



## Demographics of Local Africans

By conventional measures, the size of the African immigrant and refugee community is growing rapidly.



Source: Author's calculation of ancestry data from the American Community survey for post-2000 data and from Census 1990 and 2000.

The size of the African immigrant and refugee community here in Multnomah county is disputed, and conventional measures miss much of our community. There are many reasons why this community does not participate in official population surveys that include poverty, the absence of a phone, weaker English skills, and a distrustful relationship with the state – typically carried over from our home countries where state workers can be corrupt and violent. So too there is a lack of understanding of the purpose of the surveys and one often avoids them not knowing they can be of benefit to us.

We thus identify with hesitation the “official” counts of our community. These are 11,703 Africans in Multnomah county, and 22,483 in Oregon, as of 2011.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, the Census Bureau decided to drop the long form from its 2010 Census, which would have collected much more robustly the counts of our community as it would have included country of birth, length of time in the country and ancestry identification. None of these details are included in the short form, and now we must struggle with using the American Community Survey (ACS) to estimate the size of our population. Given the small sample size of the ACS, there will be many features impossible to uncover in the years to come.

To address the pervasive undercount in our community, we have developed our own process for defining the size of our community, the details of which follow in the next section.

### Community-Verified Population Counts

Participation in Census 2010 was long anticipated for its updated population counts available for specific racial communities. But the Census Bureau's decision to drop the long form of the Census (that would have collected ancestry data and a wide array of additional elements) has entrenched the invisibility of the African community. Because no ancestry data was collected, there is no information on the African population or any other measure that was covered in the Census to be reported out for this community. This policy decision has rendered the community invisible.

The Census Bureau has preferred to rely upon the American Community Survey to collect the wide-ranging social and economic data – but the sample size is too small to report out on data for the African community. It is only when the community reaches the size of 65,000 that these data are publicly shared. And the multi-year reports (such as “2007 to 2009”) that have become common place for the American Community Survey (ACS) to allow smaller communities to be reported still require a population of 20,000 to report. It is frustrating and quite deplorable to have one's community rendered invisible in conventional research practices. Visibility is one of the hallmarks of the beginnings of policy attention: it is time to advance policy reforms that will ensure the African community is identified in an array of important research practices.

We turn now to an important issue that is at the heart of our visibility – that of the actual size of the community. We begin with a quick review of the prior studies that confirm undercounts in communities of color and then detail the reasons why people do not participate in conventional surveys such as the American Community Survey. We will focus on the ACS here as the Census 2010 will be irrelevant to the African community because of the omission of the community's identity within collected data. Then our attention narrows to our effort to determine what we call the “community-verified population count” for the African community, extending the knowledge base of an effort to articulate alternative and, we believe, more accurate count of our communities of color.<sup>62</sup>

There are a number of reasons that many within the African community will not have participated in the surveys upon which most of the research in this report is based. These are listed below:

- **Have English language skills:** All surveys are conducted in English with a secondary offering of Spanish and far fewer in other languages. The level of those who speak English “less than very well” is 9.1% in the county, and divided into 4.3% who are Spanish-speaking and 4.8% speaking another language.<sup>63</sup> We thus have a population with 4.8% who cannot participate when surveys are conducted in English or Spanish. The most relied-upon survey for this research report is the American Community Survey and it is available in only English and Spanish. An interviewer might have an additional language to resource respondents but nothing is required of the ACS to ensure participation.

- ***Have a telephone:*** An estimated 2.2% of the White population of Multnomah county does not have a phone while 3.7% of households of color do not have a telephone, which results in more accurate data being collected from White households.
- ***Have stable enough housing to participate:*** Situations of homelessness, frequent moves and “couch surfing” will reduce participation as one needs an address to be “found” by most surveys. Being a renter (as opposed to owning one’s home) dramatically increases the likelihood of not being counted: at 4.3% for renters instead of 0.1% for owners. When disaggregated by race, more pronounced differences appear.
- ***Ability to read the surveys:*** Most surveys are initiated by a mailed form. Without an ability to read, one does not understand the purpose, the instructions or the questions. And typically when people lack basic literacy skills, they avoid the surveyors who might follow up with a phone call or a visit to expand participation options. Looking at “high school graduation” as a proxy for literacy (an imperfect proxy, we know, but such is the nature of available data), we know that 6.3% of the White population has not completed high school while 28.0% of people of color have not completed high school.<sup>64</sup>
- ***Ability to be “found” by surveyors:*** Even if housing, phone, language and literacy accessibility exists, sometimes community members still do not receive communications (although this number is likely to be small). We believe that the proxy for this dynamic is poverty as one may have precarious living and working conditions such that mailboxes might be shared or might not exist, forwarding addresses not completed, and busy irregular schedules that might result in someone not having the time and/or energy to respond to surveyors. Again, there are racial disparities in poverty rates, with Whites having poverty levels of 14.0% while that of Africans is 51.4% (in 2011), meaning that the two communities are unequally affected by this issue, and Africans much more likely to be undercounted for this reason.
- ***Have a family smaller than six members:*** The Census short form has only six family members to be identified. The long form (discontinued in 2010) had space for 12 members of the household, but only sought details on the “first” six members of the household. Here are the available data for our local community. Official counts identify that the sub-Saharan African community has 132 such households, which equals 5.3% of all households, while those who claim “American” ancestry (likely mostly White households) have only 0.51% households with more than 6 members. While the Census Bureau was supposed to follow up with these families, the narrative experience is that this follow-up step often resulted in the second form being counted as a separate household.
- ***Understanding the importance of participation and having a culture of participation:*** As communities acclimatize to the USA, a culture of participation develops to support practices such as surveys and censuses. Accordingly, newer communities will be less oriented to the importance of these practices and the ways in which participation matters. Newcomers are much more numerous among communities of color than among White communities: 26.8% of people of color arrived in the USA since 2000, while the equivalent figure for Whites is 2.1%. Among the African community, fully 91% of the community has arrived in the USA since 2000.<sup>65</sup>
- ***Have a trusting relationship with one’s own government:*** For refugee communities in particular, many African communities have experienced persecution by one’s own government in their home

country. State bodies often used violence, imprisonment, torture and killing of communities. Accordingly, keeping a low profile with the state is an act of self-preservation. There are two dimensions to this dynamic: the first is to not participate at all, and the second is to participate but not to identify features of one's identity that gave rise to the persecution. This is the "ancestry" category and is important as it is the source of data for identifying the size of many particular communities of color.

- ***Degree of inclusion experienced in the USA:*** When one experiences racism – whether it is institutional, cultural or individually-enacted racism – one is less likely to hold a prideful embrace of one's racial identity. Furthermore, there is research that illustrates that when surveys are administered by Whites, there is a less likelihood that one will identify as a person of color. The dynamic is both a combination of internalized oppression, and self-protective features whereby one wants to hold an identity that is similar to the "person in charge" such that one is less likely to be "othered" or otherwise marginalized by the institution conducting the survey.

At this point, we hope that the reader appreciates why the African community is less likely to both participate in surveys and also to identify themselves as a person of color. Given that these surveys (particularly Census population counts) are relied upon to determine the size of the community, the accuracy of these population counts are called into question. Quite simply, the African community is undercounted.

We are not the first to make such an assertion. The Census Bureau itself has determined that there is an undercount of numerous communities in the years that followed Census 2000. But revising the population counts required an act of Congress, and Congress twice refused to accept these upwards revisions. The most generous interpretation of these refusals is financial – for with upwards revisions, the federal government would be responsible for increased funding to state and local governments. Another interpretation would be the impact of newer numbers that would have increased the counts of more poor urban centers, which generally are more likely to be Democratic. Given that Congress was controlled by the Republicans at the time, and that these numbers are used for redistricting purposes and thus affecting the numbers of elected officials across the country, it would likely have led to an increased number of Democratic-leaning districts.<sup>66</sup> Whatever the cause, this example is illustrative that population counts are more than demographic practices – they are political and deeply influenced by the constructs that support and that limit participation.

The magnitude of the undercount is what is left to determine. There are wide-ranging published research findings on this issue ranging from a low of 0.94% in Multnomah county as published by the Census Bureau, to these figures disaggregated by race showing that the African American community was undercounted across the nation by 2.1%.<sup>67</sup> One particularly well-recognized community research project showed that an immigrant Brazilian community in Boston was undercounted by 29%<sup>68</sup> – and this research has been incorporated into the works of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now the Department of Homeland Security) in determining an undercount among undocumented residents of

10%.<sup>69</sup> Researchers have documented over the years that higher levels of marginality results in more undercounting of the community.<sup>70</sup>

Of significance, there is a published account of the undercount of the African population in Portland.<sup>71</sup> Drawing from the Census, American Community Survey, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Homeland Security and Oregon Office of Vital Statistics, the researchers have established through a combination of arrival records, birth records, survey data and some incorporation of narrative accounts that the formal 2011 count is undercounted by approximately 85.5%, and that their estimate places the community's size at 13,442. Note that the authors consider their estimate to be conservative.

In our efforts to determine the size of the undercount in the African community, we rely on two methods to achieve our own "community-verified population count," with one figure being determined and applied to the youth population and the second being determined and applied to the adult population. Each will be detailed in turn.

#### **Method #1: Using the Oregon Department of Education's Student Records**

Communities of color have long said that they believe that schools will have much more accurate counts of the size of each community than the ACS or other survey data, as well as the Census 2000 and Census 2010 counts. To this end, we have looked at school records of students to ascertain these counts. While African identity is typically subsumed within African American, we have recently been able to secure access to language-based school records that collect the first language of students as well as language spoken at home. We have used these data as the basis for Method #1.

The Oregon Department of Education maintains a database of students in Multnomah county schools, and this database includes students' first language and language spoken at home. According to their records, the number of Somali-originating students who took the OAKS test in the 2011/12 school year, and who attended Multnomah county schools was 502 (with 425 being Somali speakers and 77 speaking Maay-Maay). This, however, is not the full number of Somali youth in Multnomah county schools. Students are not tested in grades K through 2, so there needs to be an additional increase in these school enrollment numbers. We do not have accurate estimates of the size of the African community who are between K to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, so we simply used a standard estimate of 3 of 13 grades, which is equivalent to 23% of the student body (based on 3/13 grades). We thus increased the estimate of our Somali students by 23%. The figures are in the chart below.

2011	All Boards
# Somali students in grades 3 to 12	502
Grades missing	k to 2
Estimated % missing	23%
<b>Total estimated from 5 to 17 years of age</b>	<b>617</b>

Sources: Data provided through Pat Burk, tabulated by Myste French with additional calculations by the author.

We thus have a total of 617 Somali youth across Multnomah county's school boards. We now compare this figure with that extracted from the American Community Survey for the Somali community's size. To do this, we first look at the ancestry tables for 2009 ACS (most recent available) and find that there are 176 people who identified themselves as Somali and an estimated additional 114 Somalis who defined themselves as "African" (calculated by determining that the percentage of the community that was Somali is 6.7% based on the ancestry allocations in this ACS ancestry table). This becomes the "base number" of 290 in the table below. We then need to estimate the size of this population that is likely between 5 and 17 years of age. To determine this, we use the age structure of the entire African population in Multnomah county (as contained in the "age distribution" section of this report) which defines that all those under 18 make up 30.1% of the population. As we have no better indicator, we allocate this equally across the ages, and thus estimate that the number of Somali children from 5 to 17 years is a total of is 21.7% of the entire Somali population.

Source	ACS 2009 African Ancestry	Somali based on 2009 ACS	Total Somali based on 2009 ACS (called "base number")
Somali-specified ancestry	176 Somali	176	290
Portion of total African who are estimated to be Somali (based on % of total ancestry who specify Somali heritage)	= 6.7% x 1,701	114	
Age breakdown of "base number" = 30.1% under 18  Then count only those from 5 to 17 years, estimated to be base number ÷ 18 years x 13 years	= 0.301 x 290 = 87 (total under 18)  = 87 ÷ 18 x 13 years = <b>63 Somali youth</b> (from 5-17 years)		

We then need to conduct a supplemental calculation to increase the 2009 ACS estimate to a 2011 comparator, so as to ensure equivalent years are being used. To do this, we are using a proxy measure for the size of the population increase. The best available figure we have is that of the birth rate. We then apply it to our 63 Somali youth. Using ACS figures for the birth rate of 7.6% (provided only for the women between 15 and 50 years of age who gave birth in the prior year), and then calculating what figure this is when applied to the total population, we calculate the population growth in the following way:

Populations	ACS 2009 totals	2011 Projections
African women aged 15 to 50	2,012	Not needed
Total African	7,778	<b>Population increase</b> = 2012 x .076 x 2 = 306 births <b>Percent of the population</b> = 306 ÷ 7778 = 3.9% population increase over 2 years
Somali youth	63	= 63 x 1.039 = 65 youth

In total, this method reveals that the ACS Somali count for 2011 is 65 youth, far below the 6173 youth who are identified in the ODE student records. We now can assess the size of the undercount contained within the ACS, in comparison with the ODE data records.

2011 Estimates	Source	Method applied	Somali counts for ages 5 to 17 via two different methods	Size of Undercount
Youth aged 5 to 17	ODE 2011	Tally of students speaking Somali languages	617	=617-65 =552 youth =89.4% undercounted
Disaggregating Somali ACS count by age of population (5 to 17 only)	ACS 2009, adjusted to 2011	Using Somali ancestry tables for 2009, disaggregating by age tables and estimates, and then calculating 2011 projections based on fertility rates	65	

Sources: Data from ODE student files, and American Community Survey, 2008.

In summary, this method determines a large undercount for the Somali youth community in Multnomah county. The size of this undercount is **89.4%**. Missing from these figures will be Somali youth between the ages of 5 and 17 who reside in the region but who are not in the public school system. We anticipate this number to be relatively small and have not attempted to factor in this omission. We also do not know if the size of this undercount has an age bias, or if the undercount is of a similar magnitude in other age categories. We do know from published research that younger people (particularly infants and those under 3 years of age) are more likely to be undercounted than those who are older. We also do not know if the Somali community undercount is reflective of patterns of non-participation across the African community; we do believe that the pattern is likely to extend across the community.

#### **Method #2: Community Survey of Census 2010 Non-Participants**

In summer and early fall 2011, our research team designed a survey to respond to two questions: Did you participate in Census 2010? Did someone else include you in their response to the survey?

Staff with Africa House administered this survey attaching it to the larger African Community Survey that was conducted as part of this research report. They asked clients and community members to complete the survey. It was thus administered within a culturally-specific organization by members of the African community. Such conditions were likely to increase the response rate as well as the willingness of community members to define themselves accurately.

These survey questions were completed by 70 community members, of whom 28 (or 40.0%) said they did not complete the report nor were they included in someone else's return. Only one person was unsure if they were included in someone else's response (although the person did know they did not complete the form themselves). This response was not incorporated in our analysis. We thus have a 40% undercount of the African community in Census 2010 for the adult population.

Given that the formal population for the African adult community is 68.2% of the total African population, the American Community Survey for 2011 shows the total African population to be at 11,703. Applying this percentage who are estimated to be adults<sup>72</sup> we find that 7,981 adults to be the official count. Applying our 40% undercount level to this figure, we determine that the "community-verified population count" is 11,174 African adults.

### Final Calculations of the African Undercount

The African community has used two different methods to determine the size of the population for youth and for adults (respectively) drawing from the best-available methods to determine our community's size. Here is a summary of this calculation:

Portion of African Community	Official Count (ACS 2011)	Percentage of Undercount	Community-Verified Count
Children & Youth (under 18)	3,722	89.4%	7,049
Adults (18 and over)	7,981	40.0%	11,174
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,703</b>		<b>18,223</b>
<b>Size of Undercount</b>	<b>55.7%</b>		

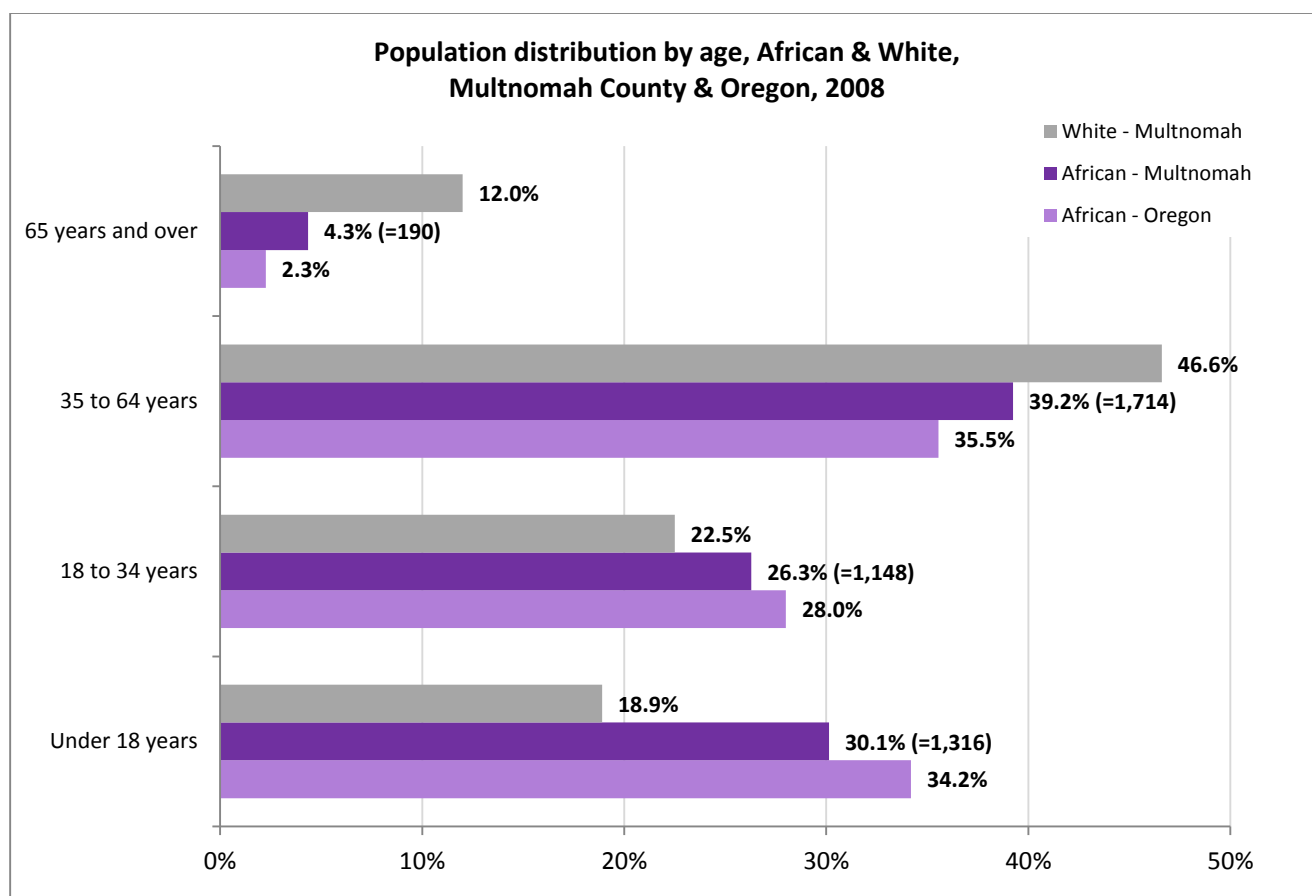
The final calculation methods reveal undercounts of 89.4% and 40.0% respectively, that when applied to the specific age grouping on which they were based, results in a community-validated population count of 18,223 Africans in Multnomah county in 2011.

At this point in time, the Coalition of Communities of Color is advocating for increased recognition of these community-verified population counts and for their inclusion in policy practice. To this end, a set of experts in developing such counts has met to discuss this work (for all communities of color in Multnomah county) and their feedback is now being used to inform our next steps. Look to the Coalition's website for updates on this process and for details on how these counts are being both improved and how they are influencing policy practice.

### Age Distribution and Family Status

The African immigrant and refugee community is very young, and there are very few elderly community members. While this is a feature of the recentness of their arrival to Multnomah county, it is also a feature that helps explain lower incomes and higher poverty rates (as illustrated later in this section). As community members age, they typically accumulate housing equity and savings, and these assets are passed to younger members of the community through inheritance and gifts. Without this legacy, the community will take a long time to build equity. This is particularly true as we integrate knowledge about the USA in the current era. Savings rates are negligible in today's era where typical savings during the past 20 years have deteriorated to zero. Today, we look back and highlight how lucky families were when they were able to save significantly. Today, saving income is near to impossible, particularly for newcomer communities who have few elderly to pass on inheritances to them, and where high poverty rates and unemployment negate their ability to save.

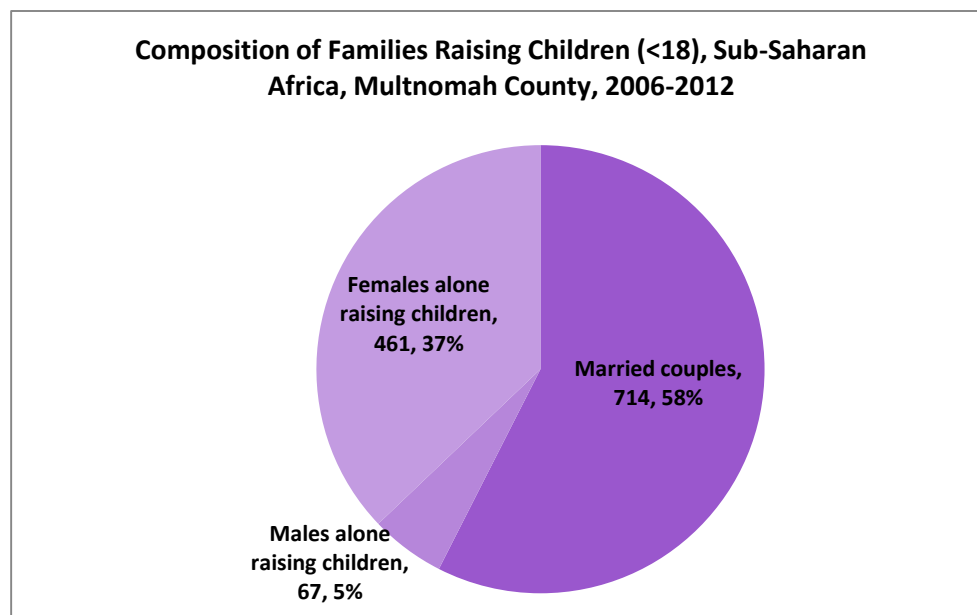




Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008.

The net impact of these characteristics is that African immigrants and refugees are likely to remain unable to accumulate wealth and unable to fortify their children through passing on of such assets – the same challenge faced by other communities of color that have kept their wealth levels low, but deepened by absence of elder people who have been able to accumulate some assets through their lives. The recentness of this community’s arrival to the USA, coupled with a very youthful age profile means that the community will face deep threats to wealth creation avenues. While this is a tough situation in Multnomah county, it is worse when Oregon’s population is considered as a whole, for the community’s profile is even more youthful.

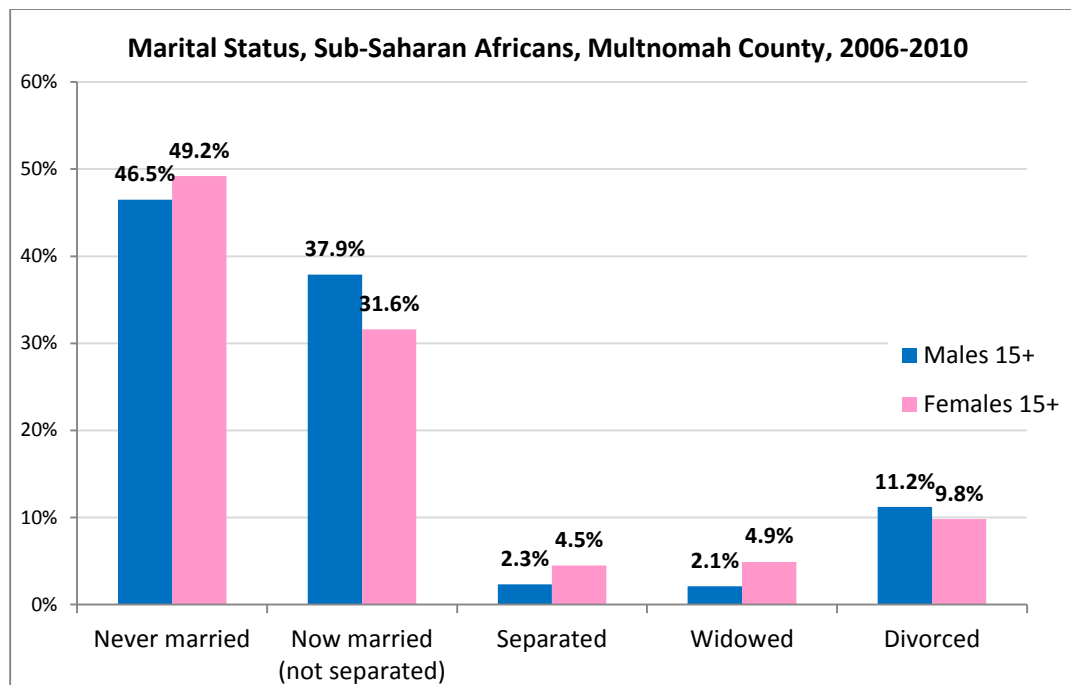
Those living in families make up the majority of the community’s population, which for the sub-Saharan community is 58.7% of all households.<sup>73</sup> Within that population, the majority live in married couple families and the remainder are either women raising children on their own, and a much lesser, though still significant, number of men are raising children on their own. The chart below illustrates this composition.



Source: American Community Survey 2006-2010.

The high number of women raising children on their own illustrates the need for services to be available to support such women's economic and social needs. These women are working very hard to meet the needs of their families. With a poverty level of 70%, and an even higher level of 100% when considering only families raising children under 5 years old, economic supports are essential. Avenues to make employment more accessible, child care more available, schooling more convenient and lower cost, and transit more accessible are all important for a community so stretched by poverty. These recommendations are included throughout the report, and their importance amplified in this section.

We also know that almost half of sub-Saharan Africans have not been married, and that more women have become separated or widowed, but a roughly equivalent number (with men) have been divorced.



Source: American Community Survey 2006-2010.

The community is differentially impacted by changes in marital status, with women being less likely to be partnered with men, and more heavily impacted by the dissolution of marriage and by the death of a partner. Suggested from the data would be more services for women raising children on their own, and (perhaps) struggling with the dissolution of relationships and the death of a spouse.

A final point on the patterns of giving birth among African women: often talked about are patterns of unmarried women giving birth, and the array of policy initiatives that might encourage such women to delay giving birth until they are married. This is not an issue for the African community – at least in the area of disparities with White women.

Fertility Rate, 2006-2010	White	Sub-Saharan African
Percentage of births to unmarried women	27.4%	17.6%

Source: American Community Survey 2006-2010.

As the above data show, our sub-Saharan African community has almost half as many new births to unmarried women as opposed to the White community.

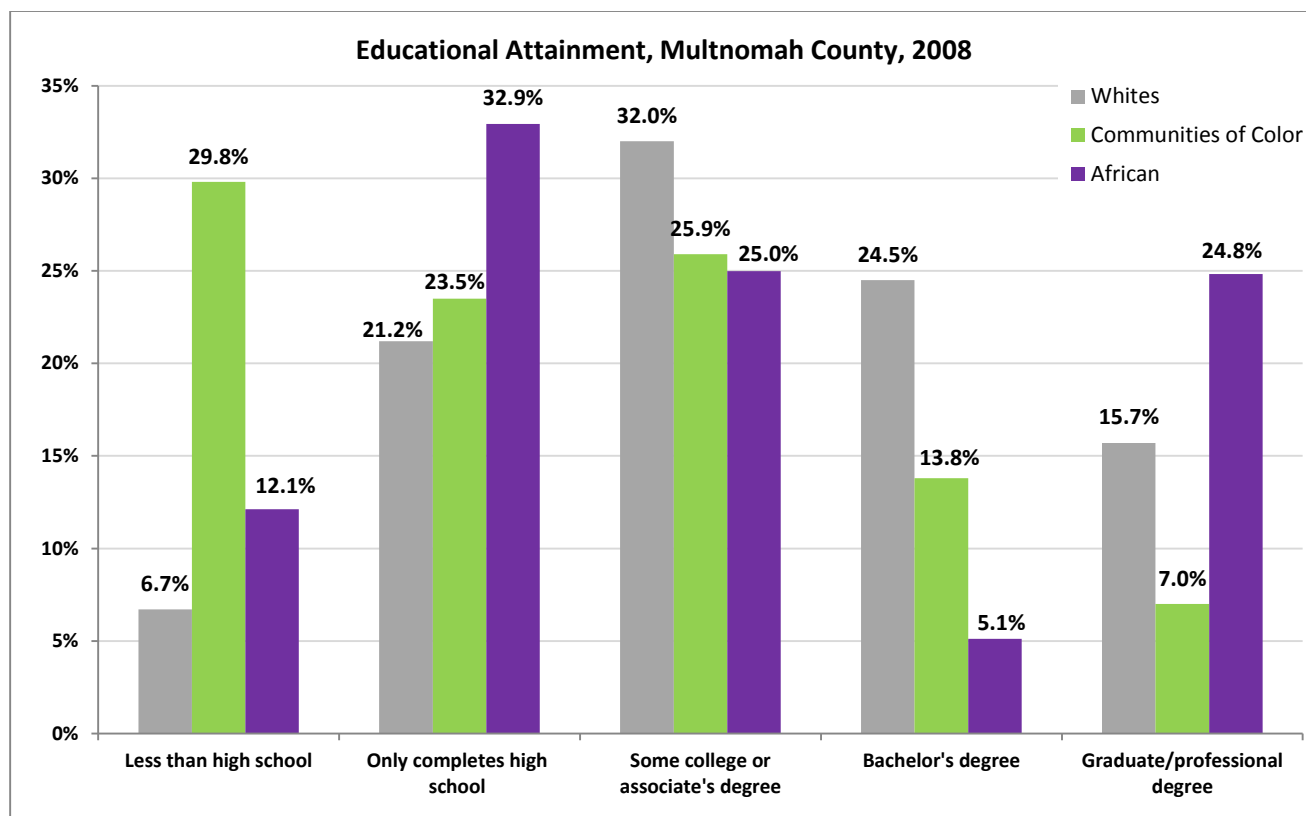
In conclusion, the African community is young, with a high percentage of families and the greatest number being married couple families. The stress of family dissolution is having a stronger impact on women, and suggests the need for specialized services to support these women as they raise families, with the majority living in poverty. This is a community not challenged in the same way as the White community with a high level who are unmarried.

## Education

Education is deeply valued among this African community, as it is with all communities of color. Indeed, on average, the African community has very high levels of accomplishment in education. In many cases, we have arrived in the USA already credentialed and academically accomplished, and our high education levels are a result of investments in higher education in our home countries. We also, however, have double the rates of Whites of those who did not complete high school. We call this a “bi-modal pattern” of education where there are two pronounced trends occurring at the same time – a large number who are highly educated and a large number who have not graduated high school, or who have only gotten high school diplomas.

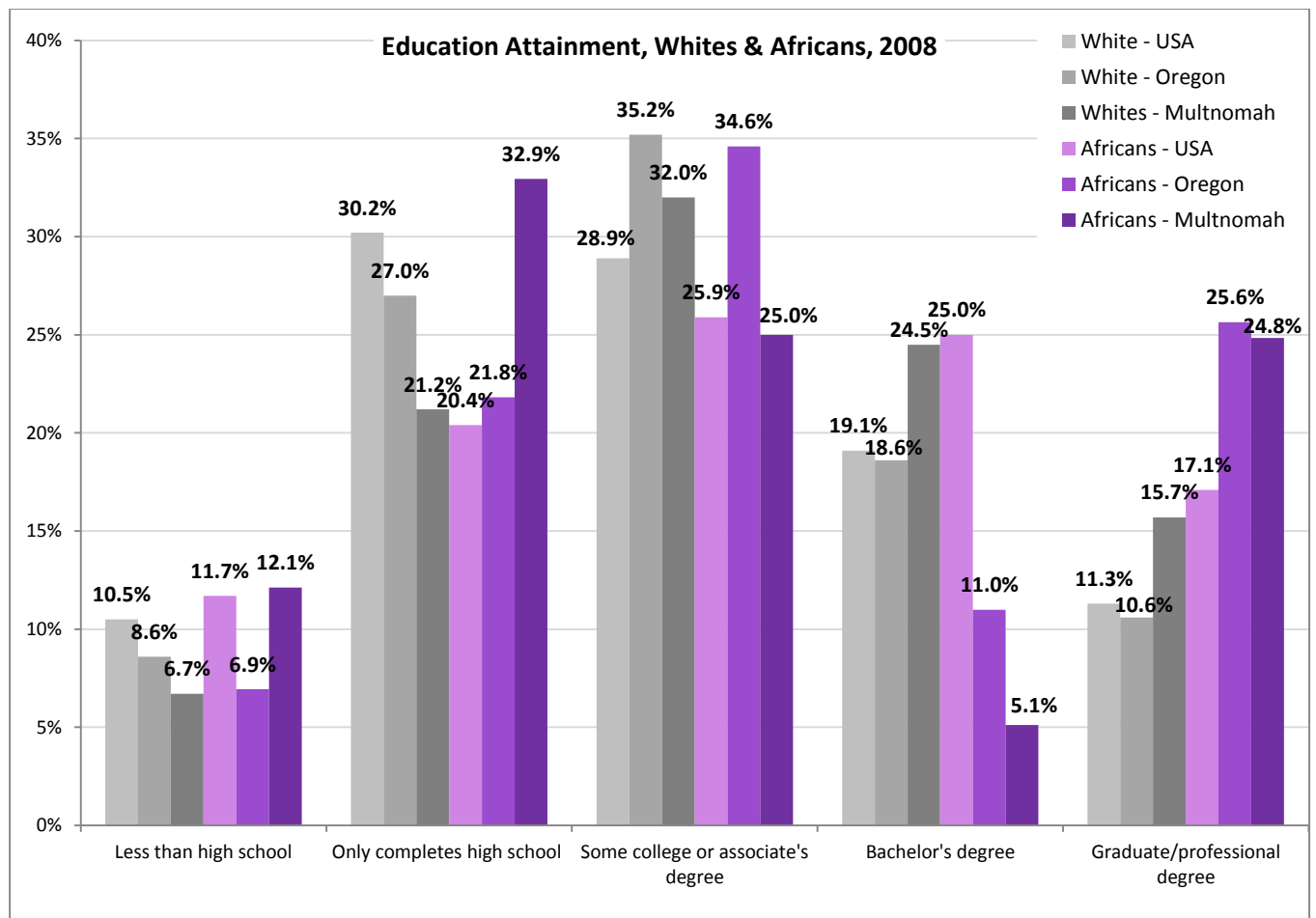
Africans in Multnomah county arrive here as both immigrants and refugees. In many cases, refugees have spent numerous years in refugee camps where we have not been in school, or have learned only rudimentary literacy levels. The bi-modal distribution of education is understood to be the result of refugees being most challenged through education, and immigrants who arrived in the USA already credentialed at high levels of education. Note that there will be variations within this analysis, and some refugee arrivals have been successful in higher education – but such progress is very difficult as will be described below.

As an entire community, we as Africans are proud of the academic credentials and resources among us. We as a community have attained the highest level of education at the Masters and professional degree levels of any community, including Whites. Our post-graduate and professional degree levels are almost four times higher than Whites. Such is also true at the national level, where Africans are recognized to hold the highest level of education among all immigrant groups. Overall, educational attainment is a strong asset for us. Yet, it is far from the full picture of our economic and social prospects.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008.

Compared with communities of color as a entirety, our profile in education is much stronger. Fewer of us have been unsuccessful in public school, and many more of us are gaining degrees in higher education. When we look at the national and local trends, the local context becomes clearer. Below we can see that our particular forte (compared with Africans elsewhere) is in graduate and professional degrees, and certainly not in bachelor's degrees. We also, compared with Oregon-wide data, have a much worse situation for those at the lowest education levels, with a total of 55% of Africans in Multnomah county having only high school or less – while Africans across Oregon (including Multnomah county) have less than 30% of the community at these levels. What explains for this difference is that our refugees are concentrated in Multnomah county, and this is where our settlement services are available. In fact, refugees receiving income supports for the 8 months of eligibility are not allowed to move outside the region.

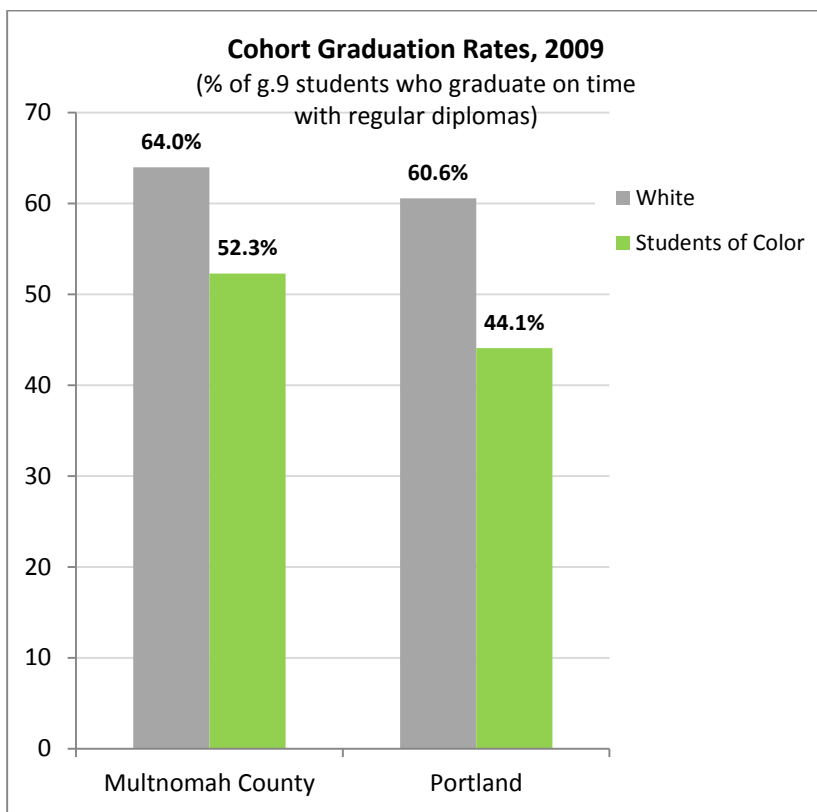


Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008 for Multnomah county data. Additional data from the American Community Survey, 2008. Note that the data for Africans – USA are those who were born in Africa as opposed to our local and Oregon measures who are those who claim African as our primary ancestry.

More, however, is illuminated in the above chart. The differential experiences facing local Whites and local Africans are significant. As Whites move closer to Multnomah county, they have an increased likelihood of graduating high school, coming close to halving this likelihood compared with Whites across the USA. So too is there a greater likelihood of moving beyond high school education – and for Whites, academic success is much more likely here than the average White person in the USA and in Oregon. This is not a trend born out for Africans – we are less likely to be successful locally than nationally, in all areas but for graduate and professional degrees, and it is likely that these were brought with us into the USA.

The current functioning of the education system is not well captured above, as these charts reflect the full attainment of everyone over 25 years of age. The current situation is best reflected in what is called the “cohort graduation rate” that shows the number of students who graduate with a regular diploma after four years of high school. Here we see low performance for all students – and even worse data for

students of color. Only one-in-two students of color are graduating from high school on time, while approximately two-in-three White students are achieving these graduation levels.



Source: Author's calculations of data from the Oregon Department of Education.

We do not, however, have these data for African students. No information is collected on the status of our students as a distinct group within the larger category of “African American” (with the exception of the data we have tallied and analyzed ourselves on achievement scores for standardized tests). We anticipate, with concern, that our local graduation rates are worse than the averages for communities of color. The reasons for our concerns are based on both policy and practice: when we arrive in the USA, we are placed in classes depending on our age as opposed to our academic skills. This is typically far above our education level, particularly when we have been in refugee camps for any length of time. As one community member says,

*The greatest challenge is that people say, “You’re 15, so you must be in grade 11”... when you’ve missed education for the last 4 to 5 years. So the system has totally failed to create a bridge to where people should be. They come in and are expected to adapt. Just adapt. Now you are going to go to school and this is the way it is.” They are not able to be ultimately be successful... they don’t go any further. They stop going to school or they don’t do well.*

We also face unique problems due to the pressures to be paid. Whether through our parents not valuing education (particularly if they are unschooled or illiterate themselves), or through economic necessity when parents are unable to find work or find work that pays a living wage, or through what sometimes

seems to be enchantment with the USA culture of consumption, many of our children leave school too early. This tightens their economic prospects to levels of permanent poverty: *“it is very hard to see our children forced to choose between their futures and survival and know there is little we can do to protect them when we are suffering so much.”*

Our progress through school is difficult – beginning with placement issues and inadequate supports, and deepened by English language challenges. For this report, we have been able to prepare a detailed analysis of the achievement gap by language. Student records require two entries concerning language: first language and language spoken at home. Where parents entered that their children spoke a language other than English in either of these two categories, we extracted those data and tallied them by the specific language. In the chart below, we illustrate the achievement gaps in Reading and Literature, and in Math – reporting the data in a composite of the six largest school boards in Multnomah county. This is the first time such data have been made available and this is an important addition to our collective knowledge base of the performance of local students in the African community. We look forward to more disaggregation of data, and are eager to see cohort graduation rates, discipline rates, dropout rates, special education and free/reduced lunch information also being shared in this manner. The African community is also interested in tracking these students onto post-high school experiences, and to seeing entry into higher education and success in these settings.

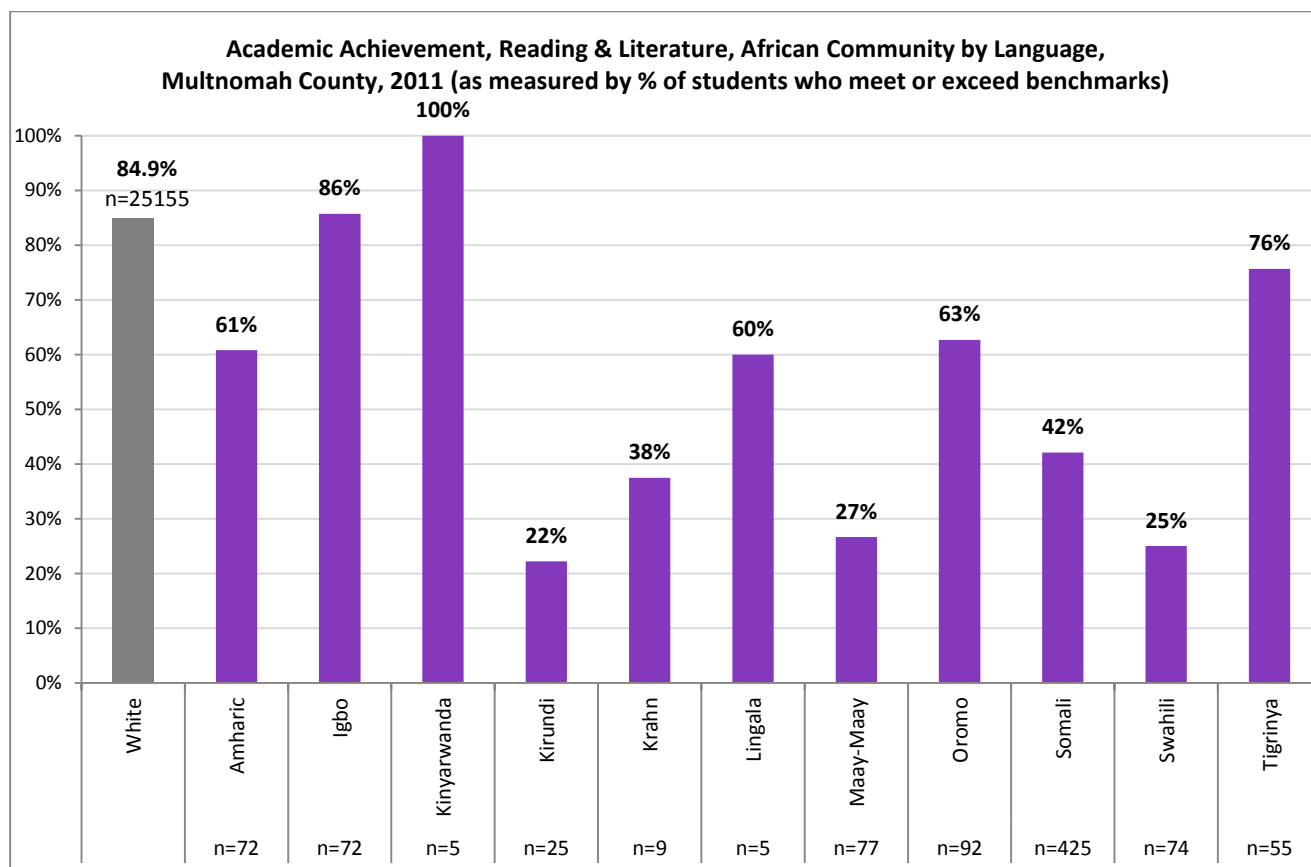
Several data explanations are needed to clarify these charts. Only six school boards across Multnomah county are included in this research: Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, Portland and Reynolds. Unfortunately, the remaining two boards (Corbett and Riverdale) have not shared their data. Please also note that there is some uneven reporting of students across different school boards as school testing only occurs in grades higher than 2 and at least one board (Parkrose) only submitted data where grades were required to be sent to the Oregon Department of Education. In addition, all communities with less than five students cannot be reported due to privacy issues. Finally, we provide the following table to assist in translating languages to countries of origin – note that there is some variation in these categories as country boundaries do not completely align with the languages.

Language	Country of Language
Amharic	Ethiopia
Igbo	Nigeria, Equatorial Ginea, Cameroon
Kinyarwanda	Rwanda, Uganda
Kirundi	Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda
Krahn	Ivory Coast, Liberia
Lingala	DR of Congo, Republic of Congo
Maay-Maay	Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya
Oromo	Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia
Somali	Somalia
Swahili	Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, DR of Congo, Malawi
Tigrinya	Eritrea, Ethiopia



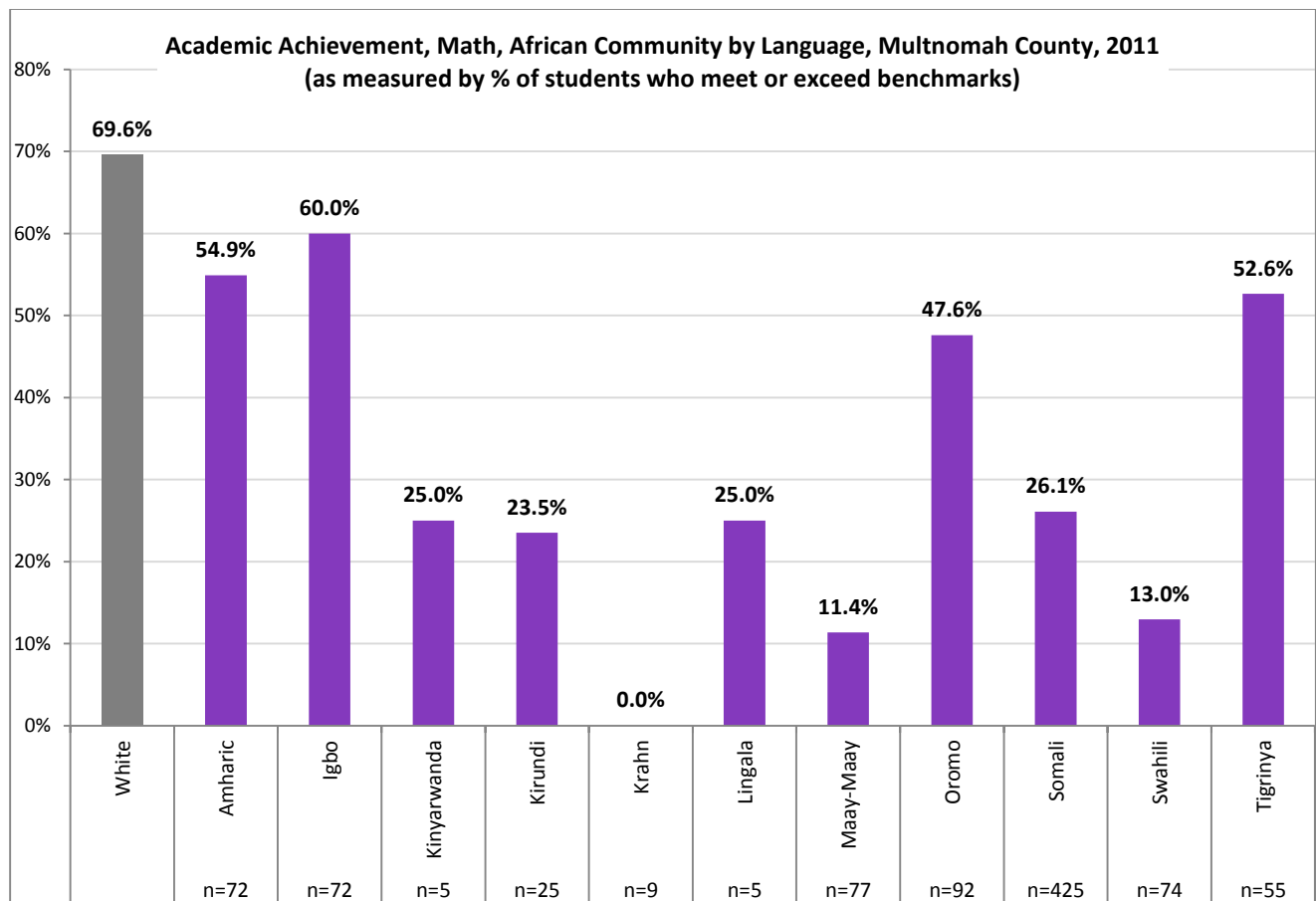
This is, we are pleased to announce, the first time that language-based achievement data has been made available and the African community deeply affirms the importance of these data.

Please note that in the below charts, the researchers have measured achievement only by those who took the tests. There are large numbers of African students who did not take these tests (on average of 28% in both reading and math, with fluctuations as high as 60% in one community) and this is a matter for exploration with the school boards.



Source: Data collected from six School Boards by Dr. Pat Burk, Portland State University, and tallied by Myste French.

The performance of those in the African community is of deep concern: all but two communities are performing at levels worse than Whites, with three communities facing scores in the area of only one-in-four youth performing adequately, and another two communities are at levels worse than one-in-two. When we turn to math scores (below), performance levels drop precipitously and all communities fare worse than Whites. Slipping scores mean that a total of seven communities have scores at or worse than only one-in-four students making the benchmark grades in this standardized test.



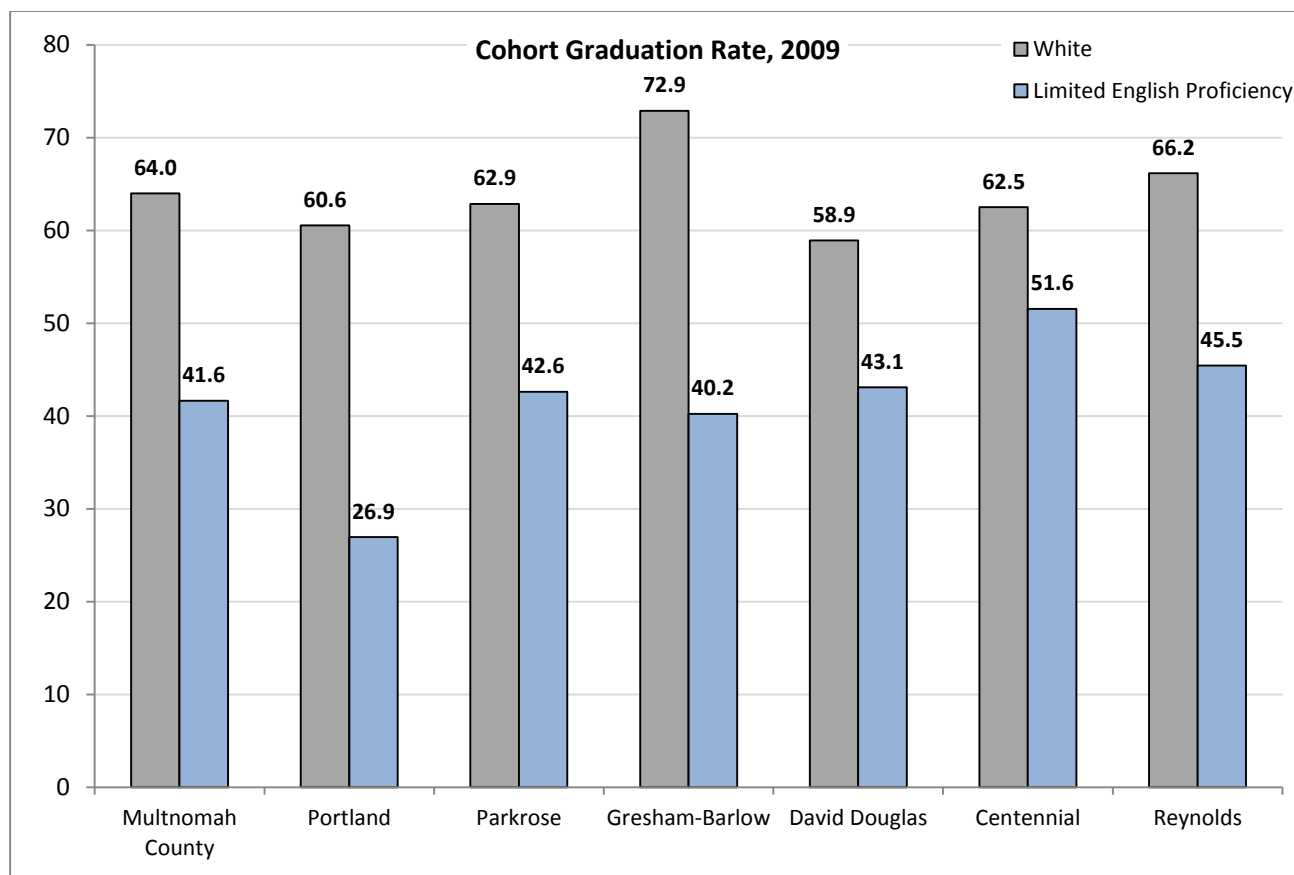
Source: Data collected from six School Boards by Dr. Pat Burk, Portland State University, and tallied by Myste French.

Concerns mount when looking at the details of the above charts. There are many communities who see more than ½ of their children and youth fail to meet benchmarks established by the State of Oregon. In the chart below, student achievement levels have been averaged across both Math and English. While the African community is concerned for any student who is not excelling in school, it is a shock to see that almost half (45%, or 6 of 11) of African communities have at least one-in-three students fail to meet minimum benchmarks reflecting adequate school performance.

2011 Ranking	Language- Based Community	Mean Score for Reading & Math
1	Krahn	19%
2	Swahili	19%
3	Maay-Maay	19%
4	Kirundi	23%
5	Somali	34%
6	Lingala	43%
7	Oromo	55%
8	Amharic	58%
9	Kinyarwanda	63%
10	Tigrinya	64%
11	Igbo	73%

Source: Data collected from six School Boards by Dr. Pat Burk, Portland State University, and tallied by Myste French.

Many community members are deeply concerned about the quality of language programs in the school which aim to help youth who do not have strong English language skills. Below are the graduation rates for the county and in school boards in the region. While graduation rates for these ESL students (here called “limited English proficiency”) include all learners in the program, Somali youth make up 6% of these students, and may make up a significant portion of the 17% of students who are identified as “other.”<sup>74</sup>



Source: Author's calculations of data from Oregon Department of Education, 2009. Note the LEP population is only partially African – likely about 10% of this total number.

It is important to remember that ESL is not all that is required to address children's learning needs. The following comment from one community member shows the failing of incomplete systems: *"What about kids who can't even read or write, and you throw them into ESL?"*

Stories told by those in our community add more complexity to our children's academic success. Students are not receiving supports from the school to achieve success. Teachers do not understand our children's distress or our culture, or the conditions that gave rise to our move from Africa to the USA. Says one community member:

*With the system here you always meet someone who is foreign and you are struggling to build that relationship – connecting is hard with them... this fails us. We don't have people we can related to and connect to.*

Parents, too, struggle with understanding the US school system, and this is a problem not unique for refugee parents or those who struggle with literacy:

*There is no parent engagement. Youth get so frustrated and think that their families don't care. Many come from countries where once your child is registered in school, it is the role of the teacher*

*and the school to help kids success. But it not like that in the USA. We also struggle with there being not enough culturally-specific services.*

Prevailing patterns of ignorance (lack of knowledge) can sometimes deteriorate to isolation from the classroom culture and from peers. In most situations, our children definitely feel like outsiders even when they are inside their own classrooms. Further deterioration can turn into arrogance for teachers and school staff in presuming that African students are stupid, uncultured, and even subhuman. There are daily indignities that our children suffer at the hands of school staff and peers. It is worth remembering that 26.5% of grade 8 students in Multnomah county reported they had experienced racial harassment either at school or on their way to school in the prior 30 days, with this number dropping only slightly to 24.7% for grade 11 students.<sup>75</sup>

A second level of complexity exists because many parents are not able to help with homework – a problem created by the school system which expects increasing amounts of homework to be done in order to compensate for burgeoning class sizes that is partially created by growing emphasis on standardized tests. Particularly for refugees, who are often illiterate having been rural farmers forced to flee violence and persecution, challenges exist in supporting children’s learning:

*For poor farmers from the Congo who are illiterate, you may have a child who is learning to be literate. You know they can’t help with their child’s homework. People who have a child are made to feel stupid because there is an expectation that parents will help with homework.*

Strong community supports would help alleviate this sense of inadequacy that has been induced by the school system. While such parents are typically pleased to see their children get educated, sometimes the angst and shame is so deep that they withdraw and sometimes they pull their children from school as well.

Our communities need also to address a deeply ingrained classist culture – which can be sometimes deeper than that of the USA. We acknowledge that we hold individual aspirations that are constrained or supported by our culture – and we can limit ourselves by determining that we are not worthy enough of higher education. Self-defeating attitudes can thwart us:

*“I am not able to get beyond that”... if you are at that level, in this class, then this is where you’ll always be. If people don’t believe they are able to do something, they are afraid to go further... Not everyone has this and some people who have broken this classist and colonialist attitude and have moved beyond can be really successful.*

At the same time, many in our community can simply become envious of those with more than they, with money to pay remittances to their families and communities in Africa, and with a sense of being paid for one’s work – even if wages are low. This too is part of our culture (perhaps a culture more common to humanity than to Africans particularly), and it stands in the way of staying in school and attending higher education. For a community who has struggled so hard and experienced so much trauma, the idea of waiting longer to get a paycheck is sometimes simply too hard.

On the other side, we are a continent of people who are much more deeply oriented to collectivism and shared concern for each other. This is a strength that allows us to extend our homes, our incomes and our compassion for each other in ways that support our ability to get by when things are tough. The various African communities have faced generations and centuries of difficult times – we remain invested in each other’s collective well being.

## Recommendations

Education reform is an urgent issue for our families and children. While data shows we have high levels of university degrees, we also have high levels of those who have not graduated high school. We also believe, but do not have the “hard” data (yet) to back this up, that our children are leaving school in high numbers, departing from an unwelcoming environment which has been very difficult and holds little prospect for reform. Here are our top seven priorities for education reform:

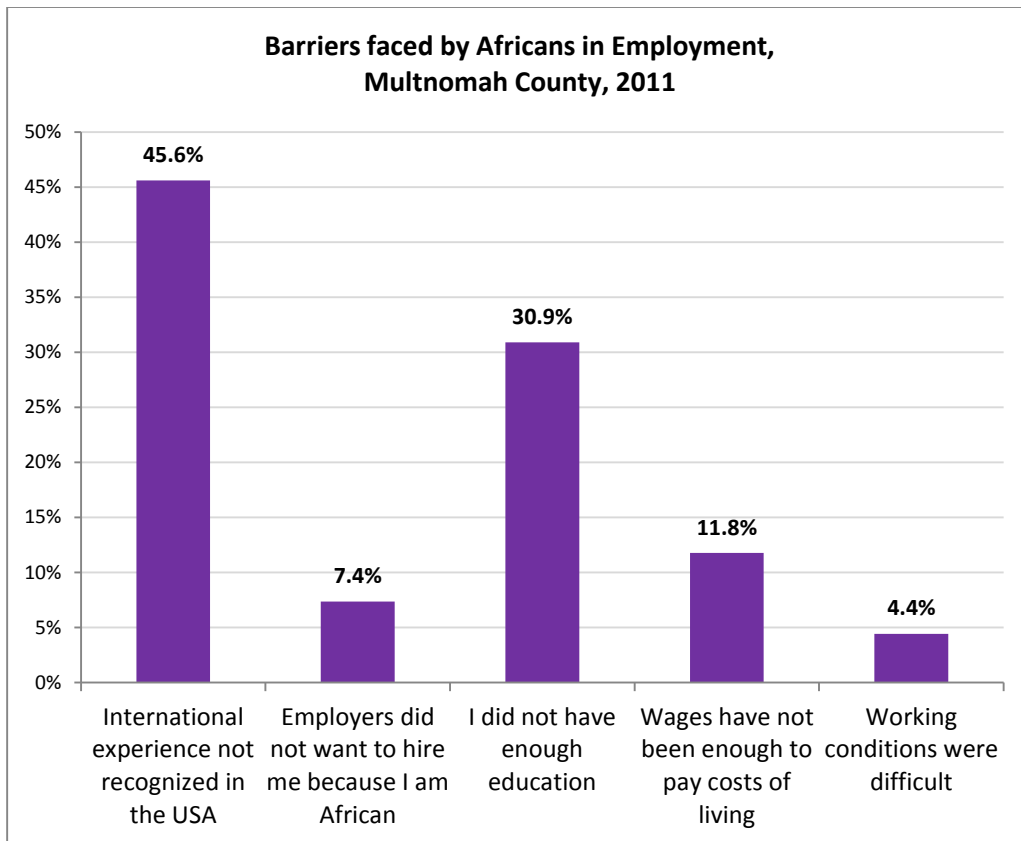
1. We aim to end the inappropriate mainstreaming of our children and youth. We need to make an intensive year of support available for our youth, and to sustain them in a culturally-specific environment without the pressure to fit into a specific grade. This would enable more individualized supports that would allow our youth to narrow the learning gap and to gain essential knowledge to enable their success in school. Says one community member:  
*The school needs to get a real understanding of where those children are and provide an intensive program... have them come in and spend a year in an intensive assimilation program and then at the end of the year you can enter them into a system where they can be successful. They’d have the skills to be successful.*
2. Accurate assessments of the achievements of students who come to the USA are needed. It is essential to determine the exact differences, in terms of credits, between various diplomas and certificates. Often, African youth receive no recognition of their prior achievements and need to repeat entire programs rather than simply take courses where they need to make more gains. The existing practice of invalidating prior knowledge contributes to students leaving school early.
3. We need accurate and routine information on how our children and youth are doing in school. Accordingly, we ask all school boards and the Oregon Department of Education to adopt the Coalition of Communities of Color’s *Research Protocol* that will allow for the progress of our children to be monitored as a composite group, rather than being rolled into the data for African Americans.
4. Our children need to enter schools where teachers and staff look like them and understand their culture and the conditions of their arrival in the USA. Improved recruiting and hiring of African teachers must be made a priority, as well as equity efforts inside each school board to retain and promote these teachers through the ranks. The expectation should reach into higher education and expanded recruitment and retention efforts are needed in Faculties of Education.

5. All teachers who engage with our children need to understand the history, the challenges and the conditions in which our children encounter their world. Understanding will provide an important link to reducing the isolation and vulnerability of our students.
6. Many adults among us have experience in providing formal education. We press our school boards to build rapid systems for recognizing African professional and experiential credentials so that we can be hired into the schools to both increase racial equity in hiring, and also to create a more welcoming, affirming and culturally-responsive academic environment.
7. Finally, many of our children are in Limited English Proficiency programs. It is imperative that this program be of the highest quality and that we as parents and consumers be assured that all school boards will meet federal regulations in LEP programs.

### **Challenges for Adults with International Degrees**

For most adults among us, our degrees are not recognized in the USA. This is very frustrating, and it has a massive impact on our employment prospects, our poverty rates and our incomes. At home, when we obtained master's degrees, this was a path that always led to good work.

The portion of our community that faces challenges in having credentials recognized in the USA is large: at levels of almost one-in-two educated and credentialed adults. Our African Community Survey showed that 46% of community members face these challenges. Below is a more full description of the nature of challenges faced in employment, showing a troubling convergence of barriers including overt racism, inadequate wages, and most dominant is the lack of recognition of international experience. Fully half of the community members faced employment challenges, and below are profiled the specific challenges members of the African community face.



Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

If one arrives here with a degree in medicine, it takes about three years to regain recognition for these degrees: one needs to take the MCAT and redo licensing tests – before one can apply for a residency position. And the story gets worse:

*And then you have to find someone who is willing to take a foreign medical person which is a small percentage. Then these programs are in the very poorest of places and it is discriminatory. [We go places] where no one wants to be, on the border with Mexico. Our graduates are not getting into programs at OHSU or Harvard even when they could be the brightest person in their country. You come here and you are treated as though you are an orderly in a hospital... I know a guy who is a doctor who is now drawing blood in a laboratory. This is demeaning for people. There is a sense of hopelessness.*

The impact of undervaluing African degrees is a broad and deep economic and social loss for both Africans and for the US nation. Among Africans, there is a pronounced inability to turn high educations into high incomes. As charts above illustrate, Africans hold the highest number of degrees per capita of any group explored throughout this research into Whites and communities of color. Yet Africans hold the worst child poverty rate of all communities of color and one of the worst poverty rates among families. Incomes are devastatingly low at half those of Whites and one-third lower than the average among communities of color. For us, low incomes, high poverty and very high education are a pronounced feature of our lives – and this is very counter-intuitive for conventions that good educations



lift people out of poverty and are an essential building block for economic progress. For the African community, this is not true.

What is happening? It is an unsettling combination of factors that is of grave concern for us, and ought to be of concern for the nation. First, there is outright rejection of our degrees as equivalent to those gained in the USA. While we recognize that it may be important to have some transition training to ensure our credentials are equivalent, and that we understand the US context for practice, such is not provided for us. Rather, our credentials are rejected on the basis of an outdated notion of US imperialism and an assumption that foreign education can never be as good as that in the USA.

The USA has creamed us from African nations, enticing those who are “professionals holding advanced degrees,” “persons of exceptional ability in sciences, arts or business,” “skilled workers and professionals, and investors with at least \$1 million to spend in the USA.”<sup>76</sup> Even if there are no billboards in Africa promising fame and fortune for those who migrate to the USA, implicit in these criteria is the idea that one’s education and experience will be valued in the USA.

It is in the interest of the nation to make it easy to gain equivalency recognition for those of us with foreign credentials and experience. Bringing degrees and experience with us means we can forgo expenditures of government revenues towards our education. If the total annual cost of a community college certificate is \$14,603, a university degree is \$36,725 (includes tuition, all government contributions, institution enterprise and endowments) per student per year in a public institution and almost double that (at \$66,354) at a private institution,<sup>77</sup> then there are huge investments saved in bringing immigrants and refugees to the USA who are already credentialed. Averaging the three, we end up with an approximate cost for four years of education that is approximately \$157,000!

Notice the juxtaposition of this value-added opportunity cost (savings for the USA because such expenditures do not have to be spent), the imbalance with the mere pittance of supports provided to immigrants and refugees, and the waste created by the nation when these degrees are not recognized in the USA. It seems a colossal loss of economic benefit to the country. At the same time, we struggle in unimaginable ways when our community cannot regain our professions and the respect and income earning ability that comes with these credentials. It is not uncommon to find that our esteemed community leaders in Africa are reduced to cleaning toilets. The reach of this problem has become common knowledge as many now recognize that their cab drivers are likely to be immigrants and refugees holding doctorates and masters degrees.

And still, there is no action. Even with skills shortages and rural difficulties in attracting professions in the health field, there is no action. Other nations have recently built such programs into their economic development strategy and Canada, the UK, Australia and Europe have initiatives that have outstripped the USA. Of note, the most recent posting of centralized information on the US Department of Education website is from 2007 and most of the links are no longer active. Rather than an affirming and welcoming document, the opening text reads as follows:

There are over 50 professional fields that are licensed in all U.S. states and territories, of which a majority require some formal postsecondary education or training as a prerequisite for entry. Not all of these professions have specialized credential evaluation services, nor do all of them have procedures for recognizing non-U.S. qualifications.<sup>78</sup>

Adding insult to injury, we cannot get jobs with our African credentials. Even our years of work experience in the field is not recognized. Here the pressure on us to get an income immediately is high – and among refugees it is legislated. When we are receiving income support from the state for the first 8 months of our arrival, we are required to accept the first job offered to us, even if we hold a degree in medicine and the job being offered is as a janitor. We end up taking jobs that do not reflect our experience, our needs or our identity. This is worse than humiliating:

*I was something... why is it that these people can't see me? I was an important person to my family, in my community, I contributed. I contributed to the fabric of the world I lived in, and then I come here and people treat me as though I am something they can just throw away.*

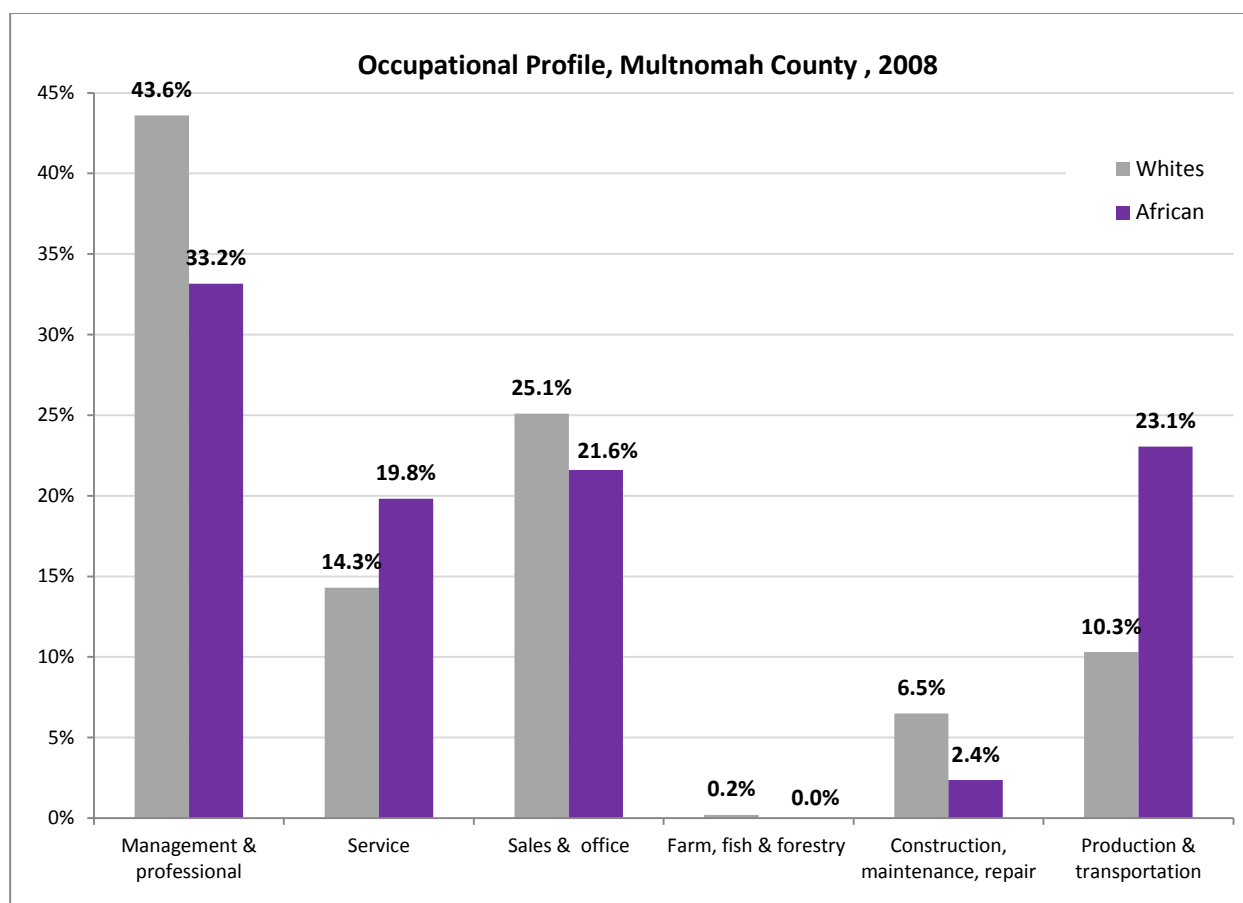
## Recommendations

To the earlier list of seven recommendations in the education arena, we add the following:

8. It is time for a robust, welcoming and easy to access system for recognizing foreign credentials. For the regulated professions, concrete, transparent, appropriate and low-cost equivalence measuring must be made available. It is important to achieve these objectives while being informed by culturally-specific community groups so as to ensure that racial bias and white privilege do not infuse the process. We welcome the creation of a comprehensive initiative in this area and urge that this is made a political priority in Oregon's next legislative session.

## Occupations

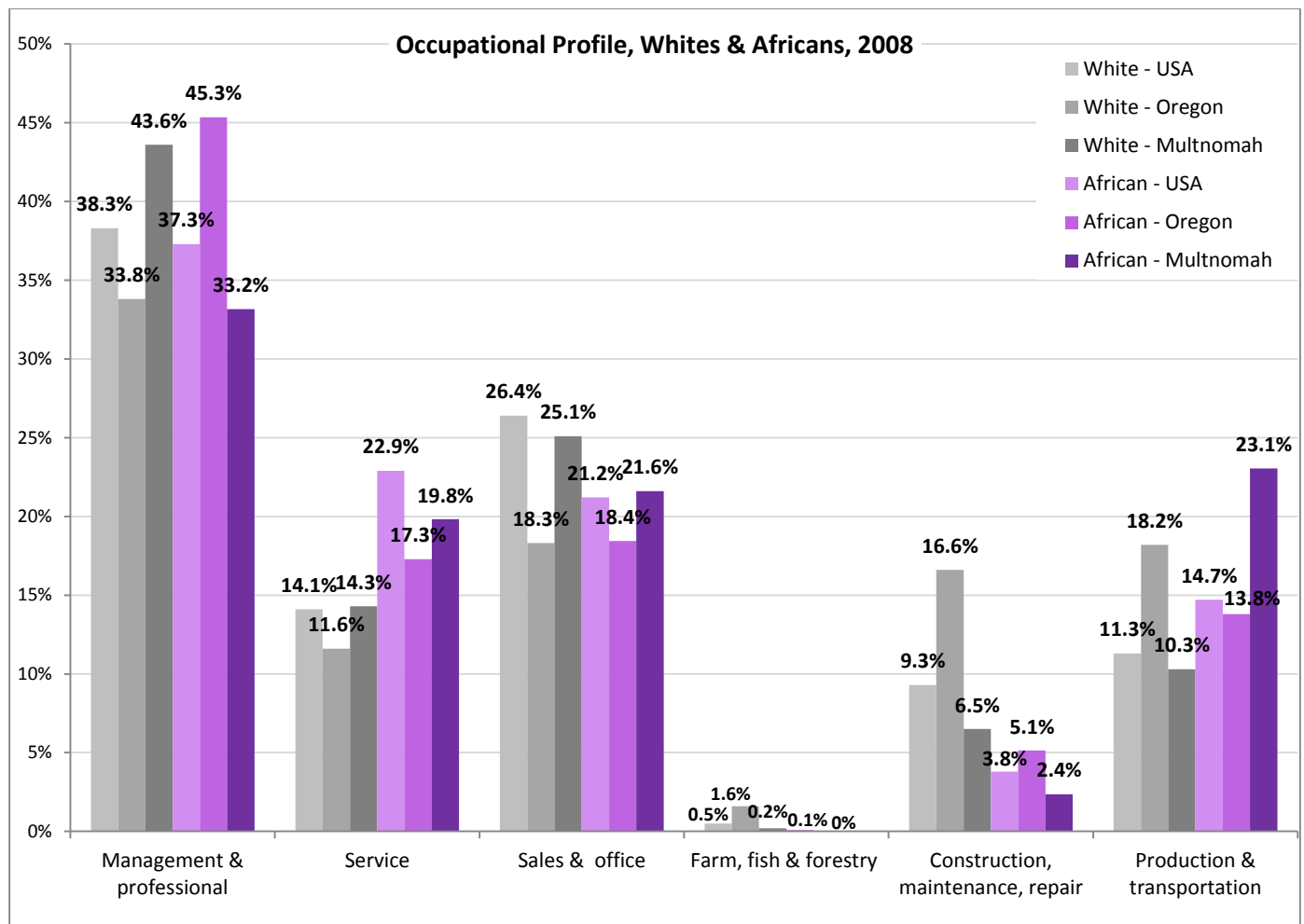
From the text above, it will be no surprise to see the data on occupations. While we hold a huge level of higher education and professional degrees, we do not see this credentialing show up in requisite amounts in our occupational profile. In the chart below, one can see that our degrees do not provide for us decent access to the best jobs – those in the management and professional arena.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008.

What we see is that there is some access to the management and professional jobs arena, but this access falls far below that of Whites. While our educations poise us well for high job profiles, few of us are able to get there. Again, recall that incomes are highest in the management and professional arena and second lowest in the service industry. And while numbers are high in the transportation arena, know that many of these will be driving taxis where incomes are uneven and working conditions very difficult.

Turning now to the composite picture across the nation, we find that Africans are faring better in Oregon (as a composite) than we are in Multnomah county. This is a finding that is complicated to understand, as we typically think that there are better prospects for people of color in an urban area, where racism is usually lessened, and where there is an abundant supply of better occupations, as head offices, and professional services are much more numerous in a metropolitan area. We find, by comparison, that Whites do better here than the USA average and the Oregon average – showing that the conventions are upheld for Whites, and not for Africans.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008 for Multnomah county data. Additional data from the American Community Survey, 2008.

When we narrow our gaze in the above chart to comparing the occupational experience of Oregonians, we see that Africans significantly outperform Whites, with much higher employment in management and professions, and equivalent employment in sales and office. We continue to be over-represented in the service industry but not in the production and transportation arena. It is important to recall the typical incomes for those of these various occupations – and this chart is reproduced below:

Annual Wages, USA, 2008	Whites	Communities of Color
Management and professional	\$54,236	\$50,596
Service	\$25,064	\$23,348
Sales and office	\$32,396	\$30,368
Farming, fishing and forestry	\$22,464	\$18,668
Construction, maintenance & repair	\$38,532	\$34,216
Production & transportation	\$31,720	\$26,624

Source: US Department of Labor, 2009.<sup>79</sup>

We are thus reminded not only of the prime incomes for those in management and professions, and the dismally low incomes for those in service, farming, fishing and forestry (which does not employ our community) and also of those in production and transportation, but also of the pervasive income disparities between Whites and communities of color.

The income disparity is one that our community experiences (as will be detailed below). We have already profiled that our education is not being recognized in the USA. Add to this a number of factors, and we have a “perfect storm” of disadvantage that does not seem to be overcome by increasing the length of time we are in the USA – as the experiences of African Americans reveal. Let us review a number of these factors that deepen our disadvantage: lack of recognition of our prior employment experience, institutional racism, lack of protection of workers’ rights, unpaid training programs, and low unionization rates.

We often arrive with decades of employment experience and yet must begin at the bottom of the employment ladder. As noted already, it is not uncommon to have doctors driving taxi cabs, or lawyers working in janitorial services. Our youth get hired before those who are middle aged. We also often bring outdated technologies with us – and our exposure to higher-order machinery has been limited by the slow entry of industrialization to the African continent, and the emphasis that structural adjustment programs placed on natural resource extraction within our economies. It is not uncommon to have our people gain employment and then lose it within a few days due to lack of familiarity with machinery:

*We placed three workers at the same company: an African, a Cuban and a Russian. The Cuban and the Russian were fine – they use the same machines here as at home, just the language is different. The African [who held a professional degree in the field] ... had never used the tool before. So he couldn’t make it. He has no clue how to work the machine. After three days, he was terminated... I met with the employer... they didn’t have time to train him. There is no time to go back and train for 1 to 2 weeks. They want people who can do it immediately. This is what we face most of the time.*

*There is an African shoe maker. His resume was very strong. We took him to a shoe company. But they use a machine to cut the leather [and he was quickly fired].*

From our standpoint, learning machinery is relatively quick. For the shoe maker, understanding leather, hand cutting and construction prepares him well for success in the shoe company. Learning the machinery was not something the firm was willing to support. This is to the detriment of both our community and the shoe company as well.

While training programs can be an asset to helping bridge these difficulties, they frequently fail with the African community as these opportunities are unpaid and there are considerable pressures for our community members to earn paychecks as quickly as possible – pressures that come from within ourselves (as we receive value from the paychecks we earn) as well as from outside us (with requirements in both the refugee settlement program and in TANF to take jobs that are offered to us).

So too we face pressure within our extended community to get employed as quickly as possible – in order to provide remittances for those back home.

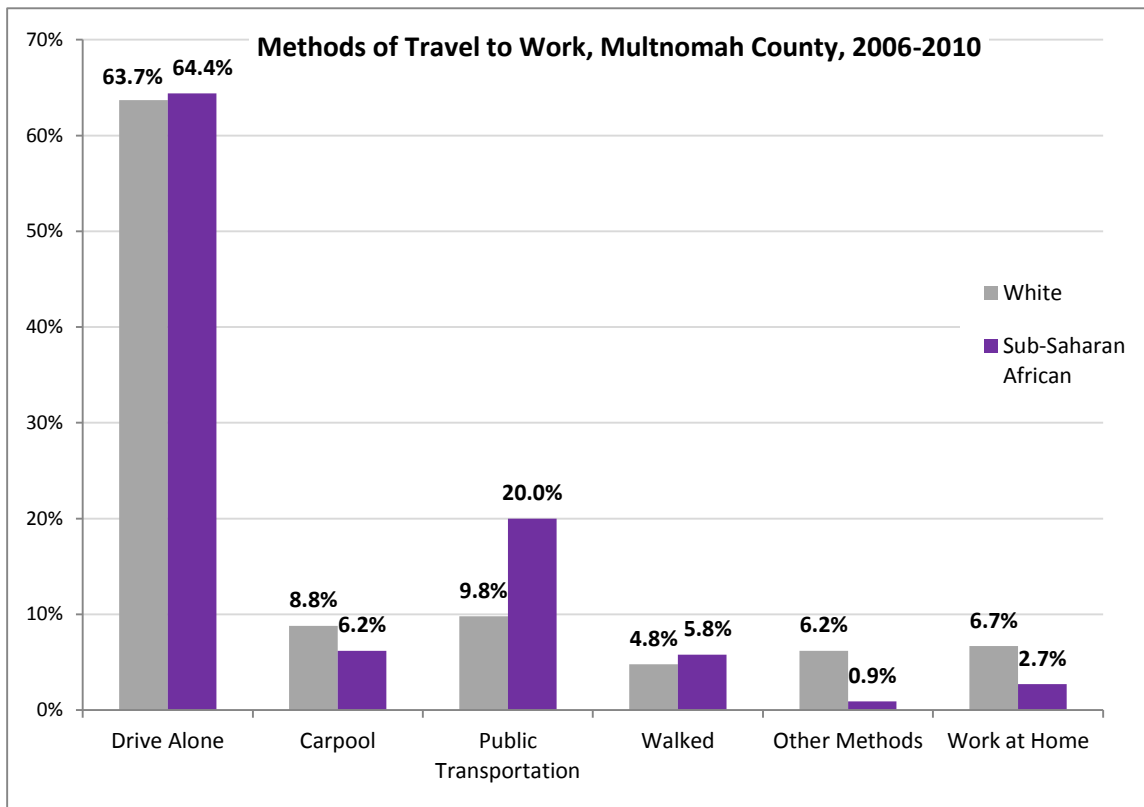
Unionization rates are low, and typically outside the consideration of Africans as an avenue for improving pay, equity and working conditions. Despite the fact that unionization provides an average pay increase of 28% for workers,<sup>80</sup> and greatly improves access to health benefits (92% of unionized workers have health care coverage compared with only 62% of non-union workers),<sup>81</sup> unionization is not an often-considered avenue for improving employment conditions. Given the precariousness of one's foothold in the USA, coupled with the risk of deportation for criminal convictions, workers are likely fearful of social action and further repercussions.

Turning our attention to another dimension of workers' rights, we surface the dismal levels of awareness about workers' existing rights in our community. There is a pervasive pattern of people being taken advantage of, and of failing to be notified of protections and compensation available to them when they are injured. The scope of the issue is encapsulated in the following community member's words:

*They don't understand their rights as an employee. [One community member] is asked to carry really heavy things, day after day after day, then he has a problem with the back – the employer says, “if you can't keep doing the work, I'm laying you off.” He manages to keep up with the work. If he goes to the doctor and the doctor says “you should be off work.” Then the employer might say, “we'll fire you.” Then he's fired and cannot get unemployment. His back is bad – he doesn't understand that he has a right as an employee to certain things... like a break during the day, or that he has to have a job description that says he is going to lift 75 pounds repetitively every day. [No one has told them] that if they work more than 20 hours, they need to have benefits... They have no idea about how the system works. They lose a finger and no one tells them that if they lose a finger its worth \$100,000 or they lose an eye, they have nothing or if have degree or not, if they understood their rights as an employee... people will just take advantage of them. It is terrible. There are a lot of people who get hurt and they don't know anything about how to move forward.*

Finally, institutional racism must be named. Our community faces deplorable levels of racism across employment experiences. Sources of racism include entire systems that do not recognize foreign credentials, employment support programs that do not adequately serve communities of color, working conditions that deny us fair working conditions, and internalized oppression. The community faces abundant barriers to fair and equitable treatment in employment.

One additional area in which we are vulnerable is in our heavy reliance on public transportation. Fully 20% of our workers use the transit daily to get to work, while only half that amount of White workers is so dependent on transit.



Source: Author's calculations from American Community Survey 2006-2010.

Retaining a public transportation system that is accessible, affordable and convenient is of importance to workers in this region. Cuts to frequency of services, increased costs and dropped routes will cause hardship in our community.

## Recommendations

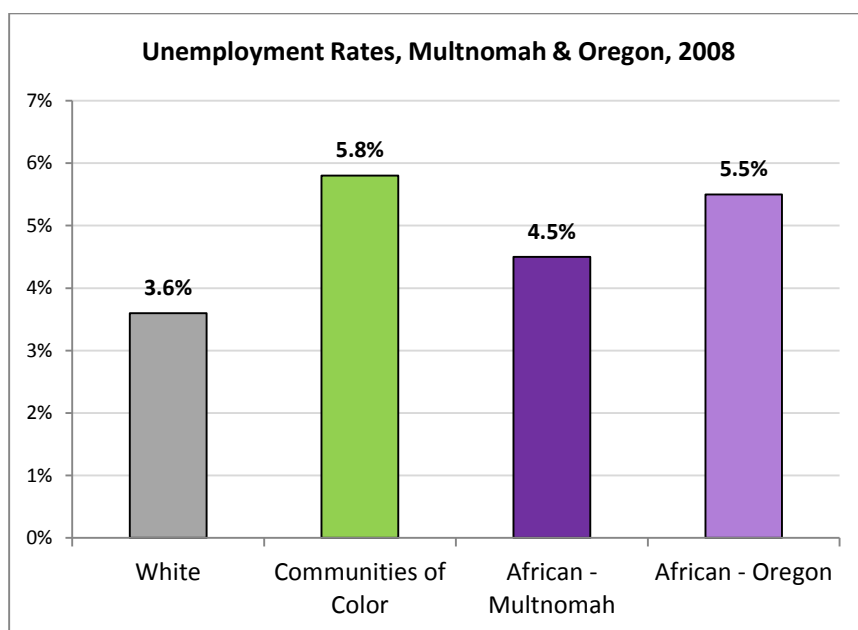
The recommendations we forward flow naturally from the section above:

9. There are two options available for bridging African workers more powerfully to jobs. The first is to provide paid skills training programs of short duration that prepare workers for specific occupations and/or jobs. These could be informed by local employers' needs and technological expectations.
10. Also essential to bridge African workers to the labor market is to have a program that provides on-the-job training for the first month of employment for immigrant and refugee workers that would subsidize the employer's payments to the workers and be rebated if the worker successfully transitions to become a regular employee. This would enable our community to be more rapidly employed (and not delayed for a training period) and provide supports for employers to hire our community members.

11. It is essential that a workers' rights information campaign be implemented to advise workers of their entitlements on working conditions, the rights to unionize, and the programs and services available to them for both prevention and for intervention when things go wrong.
12. To support employment, keeping public transportation costs low and routes accessible and convenient is essential.

## Unemployment

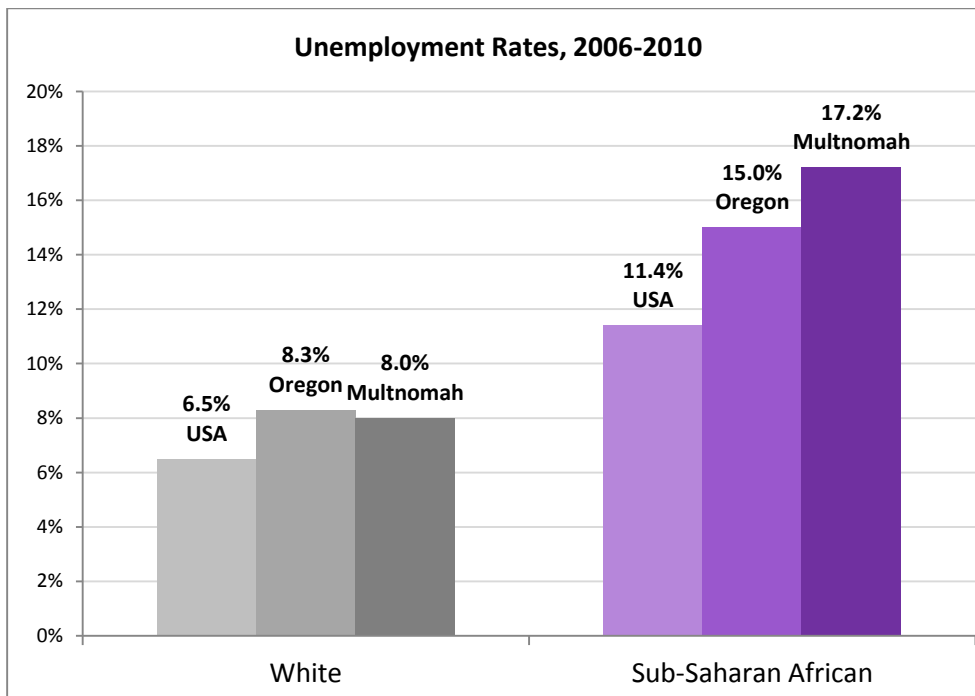
Unemployment levels are higher among Africans than among Whites, at levels that are 25% higher, and when we narrow our gaze to that of our sub-Saharan community, and extend this until 2010, unemployment levels are more than double that of Whites. When we extend our gaze to 2011, the impacts of the most recent recession are clearly being felt hard across the African community, as unemployment has reached 13.5% in Multnomah county. Such disparities suggest the community is facing discrimination in the rates at which they are hired, laid off or fired from their jobs. For a newcomer community, the concept of “last hired, first fired” will influence the way in which African residents are vulnerable to downturns in the economy.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008.

Here we have relatively moderate levels of unemployment, with harder times being experienced outside of the county. But when we bring unemployment measures to a more current year and narrow our lens to sub-Saharan Africa (from which the majority of our community originates), we find a deteriorating situation. Unemployment levels are more than double those of Whites, and the advantage that existed in living locally disappears.



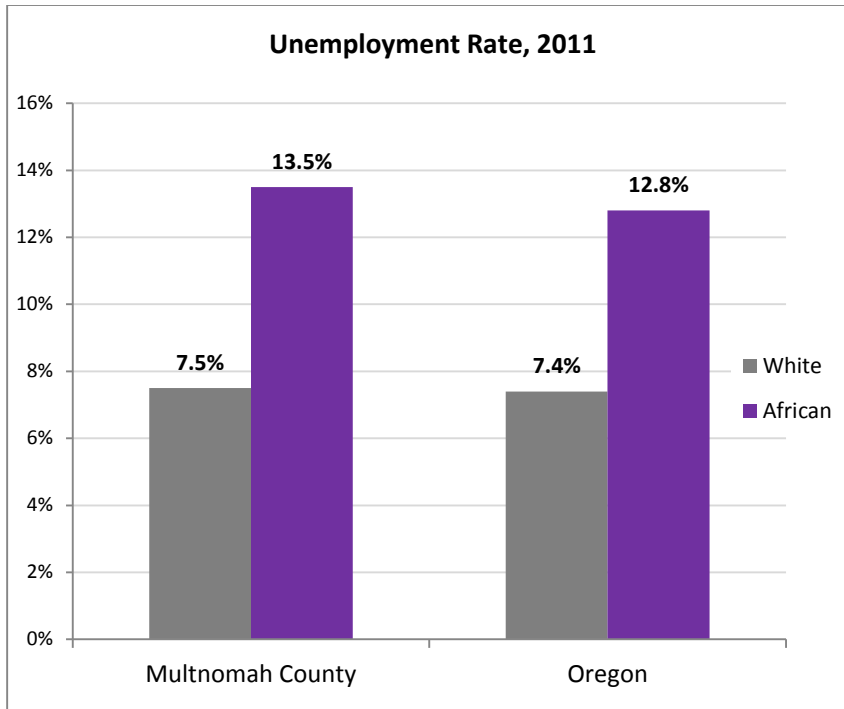


Source: American Community Survey, 2006-10.

The difference between these two charts needs some explanation, and we will share our understanding of why sub-Saharan unemployment is three times higher than among the entire African population for 2008. To begin, it is likely that the impact of the recession beginning deeply in Oregon in 2008 has affected the latter measure of unemployment that includes data until 2010. It has been documented among larger and better measured communities that the recession has had a much harsher impact on communities of color than among Whites, made even worse when these communities of color had high levels of poverty going into the recession.<sup>82</sup> Second, the more current chart excludes North Africans and it is likely that they have better access to jobs, and higher levels of education attained in the USA, both of which are in evidence at the national level. We thus do not perceive that these are inconsistent experiences even though the magnitude of the difference is significant.

Disparities exist between Whites and Africans in these geographic measures. Unemployment at the local level is higher for Africans in Multnomah county than for Whites, and particularly insidious for sub-Saharan Africans. And the difference between Whites across the USA and Multnomah is much smaller than that of Africans in these two regions: the disparity for Whites is 23% while the disparity for Africans is 51%.

When we bring in the most recent year available (2011 – and actually the average of 2009 to 2011), we find that unemployment levels among the African community has improved, as those unemployed have dropped from 17.2% of the community to 13.5%. While this news is very welcomed, unemployment remains at almost double the levels of Whites.



Source: Custom data extractions by ECONorthwest from the American Community Survey, 2011.

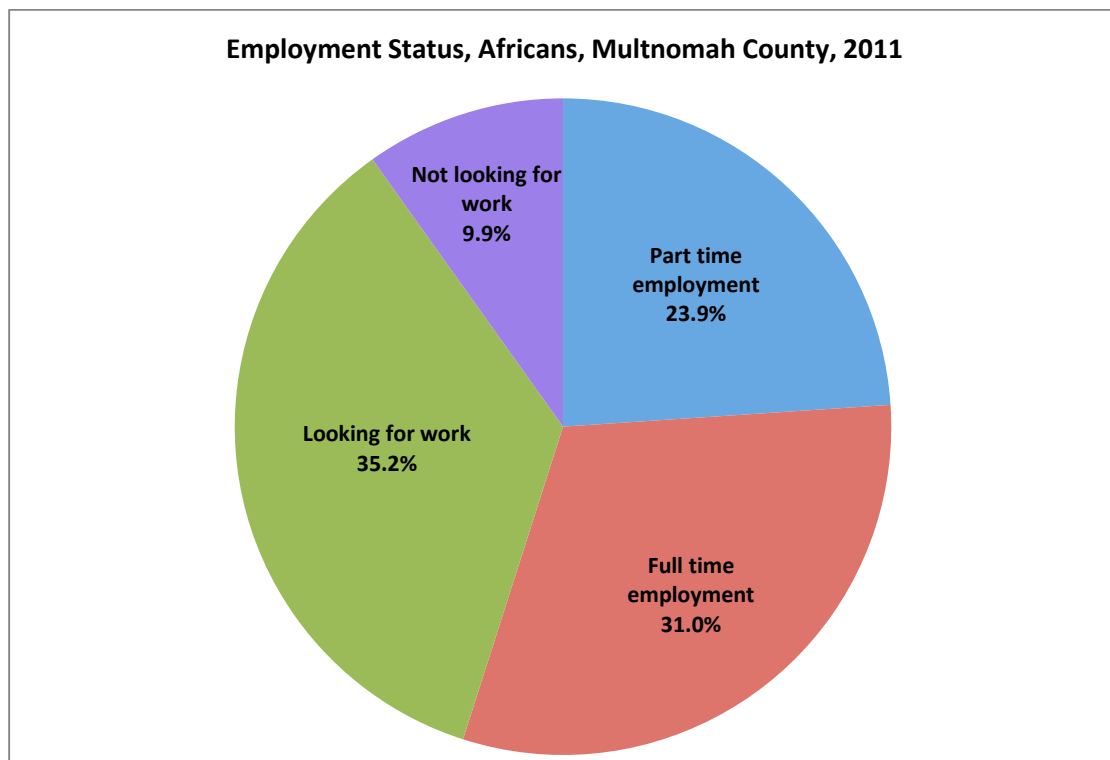
We also want to extend attention to the very high unemployment (5.5% in 2008 and 15.0% for sub-Saharanans in the five-year period, and 12.8% in 2011) across Oregon facing the African communities. Many Africans are pushed out of Multnomah county in a drive to find cheaper and more adequate housing. In such regions, fewer formal and informal supports are available, and racial discrimination may be even more pronounced, particularly when limited English language skills are present. It is incumbent on the whole state to provide good services for Africans. The absence of such supports, particularly those that are culturally-specific, or at least culturally-responsive harms the vitality of the entire region due to foregone tax revenues, higher income support reliance, greater use of food stamps, and lesser income to expend in the local economy.

A poignant reflection of the depth of our economic need is in the area of food stamps (SNAP or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Three times more sub-Saharanans rely on government supports to feed ourselves than Whites.

Use of Food Stamp Program, Multnomah County, 2006-10	
White	11.0%
Sub-Saharan African	35.5%

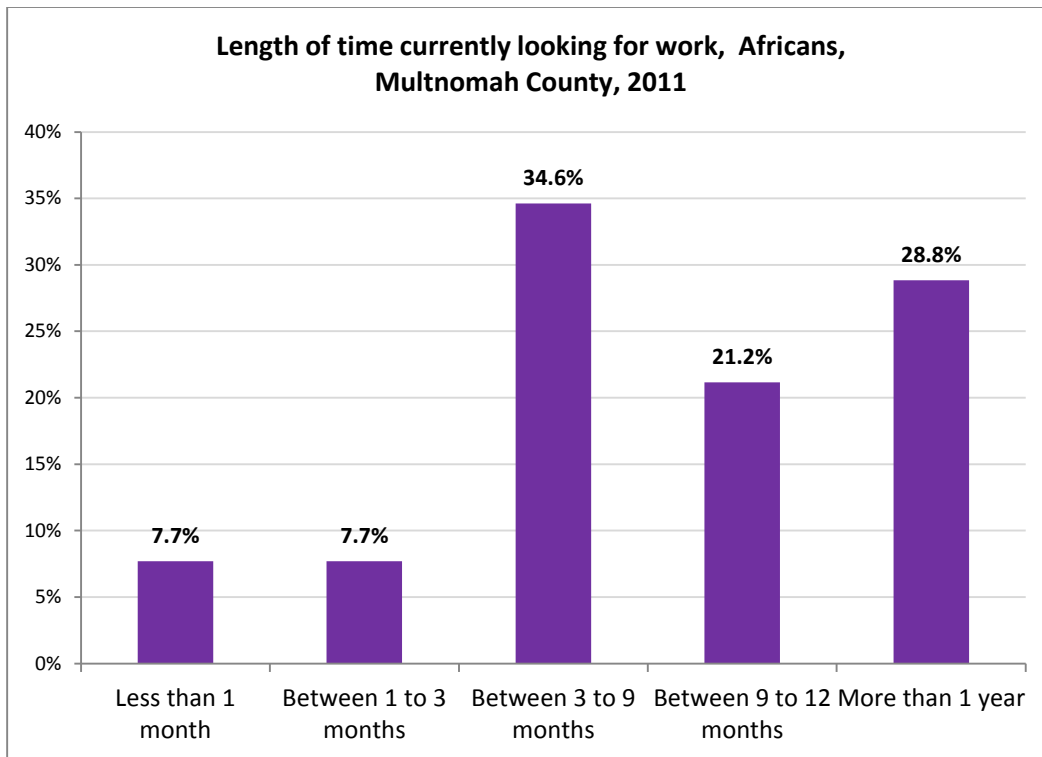
Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2010.

We asked African community members about their employment status in 2011 as part of the African Community Survey. The results below show that fully 35% of the community is unemployed and looking for work.



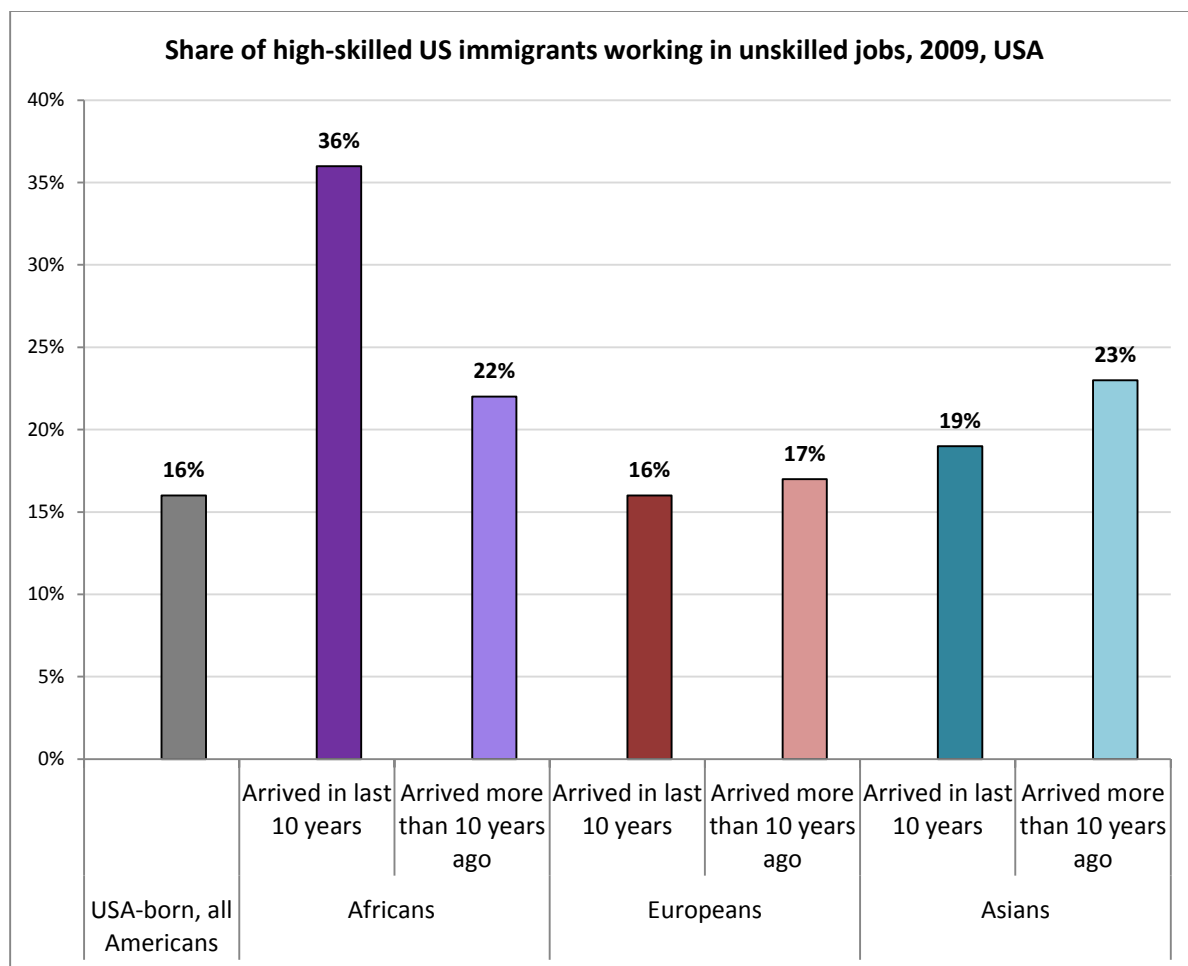
Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

Making matters worse is the length of time that many in the African community spend looking for work. In this same survey, we asked how long those who were unemployed spent looking for work. More than one-in-four have been looking for work for over a year, and an additional 21% have been looking for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a year. The official determination of “long term unemployment” is set by the Bureau of Labor Statistics at 27 weeks or longer. More than half of unemployed Africans in Multnomah county meet this level of unemployment. The nature of unemployment in the region facing Africans is harsh and troubling.



Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

A related issue is that of underemployment that is caused by lack of an ability to be hired into jobs that are skilled. At the national level (note that no local equivalent exists, except for the earlier-noted experience of having 46% of Africans in Multnomah county not having prior credentials recognized), we find a very high share of Africans working in unskilled jobs. These data are disaggregated by recentness of arrival, and for Africans who arrived in the last ten years, more than one-in-three are working in jobs below our skill levels.



Source: Capps, McCabe & Fix, 2011.<sup>83</sup>

Such practices are a waste for the USA, which typically values a high-skilled workforce, and indeed places huge amounts of resources to encourage youth to stay in school, and to become highly skilled. But if then we cannot access decent work, these high credentials are wasted. And notice how this is wasted resources for the USA – for such credentials came to the USA without the US needing to pay for the development of these assets. Now is not the time for wasted resources – it is imperative that the nation implement practices that ensure accurate recognition of foreign credentials, education and experience.

Notice too that this underemployment is not equivalent across communities – as Europeans have much better access to high skilled jobs, and so too do Asians. Africans face much constricted access, likely the result of anti-black employment barriers and institutional racism.

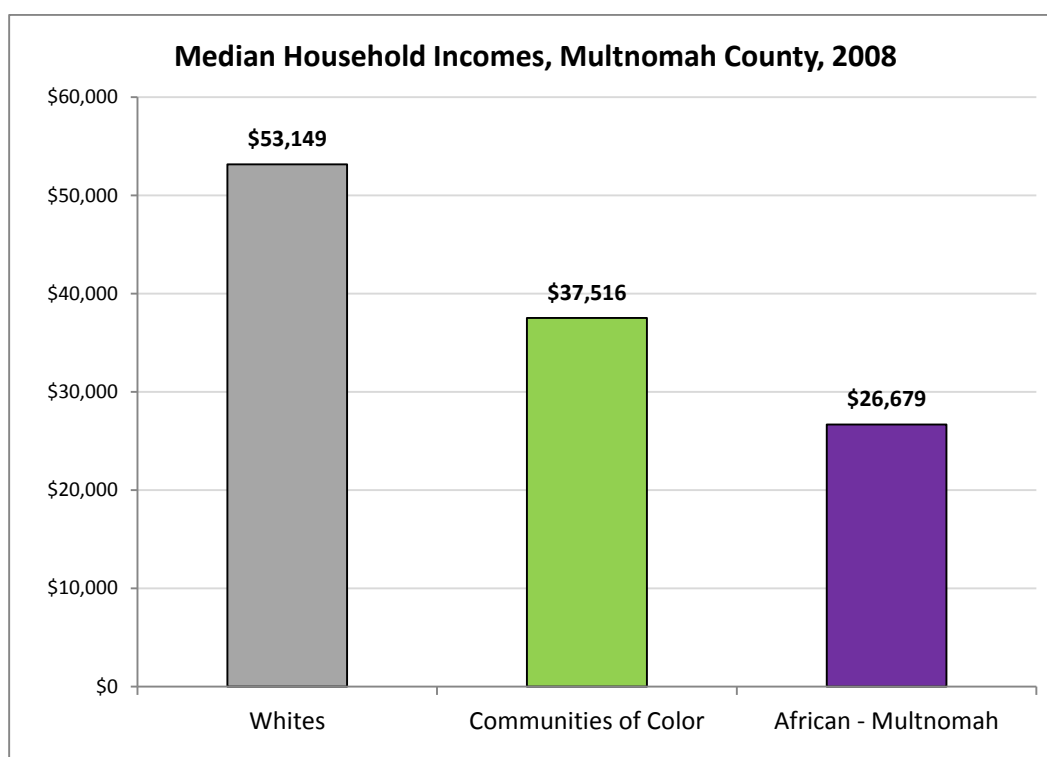
## Recommendations

13. It is essential that employment be considered a human right. African community members are exhausted with lengthy job searches and low prospects for finding living wage jobs. Providing real options for a positive future is essential for improving the well being of the community.

We also use this space to amplify the need for accurate recognition of foreign credentials and the programs and financing to support access widely across the region and across professions.

## Income Levels & Poverty Rates

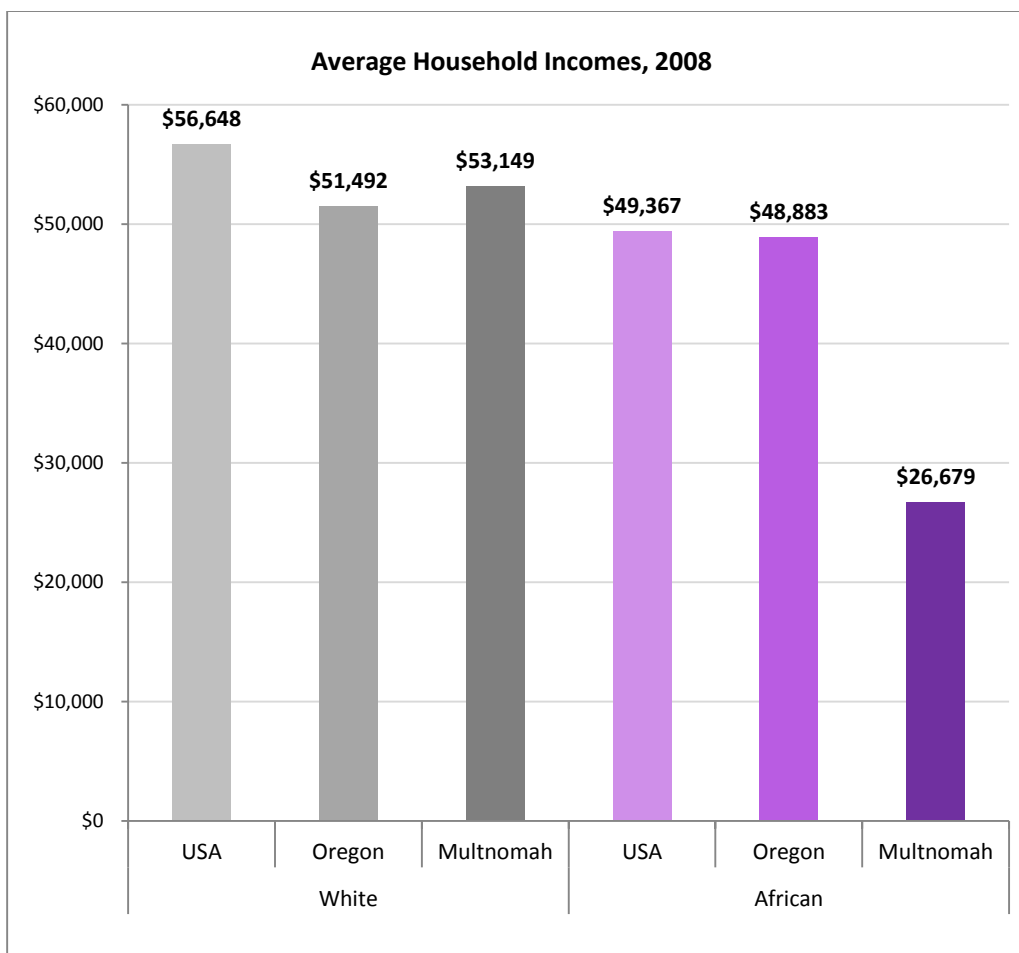
Issues of language, recognition of foreign credentials and international work experience intersect with issues of racism to deny our African community access to decent paid work, the results of which show up in the chart below.



Source: American Community Survey, 2008, Selected characteristics of the foreign-born population.

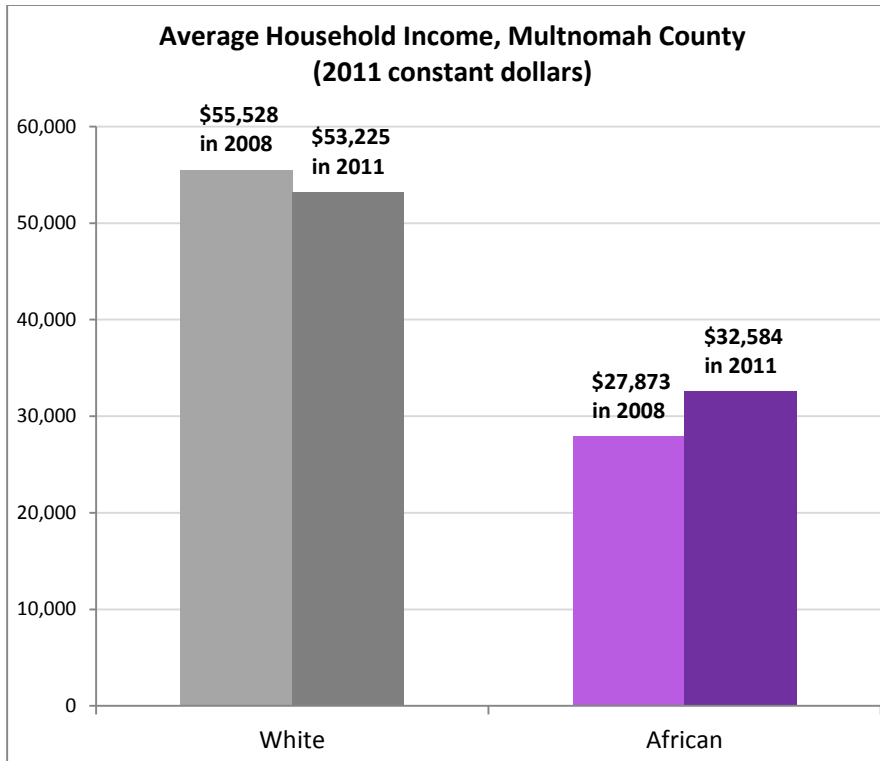
Here we see that our community members have incomes that are fully half that of Whites, and that are 40% lower than the average among communities of color. We regret that the only income measure possible to extract for our community is that of household income, as we would have liked to examine family income, per capita income, and income for seniors and other family configurations (such as single parent family incomes). Such is not possible within the American Community Survey as the small size of our community makes for a more limited set of variables being available.

We can, however, extend our gaze to wider geographic regions and examine our progress in the local region relative to that across Oregon and across the USA. In the chart below, we see that there are income disparities with Whites at all levels of geography. The most pronounced difference is indeed in Multnomah county.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008 for Multnomah county data. Additional data from the American Community Survey, 2008.

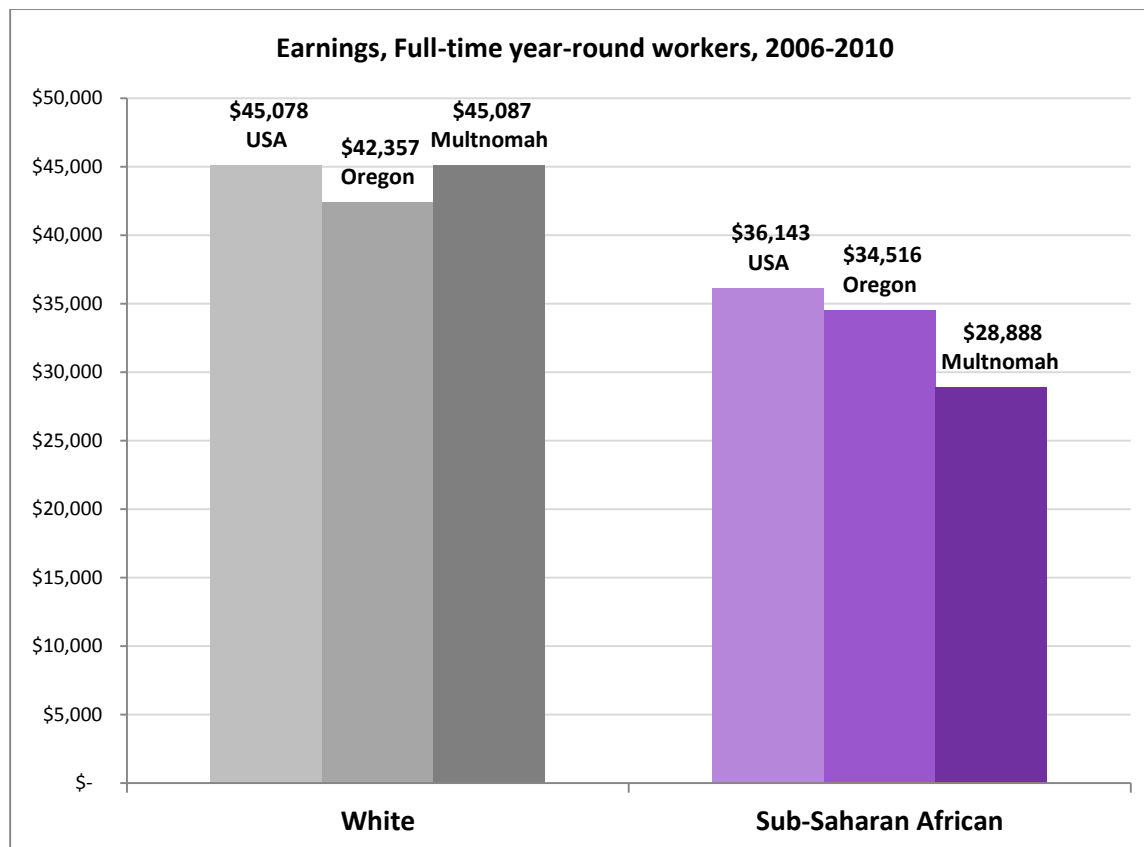
When we center on changes up to the most current data available, we see a slight improvement since 2008, most likely due increasing numbers of household members working and a rising number being of working age. That said, the improvements are an important gain for the community, although disparities remain as Africans have only  $\frac{2}{3}$  the household incomes of Whites.



Source: Custom data extractions by ECONorthwest from the American Community Survey, 2011, and by the Population Research Center, Portland State University for 2008 data.

We also know the income situation for full-time, year-round workers in Multnomah county. The below chart shows the earning averages for such workers, with the larger span of years for sub-Saharan workers. Here, disparity with Whites is a little smaller than the household incomes, because we are not adding the impact of unemployment and underemployment. It is still pronounced, and significantly larger than averages across the USA and across Oregon. The size of this gap in Multnomah county is 56%.

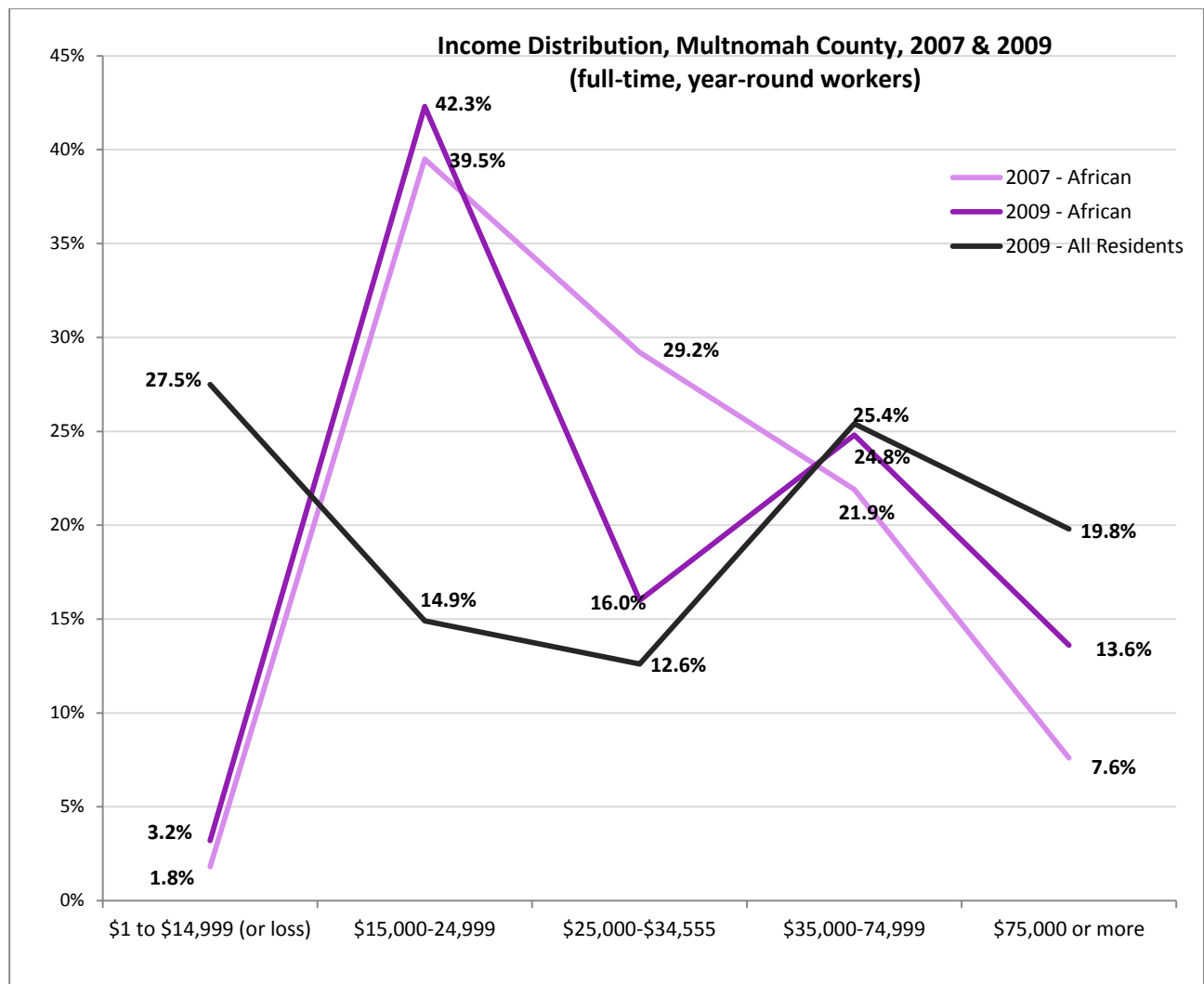




Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2010.

The economic situation facing the African community is dire. The prevalence of institutional racism and racial inequities that stretches across institutions has been detailed in the prior racial disparities report, *“Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile”* from 2010, and in it we detail pervasive and deep disparities across a total of 27 different institutions and systems. Now coupled with language barriers, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, cultural isolation, vulnerability due to not holding US citizenship, and the shortfall of culturally-specific and even culturally-responsive services, we have a heightened crisis facing the African community – the outcome of which is seen in the household income data.

While data on specific family types and individuals is not available, we do have indicators of income patterns among full time, full year workers. In the below chart, there are a number of issues and trends that are observable and we will reflect on these in the next few paragraphs. Let us first look at the African data, presented for 2007 and 2009. Poverty-level wages deteriorated for Africans, increasing from 1.8% of the population earning under \$15,000/year to 3.2% of the population. The number of low income earners (between \$15,000 to \$25,000/year) increased by about 3 percentage points – both are bad news for the community. Then, and most troubling, there is the deterioration of numbers of Africans earning moderate incomes (\$25,000 to \$35,000/year), falling a whopping 13 percentage points to only 16% of workers.



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, 2008 & 2009, selected characteristics of the foreign-born population (table S0504).

This trend marks a serious hollowing out of moderate income earners, revealing the negative impact of this recession on our community. Coupled with the rise of those earning poverty-level wages, this is overall showing us deterioration in conditions for fully three-quarters of the community.

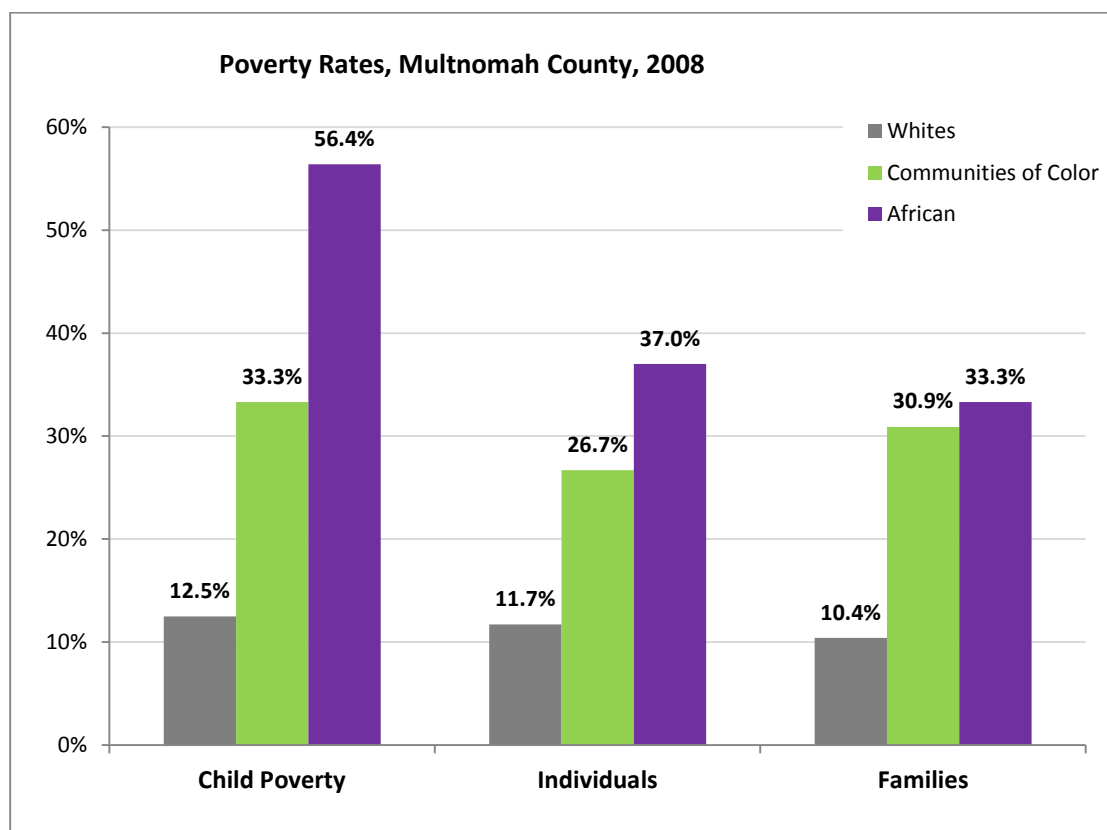
At the high end, we see some benefits as high income earners have almost doubled to 14% and upper-end earners have increased by three percentage points. This economic era (over the last 30 years) has created benefits for top income earners where typically the top 30% of the population benefits from recent economic conditions<sup>84</sup> and the African community illustrates these gains as well.

When we compare the income profile of Africans with the overall population (dominated by Whites), we find ourselves valuing that we do not have the massive numbers of those earning poverty wages as is the case with the overall population. This group has 27.5% of its population earning poverty wages! But it also has significantly fewer earning low incomes, and fewer too earning moderate incomes. And those

at the upper and high end of the income spectrum are very numerous. The overall population profile shows us that there are many workers at the bottom, few in the middle, and a high number at the top – signaling the results of this economic era, whereby the middle class hollows out and those at the ends of the income spectrum proliferate.

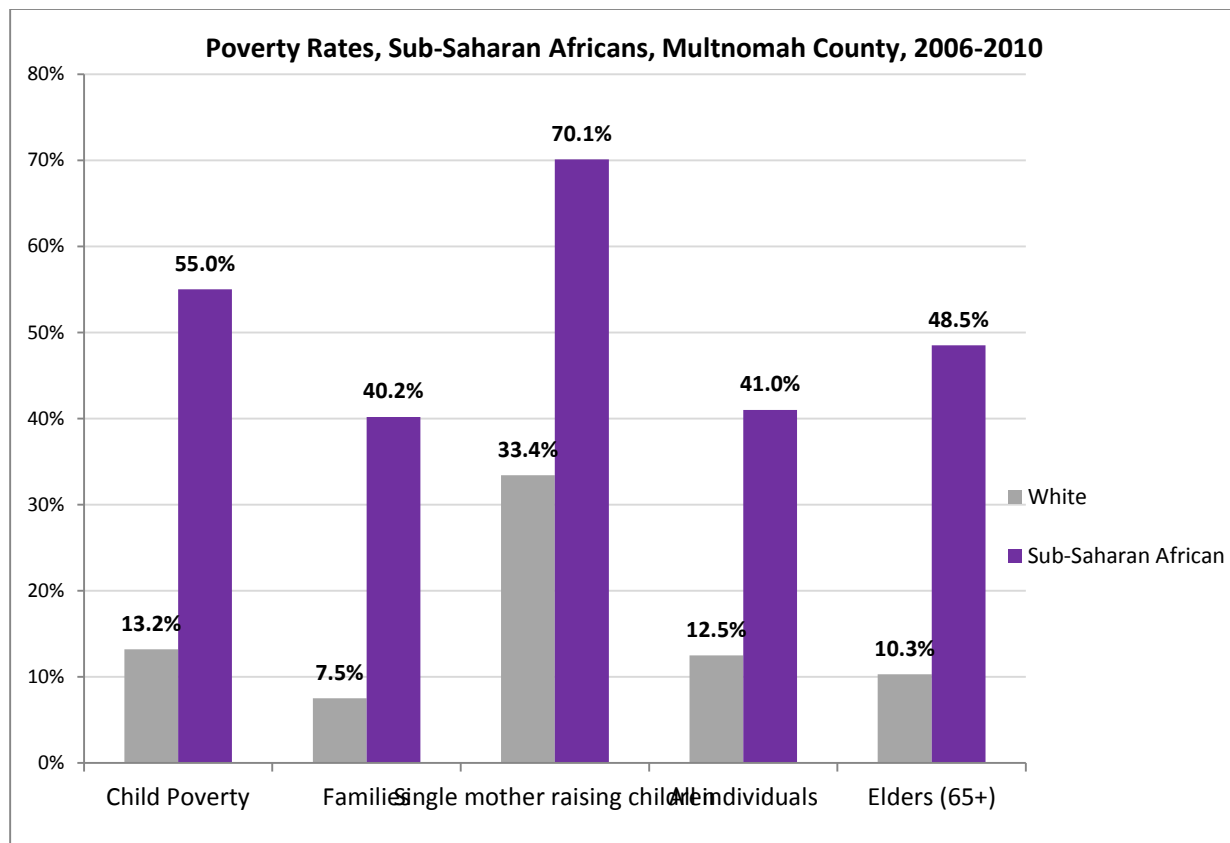
The conclusions here are that the income profile of Africans is significantly different than the overall population and that we have seen a considerable deterioration of conditions over the last two years, signaling that we have lost considerable ground in this economy, with relatively few of us reaping benefit of high incomes.

Poverty rates within the community are where we find deepening of this disturbing story. Below are the results for those at the lowest end of the population – those living in poverty. African immigrants and refugees have poverty levels higher than the average among communities of color, and have a child poverty rate where more than ½ of all African children live in poverty.



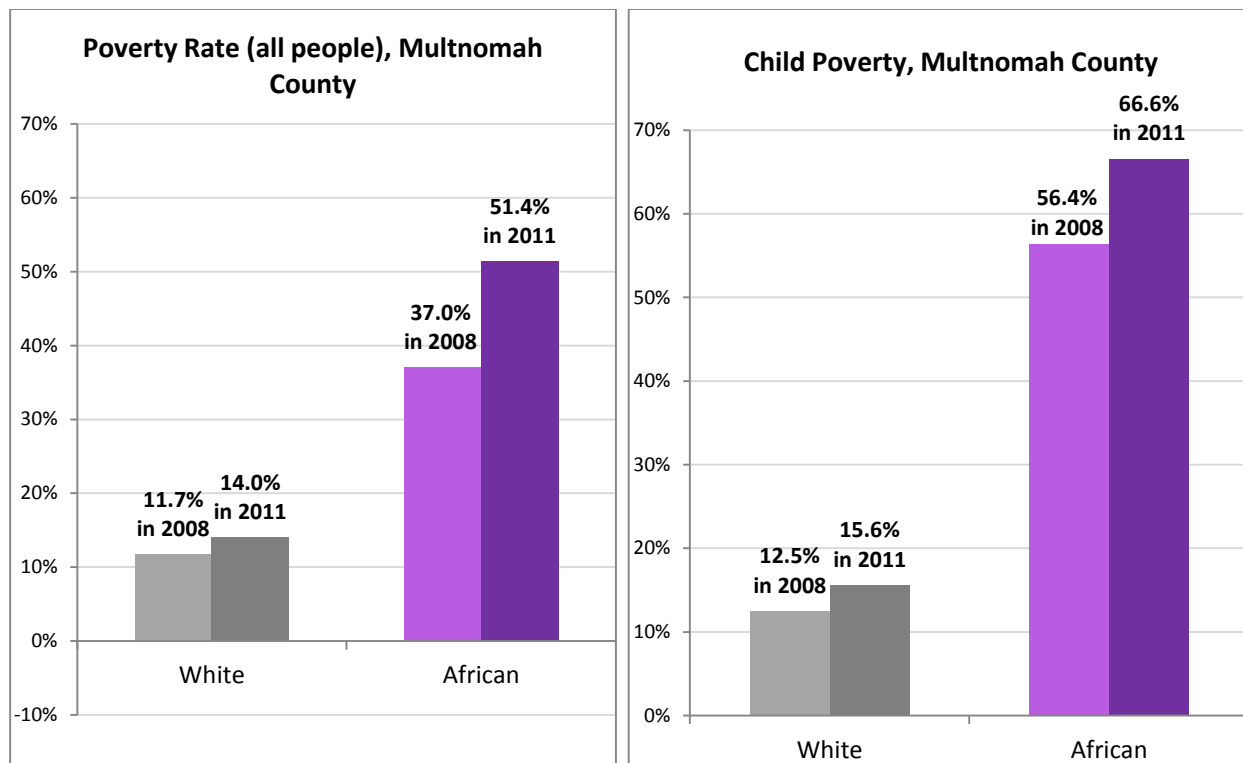
Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008.

The situation facing the sub-Saharan community allows us to add more people to our understanding of poverty. Here we see that almost ¾ of our single mother families live in poverty, and poverty among elders is also in the 50% range.



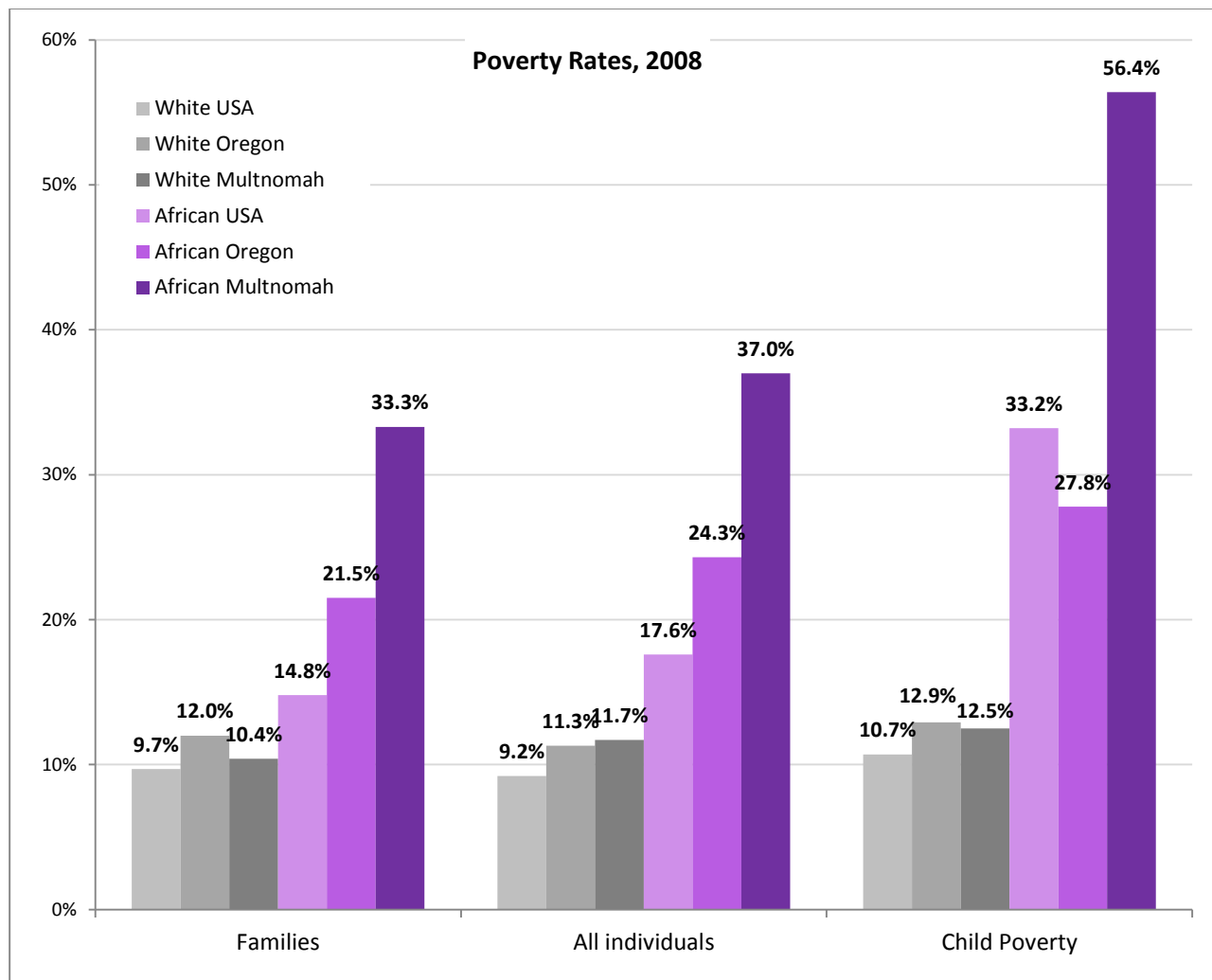
Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2010.

When we center in on the changes in levels of poverty over recent years, and bringing us to the most current data available (2011), we find rapid deterioration of poverty levels in Multnomah county for our African community. Poverty rates have shot higher over the last three years, with more than half of the African population living in poverty, and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of our children living in poverty. While any level of child poverty is deplorable – and we can be outraged that even one-in-seven White children is poor – we must collectively be mobilized to act to immediately ensure the trend facing African children and families reverses course, for today two-in-three African children are poor.



Source: Custom data extractions by ECONorthwest from the American Community Survey, 2011, and by the Population Research Center, Portland State University for 2008 data.

Consider what the depths of poverty mean to the community. This is a very highly educated community, with many refugees who have often fled genocide, persecution and/or deep vulnerability. Many from this community then encounter a period of intense distress with the high likelihood of staying in a refugee camp for an extended period of time. Then they arrive in the USA, often without evidence of education or work experience, and typically with little more than the clothes on one's backs. Whether one arrives as an immigrant or a refugee, Africans moving into Multnomah county are settling in what is portrayed as an idyllic and progressive region in the USA. Disillusionment settles in quickly as one learns of the American versions of racism that manifest in job limitations, lack of recognition of foreign experience, deeply flawed income supports, housing discrimination and system after system that does not respond to community needs with attention or resources. Collectively, we have the potential to do much better.

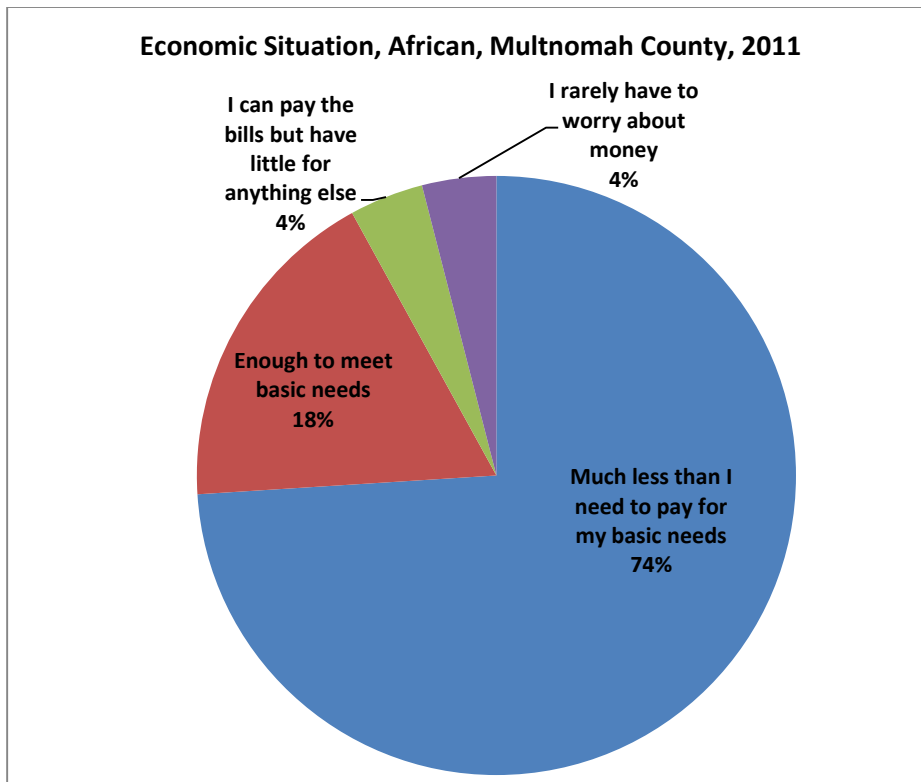


Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008 for Multnomah county data. Additional data from the American Community Survey, 2008.

Sometimes those in the African community get into trouble with debts. While there are major industries seeking to make profit from indebtedness (like the payday loan industry, predatory lenders, and unscrupulous mortgage lenders), there are also instances of confusion about things like bank machines and credit cards:

*[One man I know] didn't understand and he had taken a credit card. One day he said to me, "I don't understand, they want me to pay." [He didn't understand that] you can't just spend that money – it's not free. He didn't understand he had to repay because he didn't understand.*

The lived realities of inadequate incomes hits home as people struggle to pay bills and sometimes go hungry. In our survey of 72 African community members, three-in-four said they have much less than they need to pay for basic needs.



Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

For those at the worse end of the economic scale, hunger is far from uncommon. Today, almost one-in-three community members have experienced hunger in the last 12 months. Fully 29% of those surveyed said they had gone hungry because of being unable to afford food.

From unemployment, to lack of recognition of international experience and credentials, along with difficulty paying the bills and pronounced levels of hunger – urgent action is needed. When community members were asked about top priorities that must be acted upon by elected leaders, they universally said their priorities were jobs, education, housing and health care. The logic and the urgency of the recommendations in the 2011 survey of community members are compelling with two responses noted here:

*“Please give us the same consideration and opportunities [as white community members]”*

*“For all people looking to find a job to get a job”*

In the spirit of building an economy that works for all, the needs of our most vulnerable communities must be given priority in all levels of policy attention.

## Remittances to Family & Community in Africa

Remittances are an important dimension of the collectivist society of Africa, and of the ways in which Africans in Multnomah county support those who we care for – our family members, extended families and the wider community. Across the African community in Multnomah county, approximately 60% of those in the community send money to those in Africa.<sup>85</sup> As stories are recounted among African gatherings, there is a shared appreciation for how hard it is, while one is struggling, to extend support for those at home. In the gatherings to discuss this and other topics, the stories that emerged were gentle, bewildering, compassionate and jovial. While the depths of the responsibility are apparent, so too is this a space for communities here to express support for each other and a shared appreciation of what it means to hold privilege and stature in relationship to those in Africa. Despite what seems at times to feel like a huge burden, these are stories not told begrudgingly but rather affectionately and with a light voice. This is a community that holds its responsibilities with dignity and respect, even though responding to requests for support can be difficult.

*People from back home call – 4am – every time there is something happening... people want you to send money every time. When you lose work or when you are going to unpaid training... it is too hard to respond. If you could be paid at the same time... this would solve the problem for Africans who have this problem...*

*We receive so many calls every week, every month – back home to send money. It is so bad at home.*

*Is it possible to say no? No.... you will be abandoning your community and your family. You have a right to say no, but you are expected to support others... I grew up in a refugee camp. In the USA, you have something to live on, eat with and survive to make ends meet. I brought some of [my brothers who were on cocaine and using drugs] into the refugee camp – I had to support them to get them into schools. They will still go back into the situation they know. I don't have enough... but you are still letting someone down who could be successful with even \$1. If I don't send that money, I'm not changing those lives that I desire to change... We always pick up those phones (even though we could not pick up). I can say, "I don't have anything now; I'm struggling now." If I get money next month, I will send some for them. This reduces their depression, their anxiety. They say, "thank you."*

*To explain that you don't have something, they don't understand: "you are in America and you have a care and are living in a house and every time you come home, you are fatter... so you are eating and doing well. We are just asking for something small."*

*At home they think I am a movie star because I am from America. And so I had all this money and was so rich – of course, because I bring gifts for them when I visit. They thought I could do anything. They don't realize that I went to the dollars store for the gifts!*

*You have to send something in order to help people who are left back there. There is no way you can not send money. For construction, for money to buy a taxi – so people can have a job. I have to support my siblings' education and to help them find a job. You have to pay for the children's school fees.*

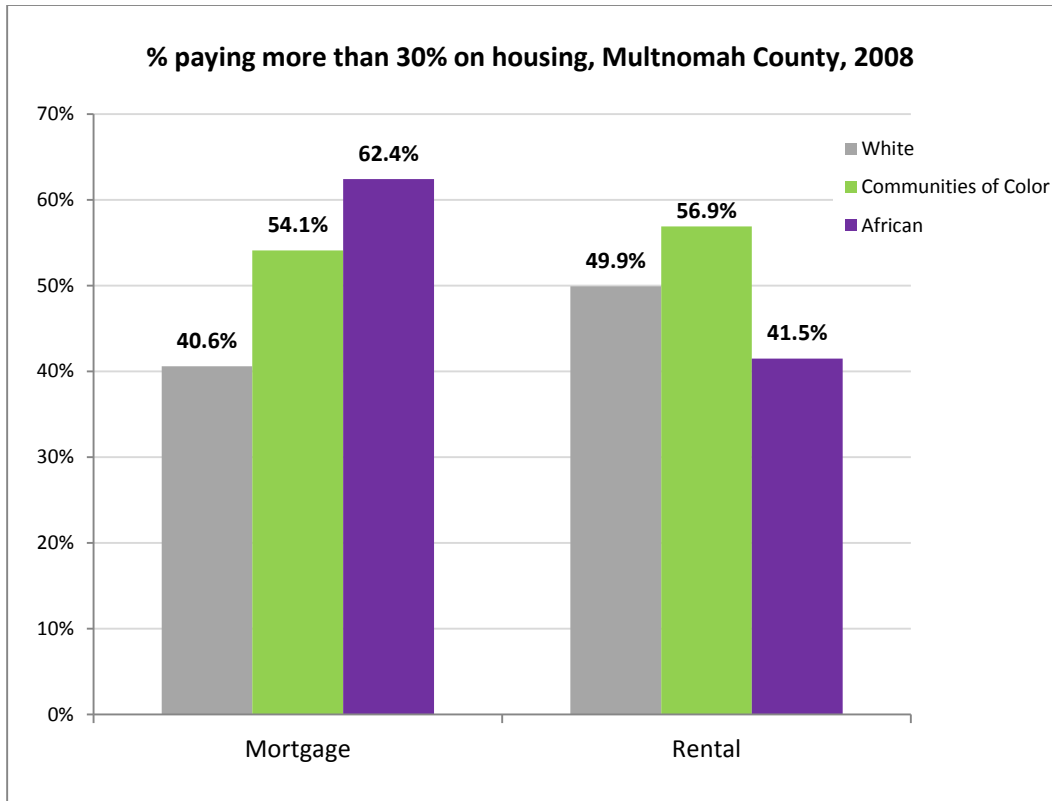


## Recommendations

14. It is well beyond time for international aid of sufficient size and quality that supports African development and peacemaking across the continent. Residents and policy makers in Multnomah county can advance a shifted discourse about the responsibility that those in the USA hold for real reforms in Africa. An end to exploitation, harmful structural adjustment programs, and mere crumbs of international aid are essential dimensions of such reforms.

## Housing

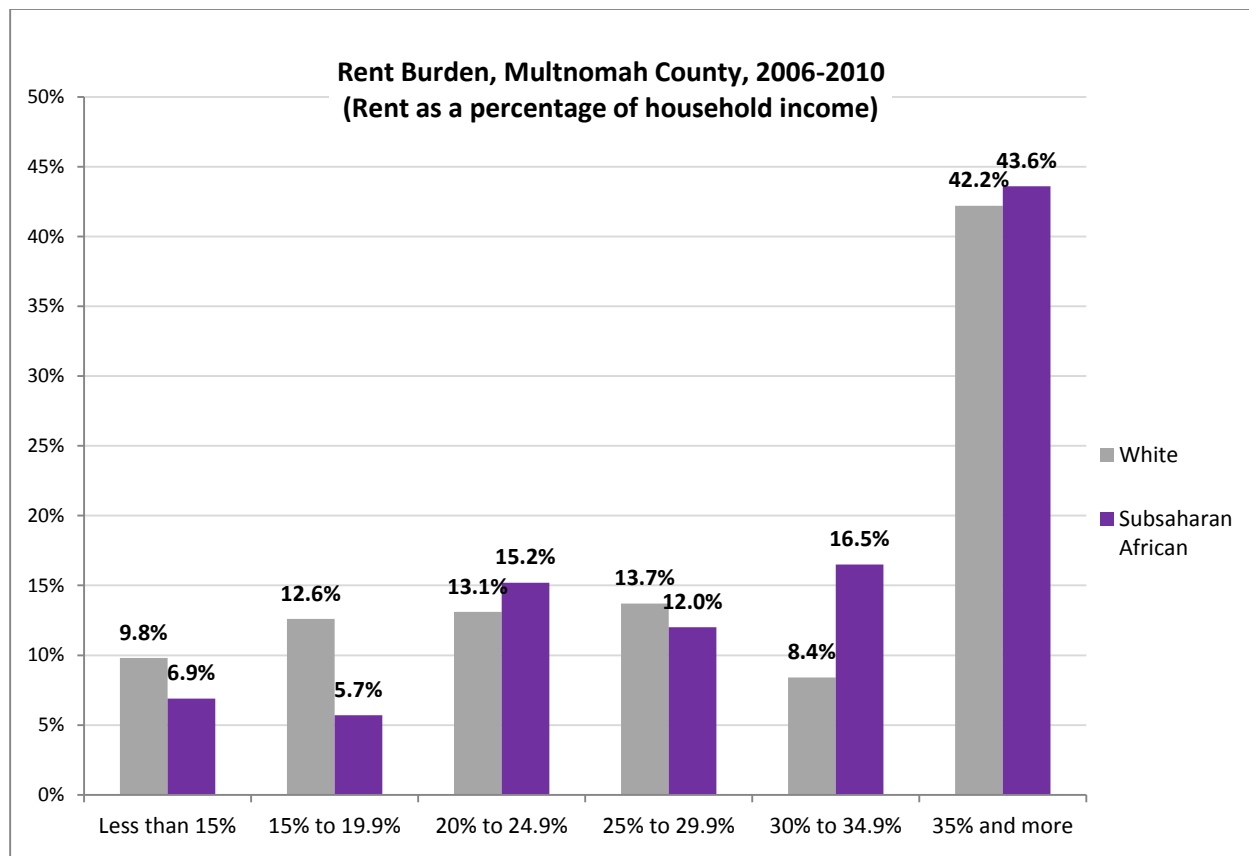
As with all communities of color (and many Whites), a tremendously high percentage of the African community is vulnerably housed. While the core problem is high regional housing costs, when inadequate incomes, and disparities in poverty rates are added, housing costs are very difficult for Africans to pay. Below we see that almost two-of-three mortgage owners are making housing payments that are deemed a burden to their ability to sustain themselves. Becoming homeowners, even though outrageously expensive for us, is a feature of trying to get out from under the dismal situation in the rental market. Making this situation dire is that the vast majority of mortgages are in the subprime mortgage market – and it is this market that is currently in crisis with foreclosure rates skyrocketing. We already know that people of color (nationally) are three times more likely than Whites to have a subprime loan, and 55% of subprime loans go to people of color while making up just 34% of the national population. We do not have such data locally. We do know, however, that foreclosures across Oregon are up by 236% in 2011<sup>86</sup> – a feature of Oregon’s slower recovery and inability to cover high mortgage costs.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008.

When looking at the rental situation, Africans are a little less imperiled than Whites and the average for communities of color. But this is exacerbated by the fact that a significant portion of Africans pay more than half our incomes on housing. For homeowners, more than one-in-three pay more than 50% of their incomes in mortgage costs (35.2%). For renters, one-in-four (24.9%) spend more than 50% of incomes on housing.

Among sub-Saharanans, the rent situation is worse, as 60% of the community is paying more than 30% of their income on rent. Again, remember that this data point includes years up to 2010, and the impact of this recession on our ability to pay rent – as unemployment is higher, and incomes are lower – is substantial. We are a community deeply imperiled in retaining a stable place to live.



Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2010.

Few among the community are able to easily afford housing. Smaller numbers own our own homes than among other communities of color. Access thus (as shown in the chart below) to the greatest feature of wealth creation, is very limited for our community.

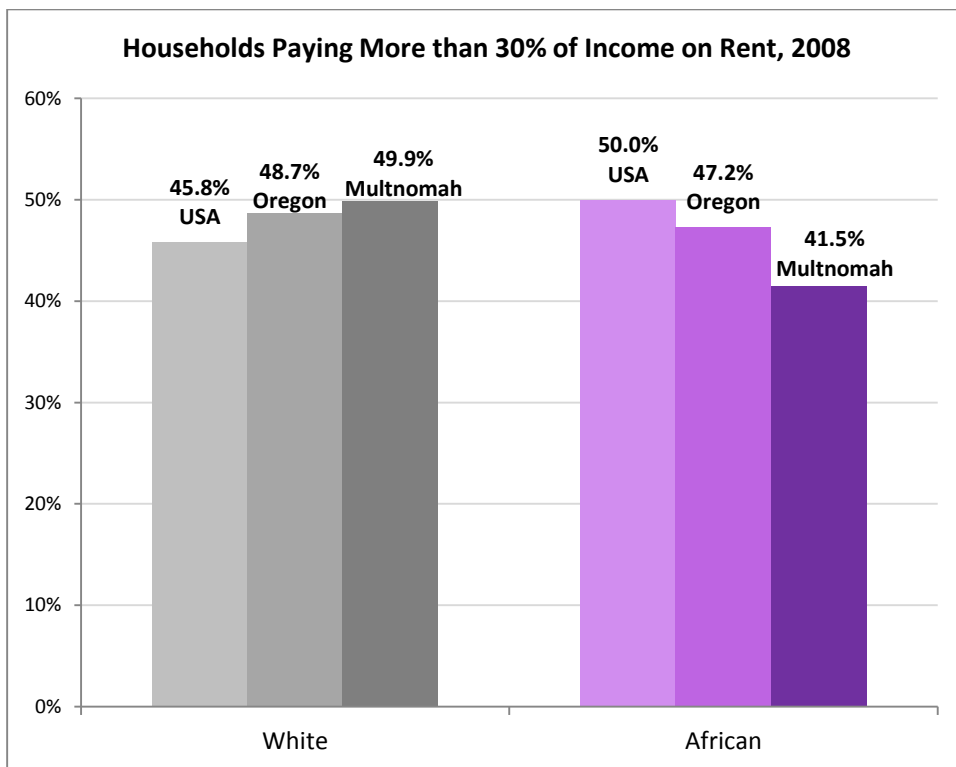
Movement into homeownership is difficult as our incomes are low. Our rents are high (when we consider how poor our community is) and very few of us are able to escape this into homeownership. Disparities with Whites is among the worst among communities of color, at levels that are well less than half that of Whites.

2006-2008	White	African
Homeownership Rate	62%	38.3%
Average Value of Home	\$291,400	\$282,343
2006-2010	White	Sub-Saharan African
Homeownership Rate	59.7%	26.8%
Average Value of Home	\$288,000	\$282,800
Average Rent Paid	\$837	\$736

Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2010.

It is a surprise that our home values are roughly equivalent, but we understand this to be a feature of a few dynamics: the first is that we are new arrivals and did not purchase homes in earlier decades when housing prices were much more reasonable. Second, we need to buy homes with more bedrooms. Third, we are much more dependent on public transportation so more of us need to remain on public transportation routes and thus cannot seek out the cheapest of homes in more weakly serviced areas. Finally, and we think this is most important, so few of us own homes and it will be the more affluent among us who are able to make these purchases and they are more able to afford homes that are equivalent to the average home values of Whites.

Given that we have already identified a trend of Africans leaving the county to secure better and more affordable housing outside the metropolitan area, we anticipate finding fewer housing-burdened Africans when we look at statewide data. What do these data show?



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008 for Multnomah county data. Additional data from the American Community Survey, 2008.

Above we do see that our families are in fact not able to reduce their rental burden by dispersing throughout the state. While such families may have accessed larger space or more stable or safe housing (not captured by these data), they have in fact worsened the housing burden they face. The best explanation that we have is that poverty is leading many households to find the tiniest and worst of housing, simply to be able to find somewhere to live. Such terrible housing conditions might be creating a relatively small number of households who are housing burdened.

It is interesting that we find White families facing increasing housing burden moving closer to this locale, and the inverse to be true for Africans. This is a rare situation as typically communities of color face a deteriorating situation as data gets closer to home. Our best insights into this dynamic is that inside Multnomah county, families are poorly housed, overcrowded, moving frequently – but more cheaply housed (comparative to our incomes) than outside the local urban area.

When turning to the narrative from community members who explain this situation, we find a much more serious problem than the above figures suggest: housing is voiced as a top concern among community members, joining employment, education and as the reader will see in coming sections, health care. The depths of concerns about housing can be summarized as follows:

- Landlords who pose maximum occupancy levels on housing that precludes access to decent housing, and that sometimes necessitate the splitting up of families
- Language barriers in relationships with landlords that result in stress, evictions, and an environment of animosity and confusion
- Inadequate supply of affordable housing that pushes us outside Multnomah county and outside of our communities of support, and into unaffordable homeownership situations

Troubling stories are abundant in housing, and are particular illustrations of racism and discrimination:

*We have many cases where the landlord yells at the tenants like children – where they cannot defend themselves due to language.*

*Tenant children come out to play. When the children run around, [non-Africans] say, “you guys don’t want the children.”*

*Fears of eviction are pronounced. We live with this fear. There are many landlords who have no ability to deal with issues. Sometimes tenants are being exploited for rents... whatever is broken, they always blame on us.*

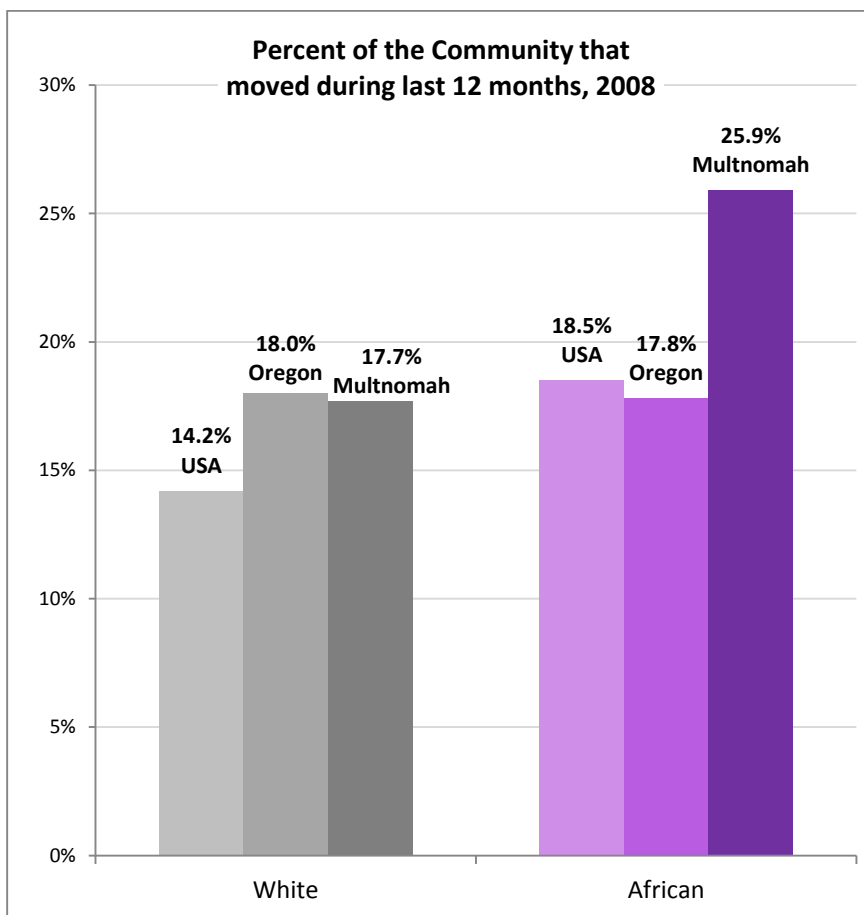
We frequently face challenges because of barriers in occupancy standards, made all the more difficult when income supports are so limited. The maximum amount available for supports to refugees and through TANF is \$506/month for a family of 4, adding pressure to overcrowd smaller units. Our community members share some of the strife behind this crisis:

*We don’t understand why we can’t stay with 7 people in a 2 bedroom apartment.*

*The house has 2 or 3 bedrooms and is enough for 10 people... but then the apartment manager says, “you are crowded” and evicts them. Now the family is homeless. If you have children, DHS might help find housing... the waiting time is at least 4 months... meanwhile, they have to send their children to different homes. This is the type of homelessness that people don’t see.*

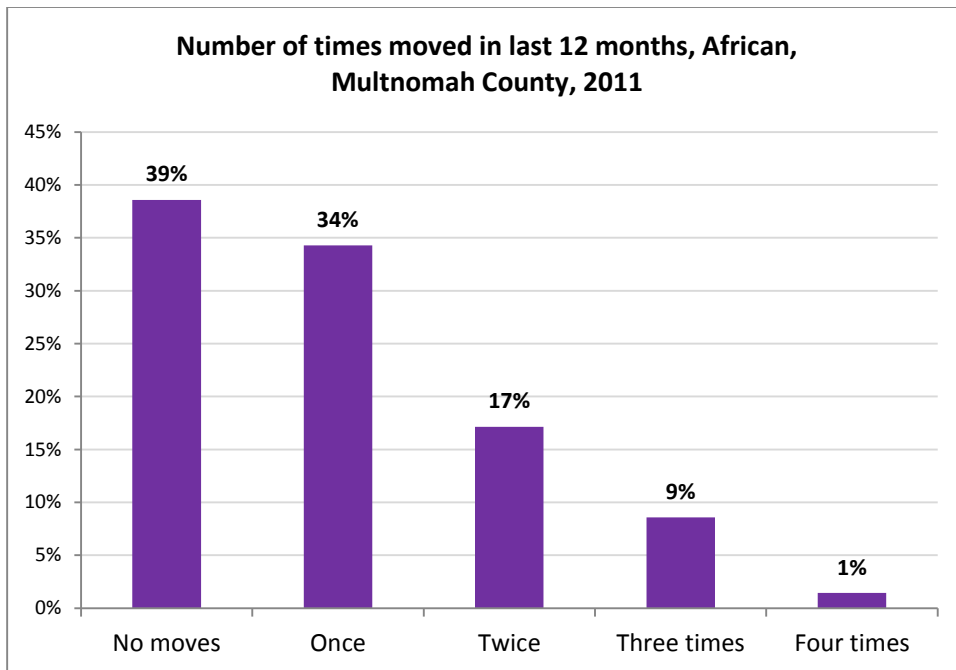
Sometimes the situation deteriorates and the police are called. This is a nightmare for us. We have not been exposed to police who are not abusive. We fear deportation, we fear abuse, and we fear retaliation. And we fear losing our housing. Without translation, we are unable to explain our version of what happened and unable to balance the landlord or housing manager’s portrayal of the situation. It is very unfair to have housing disputes settled in this way.

Africans in Multnomah county move frequently – the chart below shows that more than one-in-four community members moves annually. And this pattern is not seen among Whites where only one-in-six move annually.



Source: Custom data extractions by the Population Research Center, Portland State University, from the American Community Survey, 2008 for Multnomah county data. Additional data from the American Community Survey, 2008.

Our African Community Survey (2011) shows a much greater likelihood of moving frequently. According to our own research, fully 61% of the community moved within the last 12 months. It is not surprising that we found greater incidents in our own study as moving itself reduces the likelihood that community members will participate in the conventional surveys implemented by the Census Bureau.



Source: African Community Survey, 2011.

Many within the community have moved more than once – at 27% who have moved two or more times in the last 12 months. Housing affordability and safety is a pronounced issue with almost half (47%) of the local African community stating they were unable to find affordable and safe housing. Issues of overcrowding, ill health, bad treatment by landlords, lack of proper education about the rights of tenants, and neighborhood safety concerns accompany these experiences and frequently catalyze the need to move.

Unfortunately, moving often is associated with an array of negative outcomes. With every move, there are increased likelihood of mental health challenges (as suicide risks increase with what is called “social fragmentation” and “social isolation”<sup>87</sup>), decreased academic performance,<sup>88</sup> and a strong impact on the likelihood of dropping out of school.<sup>89</sup>

## Recommendations

15. It is imperative that solutions be found to the African housing crisis that is unique for many features: the intersection of language difficulties, cultural norms of occupancy that differ so much from that in US society, low incomes, vulnerability due to poverty, racism and bias of those involved, and the absence of culturally-specific services to assist us outside Multnomah county with housing.
16. The supply of subsidized housing must be increased immediately. We also seek for an expansion to occupancy standards to better reflect our cultural norms.

17. We highlight the necessity for expanded access to translators and policy that requires landlords and housing managers to ensure that conflict and disputes are comprehensible to African tenants.
18. It is important that housing is understood as a human right instead of a consumption item to be purchased in the private market and vulnerable to the practices of landlords. If such an understanding were to be advanced, there would be shared investments with the entire community to ensure that we were all well-housed.

## Health and Well Being among Africans

Very specific needs accompany African refugees and immigrants into the USA. These range from learning the language, to learning the social service structure, to applying for income support programs. Needs also include learning about child entitlements and child welfare standards, to legal sanctions for polygamy, to revised social structures between men and women – with at times men being offended by conventions such as making welfare payments in the wife’s name, to men and women (even boys and girls) being taught together, and to the general disempowering feature of being a novice in wider society as one needs to begin again with low-level jobs, poverty wages, and learning English. Settlement is bewildering, made more difficult by the one-sided imposition of dominant US conventions upon Africans. Acculturation is expected, and mutuality – and sometimes even mutual regard – is withheld. Acclimatizing to US society is very difficult with high stress and role changes required.

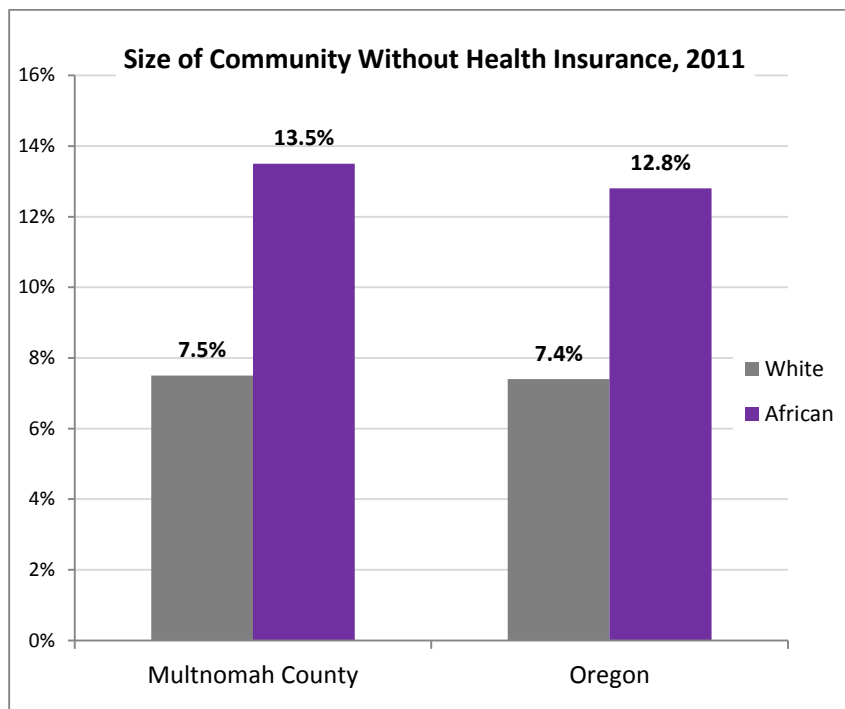
Noted earlier is that 20% of immigrants and 44% of refugees suffers from depression and similar numbers suffer anxiety disorders, while the general population has levels that are approximately 7%.<sup>90</sup> Additional struggles emerge when medical and counseling supports are not accessed:

*There are many reasons why people may not seek care or advice for mental health issues: language barriers to accessing care, cultural stigma about mental illness, social isolation and lack of insurance to pay for care... communication, even with interpreters, is difficult across cultures and complicates care, especially in the area of mental health.*<sup>91</sup>

Often times it can take months to identify mental health difficulties, as the cumulative impacts of PTSD, employment- and settlement-related stress are felt, and as the community member seeks his or her way towards identifying a problem and seeking supports. It is not uncommon to find that Medicaid coverage has ended by the time that support is arranged, remembering that refugees have access to only 8 months of support, and even if families are eligible for TANF, frequently parents are unable to get onto the Oregon Health Plan for health coverage. The 2010 lottery process resulted in only 2,000 people being added to the plan – a 4% success rate for the 50,000 who applied.



Today, access to health insurance is limited. The portion of the African community that is uninsured is almost double that of Whites, as 13.5% of Africans are without health insurance. The number is only slightly less for Africans across Oregon.



Source: Custom data extractions by ECONorthwest from the American Community Survey, 2011.

For our children, we do not know the numbers who are able to successfully navigate the system to obtain health insurance through Healthy Kids. While the state of Oregon is applauded for making such access universal for children who are low income, they do not collect sufficient data to allow us to see whether our children are accessing the program. Healthy Kids considers Africans to be African Americans, and does not collect data on refugee status, preferred language of communication, or any ancestry information. We are thus invisible in this system and thus unable to determine whether there are access barriers for our community.

Non-clinical care and supports are natural within the African community. While important supports might exist in the community, the stress of acculturation, economic demands, trauma and tragedy and isolation from formal supports are pronounced.<sup>92</sup> Informal supports such as religion, social networks, intentional support groups, talking with an elder or close friend help overcome the stigma and finances that often keep people from formal care. And affordable, culturally-specific formal care is an essential ingredient for the care continuum.

Well being is also tied to gender-related struggles. African family structures are typically male-led, with men being the leaders and breadwinners in the family. In the USA, however, African women are more likely to get employed than their male partners and also more likely to have higher incomes.<sup>93</sup> So too are

government checks likely to be issued in the names of the woman, and women are more likely to develop English skills than their male partners. As a result, role transitions are pronounced and typically disruptive of male stature and position in the family. Says one of our community members:

*Sometimes it is easier to be a black woman than a black man... the woman gets a job and the husband is at home. So now we have totally destabilized the entire fabric of our lives because the man is used to going places, making money and now it is the woman who is bringing home the money and the man is the one who is sitting and feeling useless. And then your children see this and that begins to impact how the children related with the mother and the father. And now you have this whole destabilization of the entire family and the entire community.*

The community shared a story of a man who would rather be cut off social assistance than attend classes with villagers who he used to see as inferior to him, and with his wife. Such conditions were intolerable. He must suffer the penalty of not changing his behavior quickly enough to be spared the shame and the financial penalty of being cut off from assistance.

Additional features of role transitions occur in the area of education. Young women are generally empowered in the USA to seek and attain higher education. While there are distinct benefits for this in childrearing and increased economic prospects both for the family and for incomes for the next generation, there is disruption to the existing gendered relations between men and women.

It is not uncommon to hear stories of girls not attending school as they need to ride school buses with boys – a cultural prohibition that needs explanation and local solutions. Such solutions are possible only once the problem has been identified (it typically begins with school officials reporting the youth for truancy), the need explained, and local parents involved in defining solutions. And this practice places young girls and boys in direct competition with each other, serving to challenge role expectations.

One consequence of reworked gender relationships is the profound disorientation and futility experienced by men in our families. Stories of being “babies again”<sup>94</sup> is a familiar framework:

*Some of these refugees ask themselves whether they will ever fit in America...If you know that African men are the heads of their families, and they are the breadwinners, you will understand the frustration... The feeling of inadequacy, the distance, the realization that you want to write but you cannot, make the reality traumatic... It is hard. It brings heartbreaks. Men live here in perpetual heartbreak.*<sup>95</sup>

Sometimes, men’s angst results in violence against women and children. When one experiences frustration and challenges (intended or unintended) to one’s stature, this threat catalyzes an effort to regain control, and the route to such control is the subjugation of those that threaten this stature, even more likely when violence has been an act used in the past to subjugate the person currently being challenged.<sup>96</sup>

Solutions to such situations need to be navigated in a culturally-specific manner, by leaders and elders who understand the nature of the experiences of such men. It would be a grave mistake to have these disputes among African families addressed by those who share a racial identity with colonizers. A history of hostile colonial relationships between the client and worker serves to contaminate the work with tension and mistrust.<sup>97</sup> And the existence of language barriers has been found to result in an over-diagnosis of service users 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.<sup>98</sup>

Health issues are further complicated when culturally-specific care is ignored. In the USA, the patient is expected to present symptoms and to make connections between experience and health issues (such as sleeping patterns, diet, or emotional resilience) for the health professional. Health literacy has helped develop such an environment of "noticing" dimensions of health particularly among those with higher education levels. But such an approach is counter-cultural to the stature and expertise of the African doctor: "we come from a culture where we place the doctor at a very high level... so we expect the doctor to know what our health problem is."<sup>99</sup>

So too are there cultural difficulties in navigating health systems, and dynamics of disrespect, minimizing care (on the assumption of poverty), and impatience are not uncommon for Africans in Multnomah county.<sup>100</sup> While we would like to believe that conventional White health professionals can stretch their capacities across racial, ethnic and cultural divisions, our experience is that this is rarely possible. Experiences of disrespect and unequal treatment are abundant in the African community when seeking hospital-based care in Portland, with experiences including the following:

- An assumption that African women are receiving public assistance, presuming them to be poor
- Being responded to more slowly than their White roommates
- Providers do not affirm the beauty and lovability of African patients<sup>101</sup>

At some level, there appears to be a presumption that African parents do not know how to care for their babies nor even care about their children. Such is the interpretation of researchers who led a study of 222 African and African American mothers who gave birth in hospitals in Portland.<sup>102</sup> In addition, their study revealed that only 19% of participants had no negative experiences at the hospital, with 9% feeling disrespected, and 8% being frightened while at the hospital. Humiliation levels were marked lower at 2%, and the same level existed in experiencing personal racism and feeling unsafe. But in today's context, any amount of humiliation or racism is unacceptable. In total, ⅓ of African women had concerns about their treatment at the hospitals where they gave birth.

While it is important to include cultural competency training for health professionals and other service providers, this is an inadequate response for ensuring that health and human services are appropriate, accountable and effective for Africans. Our favored approach is to expand the range of culturally-specific services available to the African community – and we will cover this at length in the next section.

To close this section, it is important to notice too that our service providers also suffer in the midst of these needs, tensions and frustrations. Today's prolonged economic recession has hit people of color hardest,<sup>103</sup> and as the most vulnerable of these communities (due to poverty, racism, lack of social networks, lack of domestic credentials and experience, and ongoing struggles with survival and mental health), Africans suffer the consequences at high levels. Many calls to African-serving organizations come in daily and are met by compassionate and understanding staff, but sometimes the tensions are too great, or the disappointment that no services are available or that income supports cannot be provided that service users vent their frustrations onto those African community members who happen to be on the other side of the phone line. It is very difficult to have limited resources and constrained eligibility criteria when people are in need.

*Many families have incomes that are the same as their rent. IRCO gets 50 phone calls requesting assistance and can only help 10. What about their bills? There is not enough funding to help these families. The demand is so very high.*

The resilience of organizations such as Africa House, from IRCO, the Center for Intercultural Organizing and from Lutheran Community Service's African Counseling Service must too be affirmed. To retain compassion, respect and empathy and a non-blaming approach to distress is the signal of the highest caliber of service provision.

## Recommendations

19. All Africans need access to accurate information about the resources available, the conditions for accessing services, the pathways to citizenship, advocacy practices for supporting our children, and options for involvement in building social justice and racial equity for our community. We need information to support our engagement and our ability to meet the needs of our family, and additional supports to then work on behalf of the entire community.

## Advancing the Call for Culturally-Specific Services<sup>104</sup>

In the above section, numerous issues related to ensuring that service providers hold a shared racial and cultural identity with service users have emerged. One such delivery method – that of “culturally-specific services” provides an important advance to ensure that the needs of communities of color are held central to the concerns of the organization and to how the organization interprets success of its efforts. Mainstream services have been inadequate in responding to our needs, and we suggest that it is the nature of power relationships within the organization and its relationship to communities of color that create institutional racism and racial disparities. In our perspective, culturally-specific services hold much greater promise for creating the conditions for racial equity in terms of the outcomes of service interventions.

There are a small but growing set of research articles that illustrate the positive benefits of culturally-specific services.<sup>105</sup> We find that they hold the potential to provide vastly improved services to people of color and simultaneously become an important form of social and economic capital, with benefits stretching across the community. In an era of profound racial inequities, such investments must not be seen as marginal.

	<b>Mainstream Services</b>	<b>Culturally-Specific Services</b>
<b>1. Primary experience</b>	Outsider	Insider
<b>2. Own culture</b>	Not affirmed or possibly denied or demeaned	Centered and affirmed
<b>3. Commitment to the success of people of color</b>	Frequently an afterthought, and sometimes active disinterest or devalued (at worst)	Durable and deeply rooted
<b>4. Accountability</b>	To a wide group which might include some representation of communities of color	To specific communities of color
<b>5. Discourse</b>	Generally accepting of dominant discourse	Typically resistive discourses adopted
<b>6. Assessments</b>	Keep problems individualized and tending towards pathologizing	Problems are socialized, contextualized and issues of racism and discrimination will be included prominently
<b>7. Interventions</b>	Not culturally-relevant and likely limited to individual and family interventions	Culturally-relevant and likely to include community development and systemic and individual advocacy
<b>8. Epistemology</b>	Likely reliant on external sources of expertise and treating community of color as having invalid knowledge	Community members as experts with subjective knowledges affirmed
<b>9. Design influence</b>	Minimal involvement of communities of color, brought for occasional consultations late in the process	Community members deeply involved

Source: Curry-Stevens (2012).<sup>106</sup>

Relations between whites and communities of color have changed dramatically over the generations. Initial encounters were those of annihilation. Next came segregation and “separate but equal” policies. Following the civil rights movement and the dismantling of segregation policies came the advent of assimilation with vestiges of the desirability of the “melting pot” remaining with us today. It is such an approach that is echoed in the “one-size-fits-all” approach to services. Next came that of colorblindness that was the advent of liberal whites. Experiencing the receiving end of such a gaze is fraught with ignorance and isolation, and ripe with discourse that precludes the possibility of naming racism or White privilege – an approach that leaves institutional racism not even being namable, let alone deconstructed. Next has come the approach of “tolerance” which sets a much too low bar for acceptance and equality. Again consider what it means to receive such a gaze – if one is tolerated, few expectations exist for real inclusion or the sharing of power. The remnants of all these approaches remain in U.S. society today. Today’s advent of “cultural competency” training can be a beneficial when it is incorporated within larger change efforts to increase accountability to communities of color and to meaningfully incorporate them in organizational reforms. Unfortunately, all-too-often it simply aims to train individual providers in communicating across differences. Such an approach is an inadequate response to needs.

We need to ensure that culturally-specific services are well funded. While these are typically arranged on the basis of proportion of the population (ie. Getting our “fair share” according to our numbers), we aim for an upwards allocation beyond simply allocation on the basis of numbers to reflect the complexity and depth of need that exists in serving communities of color – such as over-involvement in school discipline, lowered achievement levels, and over-involvement in child welfare and juvenile justice. Complexities of need – with the primary cause being generations of failed services and systems – need to be reflected in allocation decisions.

A final caution in allocation decisions: funding decisions typically value prior funding history, pre-existing relationships, ability to evaluate programs, high-stature recommendation letters and low cost competitive bids. All these factors serve to reinforce the conventional funding patterns and preference for large mainstream institutions. Serious commitments to the needs of communities of color simultaneously involves examining decision making practices and discourses – and reworking them to ensure equity in access to funds.

Equity in access to quality services also requires changed accountability conditions for mainstream services. In many cases, culturally-specific services are not available and people of color must use mainstream services such as child welfare, public schools, institutions of higher education and local community centers. We need to ensure that all services ensure that communities of color are able to access services and are well served, particularly in terms of outcomes of services. We must end the practice of mainstream services making promises to serve all communities yet failing to hold them accountable in terms of the quantity and quality of such service. To facilitate moving beyond good intentions to equitable outcomes, funding bodies must require such accountability from services. Such is part of the advocacy platform of the Coalition of Communities of Color and also that such data be routinely collected and made available to potential and to actual service users.

We direct the reader’s attention to Appendix #1 where Multnomah County’s policy on culturally-specific services can be found. Here the specifics of the definition and the service elements can be found.

## **Policy Recommendations**

Urgency and immediacy are the required responses to the situation facing many African immigrants and refugees. Inaction is impossible. Failing to act means legitimizing poverty and spiraling distress. Inaction will seal the fate of this community to marginalization, damaging levels of distress and ongoing exclusion from mainstream society. Failing to take action as our research compels will be the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s continued entrenchment in institutional racism and a White legacy of silent complicity.

At the end of most sections of this report, there are key policy priorities developed to address the pressing needs of the African community. Collated below, we implore our elected leaders and policy community to advance this robust agenda that addresses our needs and the future of our children.

### **Education Reform**

1. We aim to end the inappropriate mainstreaming of our children and youth. We need to make an intensive year of support available for our youth, and to sustain them in a culturally-specific environment without the pressure to fit into a specific grade.
2. Accurate assessments of the achievements of students who come to the USA are needed. It is essential to determine the exact differences, in terms of credits, between various diplomas and certificates.
3. We need accurate and routine information on how our children and youth are doing in school. Accordingly, we ask all school boards and the Oregon Department of Education to ensure that our community can be differentiated from that of African Americans.
4. Our children need to enter schools where teachers and staff look like them and understand their culture and the conditions of their arrival in the USA. Improved recruiting and hiring of African teachers must be made a priority, as well as equity efforts inside each school board to retain and promote these teachers through the ranks.
5. All teachers who engage with our children need to understand the history, the challenges and the conditions in which our children encounter their world. Understanding will provide an important link to reducing the isolation and vulnerability of our students.
6. We press our school boards to build rapid systems for recognizing African professional and experiential credentials so that we can be hired into the schools to both increase racial equity in hiring, and also to create a more welcoming, affirming and culturally-responsive academic environment.
7. Finally, many of our children are in Limited English Proficiency programs. It is imperative that this program be of the highest quality and that we as parents and consumers be assured that all school boards will meet federal regulations in LEP programs.

### **Employment**

8. It is time for a robust, non-imperial, welcoming and easy to access system for recognizing foreign credentials. For the regulated professions, concrete, transparent, appropriate and low-cost equivalence measuring must be made available.
9. Provide paid skills training programs of short duration that prepare workers for specific occupations and/or jobs. These could be informed by local employers' needs and technological expectations.
10. Provide on-the-job training for the first month of employment for immigrant and refugee workers that subsidize employer's wages paid to workers and that would be rebated if the worker successfully transitions to become a regular employee. This would enable our community to be more rapidly employed (and not delayed for a training period) and provide supports for employers to hire our community members.

11. A workers' rights information campaign is needed to advise workers of their entitlements on working conditions, the rights to unionize, and the programs and services available to them for both prevention and for intervention when things go wrong.
12. To support employment, keeping public transportation costs low and routes accessible and convenient is essential.

### **Unemployment**

13. It is essential that employment be considered a human right. African community members are exhausted with lengthy job searches and low prospects for finding living wage jobs. Providing real options for a positive future is essential for improving the well being of the community.

### **Remittances**

14. It is well beyond time for international aid of sufficient size and quality that supports African development and peacemaking across the continent. Residents and policy makers in Multnomah county can advance a shifted discourse about the responsibility that those in the USA hold for real reforms in Africa. An end to exploitation, harmful structural adjustment programs, and mere crumbs of international aid are essential dimensions of such reforms.

### **Housing**

15. It is imperative that solutions be found to the African housing crisis that is unique for many features: the intersection of language difficulties, cultural norms of occupancy that differ so much from that in US society, low incomes, vulnerability due to poverty, racism and bias of those involved, and the absence of culturally-specific services to assist us outside Multnomah county with housing.
16. The supply of subsidized housing must be increased immediately. We also seek for an expansion to occupancy standards to better reflect our cultural norms.
17. We highlight the necessity for expanded access to translators and policy that requires landlords and housing managers to ensure that conflict and disputes are comprehensible to African tenants.
18. It is important that housing is understood as a human right instead of a consumption item to be purchased in the private market and vulnerable to the practices of landlords.

### **Health and Human Services**

19. All Africans need access to accurate information about the resources available, the conditions for accessing services, the pathways to citizenship, advocacy practices for supporting our children, and options for involvement in building social justice and racial equity for our community.

In addition to these priorities, we support the community-wide policy recommendations that the Coalition of Communities of Color has developed and endorsed. These measures will advance the needs of our people.

- 1. 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 the State, Metro, County and City governments, including 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. Elements of such an initiative would include:

- Policies to reflect these commitments are needed.
- 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.
- Disparities must be understood institutionally, ideologically, behaviorally and historically. Institutional racism must be a major feature of disparity reduction work.
- Effectively resource these initiatives and place control of these initiatives in the leadership of communities of color.
- Transparency must feature across all institutional efforts.
- Annual updates must be conducted and the results available to the general public.

- 2. *Expand funding for culturally-specific services.***<sup>107</sup> 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. Recognizing the complexity and depth of need that exists for communities of color requires that we are provided with a higher funding base in recognition of the urgent need for ameliorative interventions. Culturally-specific services are the most appropriate service delivery method for our people. Service providers within culturally-specific services must be involved in establishing funding formulas for such designations.

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. This supports our ability to respond to community needs and to work in solidarity with them to address larger injustices.
- Accountability to the specific community of color for whom services are delivered.
- Top leadership (Board of Directors or equivalent) are primarily composed of community members who share the same racial and ethnic identity. This means they have a lived experience of racism and discrimination and will address these at all levels of practice.

- Located in 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.
- 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.

**3. *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 or 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.

**4. *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.

Current economic development initiatives and urban renewal activities do not address equity concerns nor poverty and unemployment among communities of color. Protected initiatives to support access of minority-owned businesses to contracting dollars, along with small business development initiatives must ensure equitable distribution of resources and the public benefits that flow from such investments.

**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 be prioritized.

Significant reductions in dropout rates of youth of color, improvements in graduation rates, increased access to early childhood education (with correlated reductions in disparities that exist by the time children enter kindergarten) and participation in post-secondary education and training programs is essential for the success of our youth.

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. Disparity reduction efforts will include the following:
  - Establishing an external accountability structure that serves an auditing function to keep local and state governments accountable. This leaves the work less vulnerable to changes in leadership.
  - Creating annual reports on the status of inequities on numerous measures.
  - Continuing to work with mainstream groups to advise on changes in data collection, research and policy practices to reduce disparities, undercounting and the invisibility of communities of color.
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.

Better data collection practices on the race and ethnicity of service users needs to exist. Self-identification is essential, with service providers helping affirm a prideful identification of one's race and ethnicity as well as assurances that no harm will come from identifying as a person of color. We also want people to be able to identify more than one race or ethnicity, by allowing multiple identifiers to be used. The Coalition of Communities of Color then wants research practices and usage statistics to accurately and routinely reveal variances and disproportionality by race and ethnicity. The Coalition will consult with researchers and administrators as needed on such improvements.

9. ***Fund community development.*** Significantly expand community development funding for communities of color. Build line items into State, Metro, 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. The current partnership with Meyer Memorial Trust to develop the leadership within communities of color is one step towards this vision.
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.

Data collection tools must routinely ask service users to identify their race and ethnicity, and allow for multiple designations to be specified. These data must then be disclosed in an open and transparent manner. The Coalition of Communities of Color expects to be involved in the design of these data collection tools. Outcomes by race and ethnicity need to be publicly available on an annual basis.

**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 to aim to 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.

## Closing Comments on the African Community

The complexity of issues facing the African immigrant and refugee community commands attention. While this is a highly educated group, particularly in post-graduate education, the community is not able to access jobs that reflect these qualifications. Our best understanding of this is that the intersection of the US diminishment of foreign credentials and work experience intersects with language difficulties and institutional racism leading to underemployment and unemployment. The depths of racism, social exclusion, and inadequate income support programs render more than 67% of our children living in poverty.

This is the first time that African-specific data has been brought to light. Our databases across systems do not report on the African community. All institutions fail this community, from education to child welfare, to health and even health equity initiatives. Researchers need to build capacity in bringing an anti-racism lens to their work, questioning whether or not they have the data on the diversity of communities of color, and working to modify research and data collection practices in order to make the

invisible visible. Hopefully this report will awaken mainstream researchers and policy makers alike.

Our African community joins with other communities of color to advance racial equity and social justice. We aim to build political and social capital through the development of strong social movements, advocacy practices and increased involvement in the political and legislative process.

## **Appendix #1: Multnomah County's philosophy and implementation of culturally-specific services**

### **Philosophy of Culturally Specific Service Delivery**

Multnomah County believes that funding should follow the client and not the other way around. In the business world, this is known as “customer choice.” Over years of service delivery to communities of color it has been made clear that consumer choice for people of color and ethnic communities is based on three dimensions: comfort, confidence, and trust. These dimensions are strongest in an environment where the organizations and/or institutions providing the services reflect the values, histories and cultures of those being served. Agencies which hire one or two culturally specific staff members do not provide an environment where comfort, confidence and trust are maximized for clients. Communities of color are characterized by significant language and cultural differences from the majority culture of the United States. One of these characteristics is a personal or relational way of interacting with service providers, rather than an impersonal bureaucratic way of interacting with service providers, which is more common in mainstream culture. This fact makes it important that the overall “feel” of an organization be familiar and comfortable to the client receiving services. While the specifics of these characteristics vary in the African American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Slavic and the many African and Refugee cultures in Multnomah county, all of these communities share the need for a culturally specific style of personal interaction, language, and organizational culture.

Indeed, in our experience not only do members of the various communities of color prefer to seek services from culturally-specific providers, but there are many issues that clients may not have the trust to openly discuss and confront outside a culturally-specific context. Some of these issues include but are not limited to domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, gang involvement, financial hardships, youth sexuality, and family and relationship problems. Thus, culturally-specific services are not only the preferred service provider for many people of color and immigrants, in many cases they may be the only provider in which individuals and families will feel comfortable asking for and receiving appropriate services.

### **Values Statement**

Multnomah County values and celebrates the rich diversity of our community. Through diversity comes a sense of community. Community provides a wealth of experience and different perspectives that enriches everyone's life. Communities in Multnomah County have a long tradition of supporting each other through families, churches and community organizations. Cultural minorities are more likely to engage individuals and organizations that are intimately knowledgeable of the issues of poverty and minority disproportionality facing the community today, and further, whose services are culturally specific, accessible and provided with compassion. Therefore, we are committed to providing a continuum of culturally specific services including prevention, intervention and anti-poverty services throughout Multnomah County that ensures the welfare, stability and growth of children and families who are part of at-risk, minority populations. By so doing, these individuals will be able to contribute and participate in the civic life of our county.

**Criteria for Culturally Specific Service Providers:**

The following section identifies specific criteria that Multnomah uses to identify and designate organizations which have developed the capacity to provide culturally specific services. The following criteria should be used in Request for Proposals, contracting, and other funding processes to determine the appropriateness and eligibility of specific organizations to receive culturally specific funding. Both geographic hubs and culturally specific service organizations should be required to meet these criteria in order to receive funding from the resources that are dedicated to culturally specific service provision. These agency characteristics are expected to be in place at the time the organization applies for culturally specific services and not be characteristics or capacities that the agency proposes to develop over a period of time after contracts are signed. The criteria include:

- Majority of agency clients served are from a particular community of color: African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino, African and Refugee, and Slavic.
- Organizational environment is culturally focused and identified as such by clients.
- Prevalence of bilingual and/or bicultural staff reflects the community that is proposed to be served.
- Established and successful community engagement and involvement with the community being served.

**Contracting Implementation:**

Steps will be taken throughout all phases of the Request for Proposals process to ensure that Multnomah County contracts are given to organizations that have the capacity to provide the best culturally specific services. Those steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Refer to the definition of culturally specific service providers when reviewing funding applications.
- Create and implement an effective process to validate the accuracy of an organization's claim that they're a culturally specific service provider using the aforementioned definition and eliminate applications that do not meet the criteria.
- Include a requirement to submit past performance documentation regarding County contracts to ensure contracting with the most qualified providers and to achieve the highest quality of service delivery.
- Verify with partnering organization(s) that the relationship(s) referred to in an application exist and that the scope of work is targeted toward the work Multnomah County is supporting.
- Include representation from the communities that are proposed to be served on committee and review panels for their respective communities.

## Appendix #2: Language definitions<sup>108</sup>

**Ally:** “A member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression which gives her or him privilege. For example, a white person who works to end racism, or a man who works to end sexism” (Bishop, 1994, p. 126).

**Anti-Oppressive Practice:** a person-centered philosophy; and egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people’s lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies on their interaction and the work they do together (Dominelli, 1994, p.3).

**Communities of color:** Four communities are traditionally recognized as being of color – Native American, African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latino. To these four groups, the Coalition of Communities of Color also recognizes and includes two communities: Slavic and African immigrant and refugee. Note that there is some tension in whether Latinos are a racial or an ethnic group. Most databases define them as a separate ethnic group, as opposed to a racial group. In Multnomah county, we define Latinos as a community of color and primarily understand the Latino experience as one significantly influenced by racism. We include the Slavic community as a community of color as their experiences are similar to those of other communities of color, and include marginalization, powerlessness, and dominant discourses that prevent their fair treatment and inclusion.

**Cultural Competence:** A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or profession and enable that system, agency, or profession to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The goal is to build skills and cultures that support the ability to interact effectively across identities. The word **culture** is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. The word **competence** is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively. Five essential elements contribute to a system, institution or agency's ability to become more culturally competent: valuing diversity; having the capacity for cultural self-assessment; being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact; having institutionalized cultural knowledge, and; having developed adaptations to service delivery and reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity (Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Isaacs, 1989).

A significant critique is emerging about the capacity of “cultural competency” to address racial disparities. The basis of this critique is that it idealizes the ability of mainstream service providers to work outside their own cultural context and provide services to communities of color. Today’s advent of “cultural competency” training can be a beneficial when it is incorporated within larger change efforts to increase accountability to communities of color and to meaningfully incorporate them in organizational reforms. Unfortunately, all-too-often it simply aims to train individual providers in communicating across differences. Such an approach is an inadequate response to needs.



**Cultural proficiency:** See “cultural competence”

**Discourse:** “A set of assumptions, socially shared and often unconscious, reflected in the language, that positions people who speak within them and frames knowledge” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.114).

**Discrimination:** “The prejudgment and negative treatment of people based on identifiable characteristics such as race, gender, religion, or ethnicity” (Barker, 1995, p.103).

**Disparities:** Are differences between population groups in the presence of any form of incidence or outcomes, including access to services. Disparities include both acceptable and unacceptable differences. (Adapted from Multnomah County Health Department, Health Equity Initiative)

**Diversity:** “Diversity refers to the broad range of human experience, emphasizing the following identities or group memberships: race, class, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, mental or physical disability, immigration status, language and linguistics” (Portland State University, 2009).

**Dominant discourse:** Refers to the prevailing discourses that typically consolidate a set of myths about particular groups of people and then reproduce these myths through language, images, and generalized beliefs about who such people are and what they are capable of. These discourses are created by those with privileged identities and serve the function of maintaining oppressive systems such as racism, thus becoming an act of oppression themselves. When these characterizations are reproduced widely, they become the accepted way of speaking about and understanding particular groups of people. An example is the dominant discourse around “Black” and all this implies, and the corollary of “White” and all this implies.

**Ethnicity:** Refers to arbitrary classifications of human populations based on the sharing of common ancestry including features such as nationality, language, cultural heritage and religion.

**Exploitation:** “When a person or people control another person or people, they can make use of the controlled people’s assets, such as resources, labor, and reproductive ability, for their own purposes. The exploiters are those who benefit, and the exploited are those who lose” (Bishop, 1994, p.129-130).

**Individual racism:** “The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both an unconscious and conscious level, and can be both active and passive” (Wijeyasinghe, Griffin & Lowe, 1997, p.89).

**Inequities:** Are disparities that result from a variety of social factors such as income inequality, economic forces, educational quality, environmental conditions, individual behavior choices, and access to

services. Health inequities are unfair and avoidable (adapted from Multnomah County Health Department, Health Equity Initiative).

**Institutional racism:**

- “The network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups. The advantages to Whites are often invisible to them, or are considered “rights” available to everyone as opposed to “privileges” awarded to only some individuals and groups” (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin & Lowe, 1997, p.93).
- Institutional racism consists of those established laws, customs and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities... whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions (Jones, 1972, p.131).
- Institutional racism is understood to exist based on the experiences of people of color, rather than intention to create inequities. One does not need to “prove” intent to discriminate in order for institutional racism to exist. Institutional racism exists by impact rather than intention.

**Internalized Dominance:** Occurs “when members of the agent group accept their group’s socially superior status as normal and deserved” (Griffin, 1997, p.76).

**Internalized Oppression:** Occurs “when members of the target group have adopted the agent group’s ideology and accept their subordinate group status as deserved, natural, and inevitable” (Griffin, 1997, p.76). Furthermore, “oppressed people usually come to believe the negative things that are said about them and even act them out” (Bishop, 1994, p.131).

**Mainstream services:** These are service organizations that are largely devoid of specific services for communities of color, or having minimal or tokenistic responses to the specific needs of these communities. They operate from the presumption that service needs are independent from racial and cultural needs, and that staff can be trained in “cultural sensitivity” or “cultural competence” to ensure delivery of quality services regardless of clients’ race and ethnicity.

**Marginalized/margins:** “Groups that have a history of oppression and exploitation are pushed further and further from the centres of power that control the shape and destiny of the society. These are the margins of society, and this is the process of marginalization” (Bishop, 1994, p.133).

**Power:** “A relational force, not a fixed entity, that operates in all interactions. While it can be oppressive, power can also be enabling” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.116).

**Prejudice:** “An opinion about an individual, group, or phenomenon that is developed without proof or systematic evidence. This prejudgment may be favorable but is more often unfavorable and may become institutionalized in the form of a society’s laws or customs” (Barker, 1995, p.290).

**Privilege:** “Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do. Access to privilege doesn’t determine one’s outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them” (McIntosh, 1988).

**Racialized:** “Process by which racial categories are constructed as different and unequal in ways that have social, economic and political consequences” (Galabuzi, 2006, p.251).

**Racism:** “A system in which one group of people exercises power over another or others on the basis of social constructed categories based on distinctions of physical attributes such as skin color” (Galabuzi, 2006, p.252).

**Relative Rate Index (RRI):** Is a methodology for measuring rate differences between groups to estimate disparity of a phenomenon. It involves calculating the occurrence rate of a reference and a second group and comparing the resulting ratio to 1. For a more in depth discussion of RRI and methods for calculating, see U.S. Department of Justice (2006). *Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Washington D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

**Social justice:** “Social justice is both a process and a goal that (1) seeks equitable (re)distribution of resources, opportunities and responsibilities; (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) empowers all people to enhance self-determination and realize their full potential; (4) and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action” (Portland State University, 2009).

**Stereotype:** “An undifferentiated, simplistic attribution that involves a judgment of habits, traits, abilities, or expectations and is assigned as a characteristic to all members of a group regardless of individual variation and with no attention to the relation between the attributions and the social contexts in which they have arisen” (Weinstein & Mellen, 1997, p.175).

**Systemic racism:** “Refers to social processes that tolerate, reproduce and perpetuate judgments about racial categories that produce racial inequality in access to life opportunities and treatment” (Galabuzi, 2006, p.253).

**Tokenism:** “A dominant group sometimes promotes a few members of an oppressed group to high positions, and then uses them to claim there are no barriers preventing any member of that group from reaching a position with power and status. The people promoted are tokens, and the process is called tokenism. Tokens can also be used as a buffer between the dominant and oppressed groups. It is harder for the oppressed group to name the oppression and make demands when members of their own groups are representing the dominant group” (Bishop, 1994, p.136).

**White:** Refers to the racial identity as Caucasian, regardless of ancestry or ethnicity. While conventional definitions of being White can include being Latino as well, we exclude such a definition from this text. In our situation, being White means having the racial identity as Caucasian, without being Latino.

**Whiteness:** Whiteness refers to the social construction of being White that coexists with privilege in all its forms, including being on the privileged end of history, including colonization, slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. It also includes being the beneficiaries of institutionalized and systemic racism, dominant discourses, internalized racism and individual acts of discrimination and micro-aggressions of racism in everyday life.

**White Privilege:** “White privilege is the other side of racism. Unless we name it, we are in danger of wallowing in guilt or moral outrage with no idea of how to move beyond them. It is often easier to deplore racism and its effects than to take responsibility for the privileges some of us receive as a result of it...Once we understand how white privilege operates, we can begin addressing it on an individual and institutional basis” (Rothenberg, 2002).

### Appendix #3: Detailing Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the African continent that is south of the Saharan Desert. It omits countries of North Africa including Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Western Sahara, Mali and Mauritania.



Source: Image from Wikispaces.com (at <http://b-slaglobal10.wikispaces.com>), downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/cbezh3m>.

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<sup>104</sup> This section of the report draws very heavily from our lead researcher's work on culturally specific services. Her article is as follows: Curry-Stevens, A. (2011). In defense of culturally-specific services: An epistemological, ideological and outcomes-based appeal. [under review with *Journal of Progressive Human Services*].

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<sup>107</sup> Please see Appendix #2 for a full description of culturally-specific services and the way in which Multnomah County has worked with the Coalition of Communities of Color to define the features of such services.

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