

Race & Social Justice



INITIATIVE

Report 2008:  
Looking Back,  
Moving Forward

*“ In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. ”*

– Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun

**The Race and Social Justice Initiative** is working to transform City government and to eliminate institutional racism and race-based disparities.

This report provides:

<b>Section I:</b> An introductory overview ..... 1 of the Initiative	1
<b>Section II:</b> A description of what we've done ..... 8 and how well it has worked	8
<b>Section III:</b> Our plan for the future ..... 12	12
<b>Section IV:</b> Concluding thoughts ..... 20	20

*“ It is time for all of us to have an honest conversation about race, and to take steps to eliminate institutional racism. ”*

– Mayor Greg Nickels

Prepared by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights  
Julie Nelson, Director  
Glenn Harris, RSJI Manager  
810 Third Avenue, Suite 750 • Seattle, WA 98104-1627  
206-684-4500  
[www.seattle.gov/civilrights](http://www.seattle.gov/civilrights)



Information available on request to accommodate people with disabilities.  
Designed by Rivera Design      December, 2008

Thank you to all who have worked on the Race and Social Justice Initiative  
- together we are making a difference.

# I. Race and Social Justice: An Introductory Overview

The movement to end racism in the United States is not new. Early in the nation's history, campaigns rose up to oppose Native American genocide and the enslavement of Africans. Throughout the twentieth century, organizations and individuals used legal, legislative and social pressures to fight systemic race-based discrimination and its vicious effects. In Seattle and the Pacific Northwest, local efforts to achieve race and social justice have been an important part of our region's history.

When Greg Nickels campaigned for Mayor of Seattle in the summer of 2001, he asked thousands of Seattle residents for their perceptions concerning City services and government. The range of their responses surprised him: some Seattle residents felt that the City served their interests well, while others saw the City as a remote institution that served their interests poorly, if at all.

There were a number of explanations for the chasm that seemed to divide people, but to future Mayor Nickels the single overriding factor was race. White people tended to feel engaged and well-served by City government; people of color tended to feel disengaged and poorly-served.

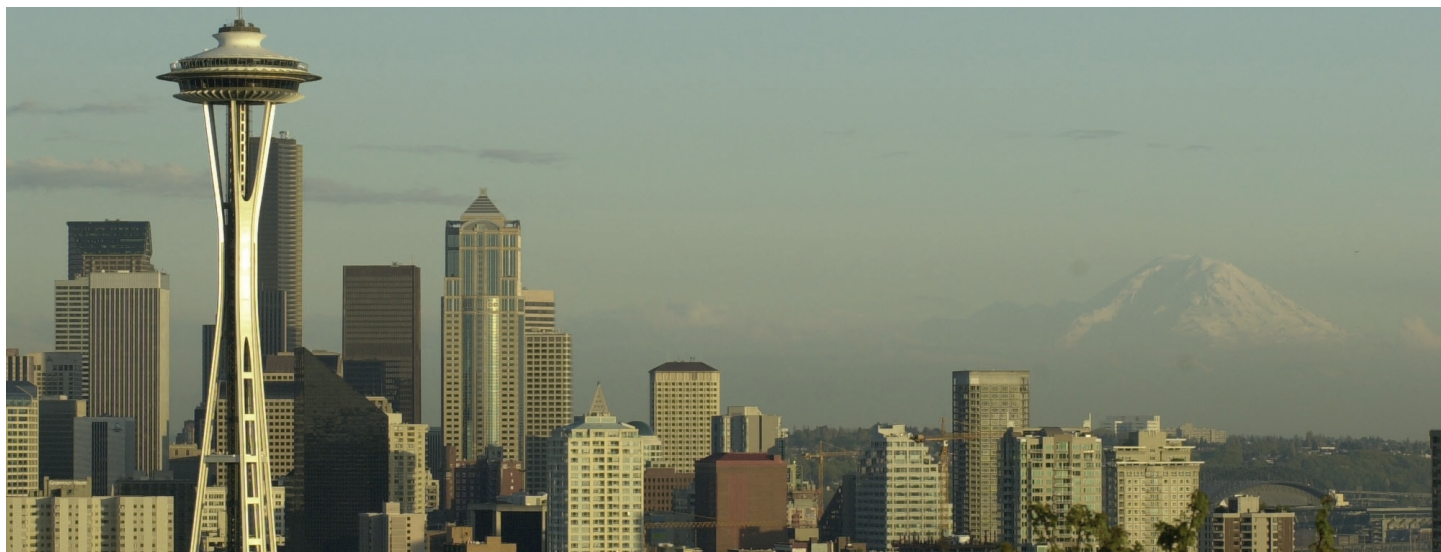
Several City departments and many staff members already had been working for years to address racial disparity and race-based barriers to the use of City services. The diversity training of the 1970s and 80s had evolved into efforts to address institutionalized racism in the 90s. After Mayor Nickels took office, he directed staff to address those concerns Citywide. His staff began to work collaboratively across City departments to develop the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). At the turn of the century, the time was ripe with Mayor Nickels' leadership and a strong cadre of internal staff to transform City government.

## Why a Race and Social Justice Initiative

Today Seattle has a liberal reputation for being progressive and accepting of people's differences. That has not always been the case, however, and despite our reputation, outcomes for people of color in Seattle are predictably worse than for white people.

When it comes to race, Seattle is no different than any other city in the United States. Race influences where we live, where we work, how well we do in school, how long we will live, and the likelihood of our involvement in the criminal justice system. The racial makeup of our neighborhoods is

a legacy of restrictive, race-based covenants and redlining (denying mortgages or homeowners' insurance to people in certain neighborhoods based on race) that were common in Seattle until the early 1950s. Prior to the civil rights movement, African Americans and other people of color in Seattle were systematically excluded from higher education and many professions and industries. To this day, people of color experience discrimination in employment, housing, education and public places. Significant race-based disparities exist in economic equity, environmental justice, criminal justice, health and education.



It is important to acknowledge the unique situation in which RSJI planners found themselves in 2004. No American city or other government institution had ever undertaken an initiative that focused explicitly on institutional racism. At various times dating back to the 1980s, the City of Seattle, like most other institutions, had offered a variety of diversity and cultural competency training. Such training was designed primarily to address issues that arose as the City's workforce became more racially diverse.

There was not a roadmap for this new work. Fortunately, the Mayor recognized the complex nature of RSJI design and implementation. RSJI's work, accomplishments and challenges reflect the reality of working without an already-established model for action. The Initiative has made use of a wealth of organizing tools, resources and knowledgeable people both in Seattle and across the country to develop our own model.

## From Overt to Covert: Examples of Racism in Seattle

**1862** Small pox kills 14,000 Northwest Coast Native peoples between April and December. The epidemic was both disastrous and preventable.

**1942** Japanese Americans are ordered to leave Seattle under President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. Seattle Mayor Earl Millikan and Governor Arthur Langlie declares their support of the removal. A total of 12,892 persons of Japanese ancestry from Washington State are incarcerated in internment camps.

**1964** By a margin of 115,627 to 54,448, Seattle voters reject an Open Housing Ordinance that the Seattle City Council had placed on the ballot the previous year. J. Dorm Braman, an opponent of open housing, is elected Mayor of Seattle, defeating John Cherberg, a supporter of open housing. Community leaders from the local chapters of the NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Central District Youth Club, and faith leaders like Rev. Samuel McKinney and Rev. Mance Jackson organize protests and sit-ins to do away with housing discrimination.

**2008** Racially disproportionate outcomes exist across measures of success in all areas. Over previous decades, attempts to achieve racial equity have focused on helping people of color. Now, more institutions are beginning to look for the ways systems, policies, programs and procedures work to the advantage of white people and to the detriment of people of color. To achieve racial equity, systemic changes within institutions will be necessary.

Format and concept extracted from Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity, 2007. Sources: Seattle-King County Milestones, [historylink.org](http://historylink.org); World War II Japanese American Internment -- Seattle/King County, [HistoryLink.org](http://HistoryLink.org) Essay 240, [historylink.org](http://historylink.org); The Seattle Open Housing Campaign, 1959-1968. Digital Document Library, Seattle Municipal Archives, [www.clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/doclibrary/OHousing/timeline.shtml](http://www.clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/doclibrary/OHousing/timeline.shtml); Affirmative Action and I-200, Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, [www.capaa.wa.gov/economic/affirmative\\_action.shtml](http://www.capaa.wa.gov/economic/affirmative_action.shtml)



## A commitment to meaningful change

To make a difference, the City of Seattle has committed itself to real change for the people of Seattle. The Race and Social Justice Initiative is developing new policies, practices and procedures that will result in meaningful improvements in the City's programs and services.

The Initiative has focused on the City's own programs and services, because our first priority was to "get our own house in order" – in other words, to address institutional racism within City government as a necessary first step before engaging the community more broadly.

The RSJ Initiative is not a project – it is an ongoing commitment to a new way of doing business. There are no quick fixes. Institutionalized racism has been built into our systems for hundreds of years; it cannot be eliminated over-

night. But through analysis, strategic thinking and intentional changes, we can end it. Racism is a learned behavior that can be unlearned through education and action. Ultimately, through changes in our institutions, we will achieve greater equity.

### Institutional racism:

**Organizational programs, policies or procedures that work to the benefit of white people and to the detriment of people of color, usually unintentionally or inadvertently.**

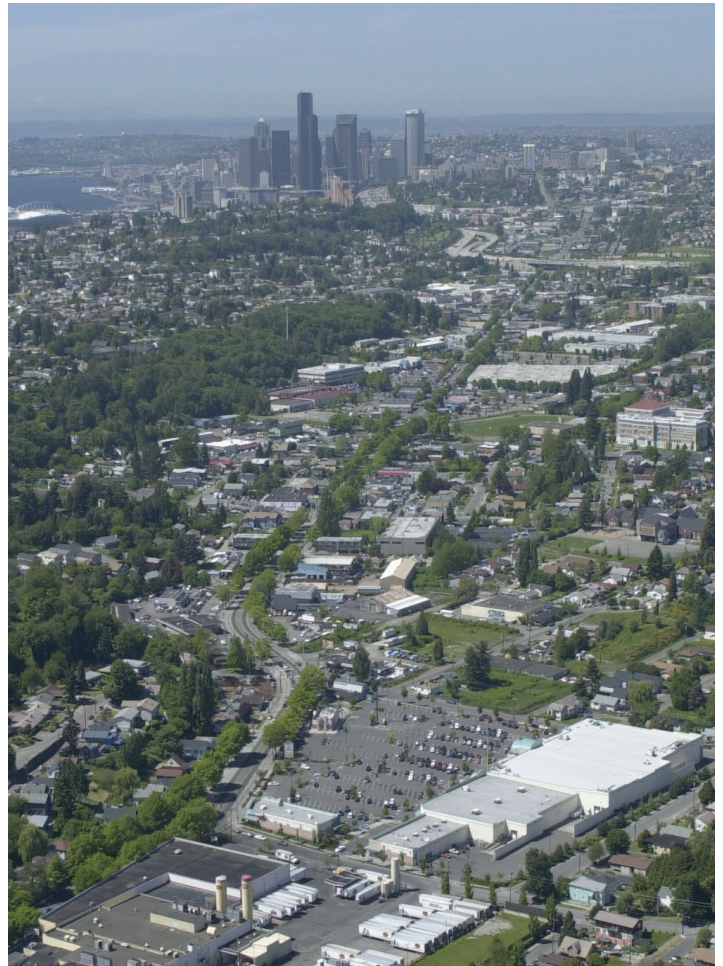
**For example, job requirements that put undue emphasis on college degrees over work experience may eliminate qualified candidates of color, who face institutional barriers to higher education.**

## Why focus on institutional racism?

The RSJ Initiative focuses on racism because race has shaped our institutions and public policies in the United States in ways that prevent us from achieving equity. All historically disadvantaged groups – lesbians and gay men, women, people with disabilities, low-income households – experience systemic inequity. Within each of these groups, however, racism also has created powerful dynamics that keep people from working together. We all have something to gain by eliminating racism; at the same time, we understand how critical it is to continue to address other social justice issues.

Until now, government typically has responded to inequities – when it has responded at all – by developing programs and services to ameliorate the effects. To eliminate inequity, however, we must focus on the root causes. Ending institutional racism involves more than simply developing programs to help people of color. The Race and Social Justice Initiative is the City of Seattle's effort to focus on the root of the problem – to change the underlying system that creates and preserves inequities – rather than attempt to treat the symptoms.

To challenge racism, we have to look beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systematic biases that are built into our institutions and our society. We are not to blame for what happened in the past, but we are responsible – both personally and collectively – for eliminating racism and its legacy today.



# A tale of two cities

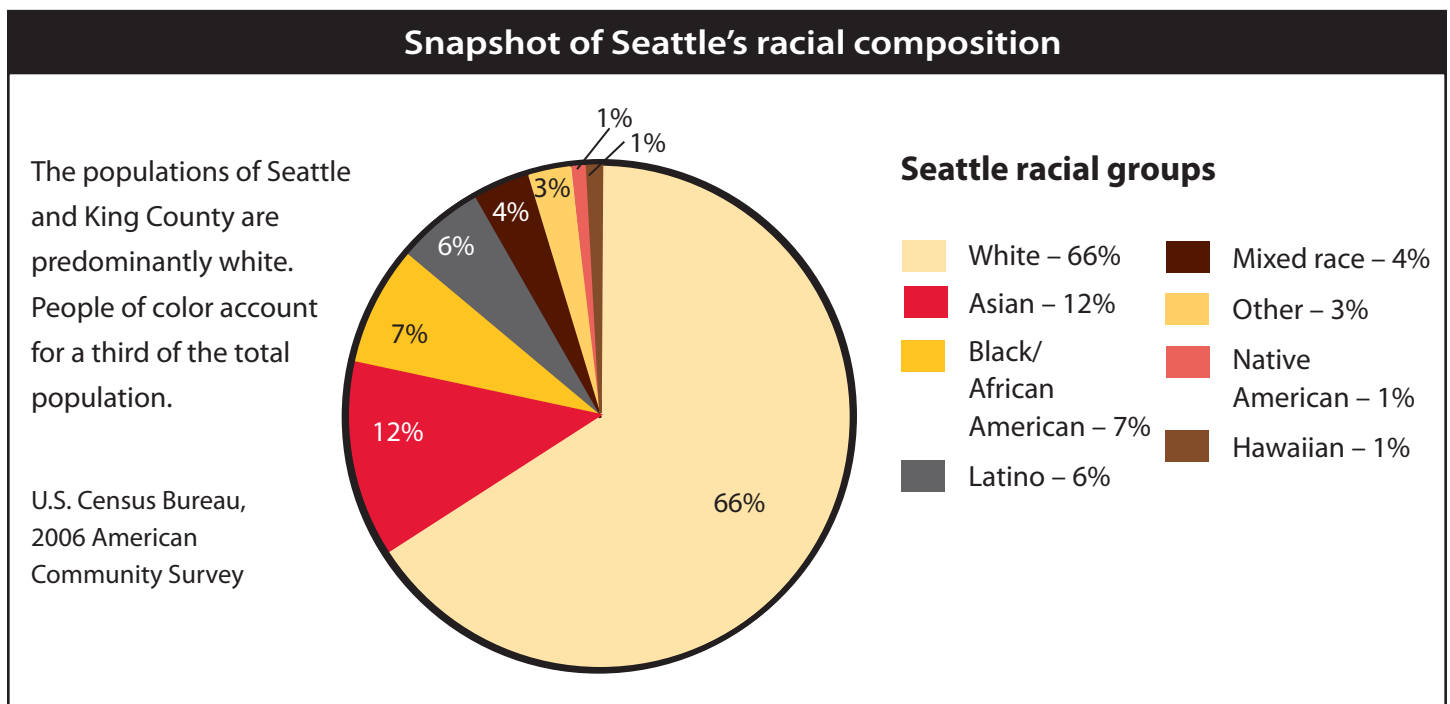
Even a cursory examination of key societal indicators in Seattle reveals stark race-based disparities in all aspects of life:

## Income and poverty

There is severe income disparity between white people and people of color in Seattle-King County. Wage disparities and the lack of family wage jobs contribute to the disproportionate number of people of color who live in poverty in Seattle. People of color comprise a relatively small percentage of the overall population, yet they account for a disproportionate number of those living in poverty.

The poverty rate for American Indian/Alaskan Natives in our area is almost one in three. Almost 30% of African Americans live in poverty. A landmark report issued this year by the Women's Funding Alliance reveals a striking gap between the wages of white men and wages earned by women of color. Latina women earn only a little over half of what white men receive; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander women earn 59%; Native American women earn 61%; and African American women earn only 63%.

A small amount of money can mean the difference between paying for rent and paying for groceries or gas. Income inequity can have a domino-effect on communities of color – pushing many families into poverty.

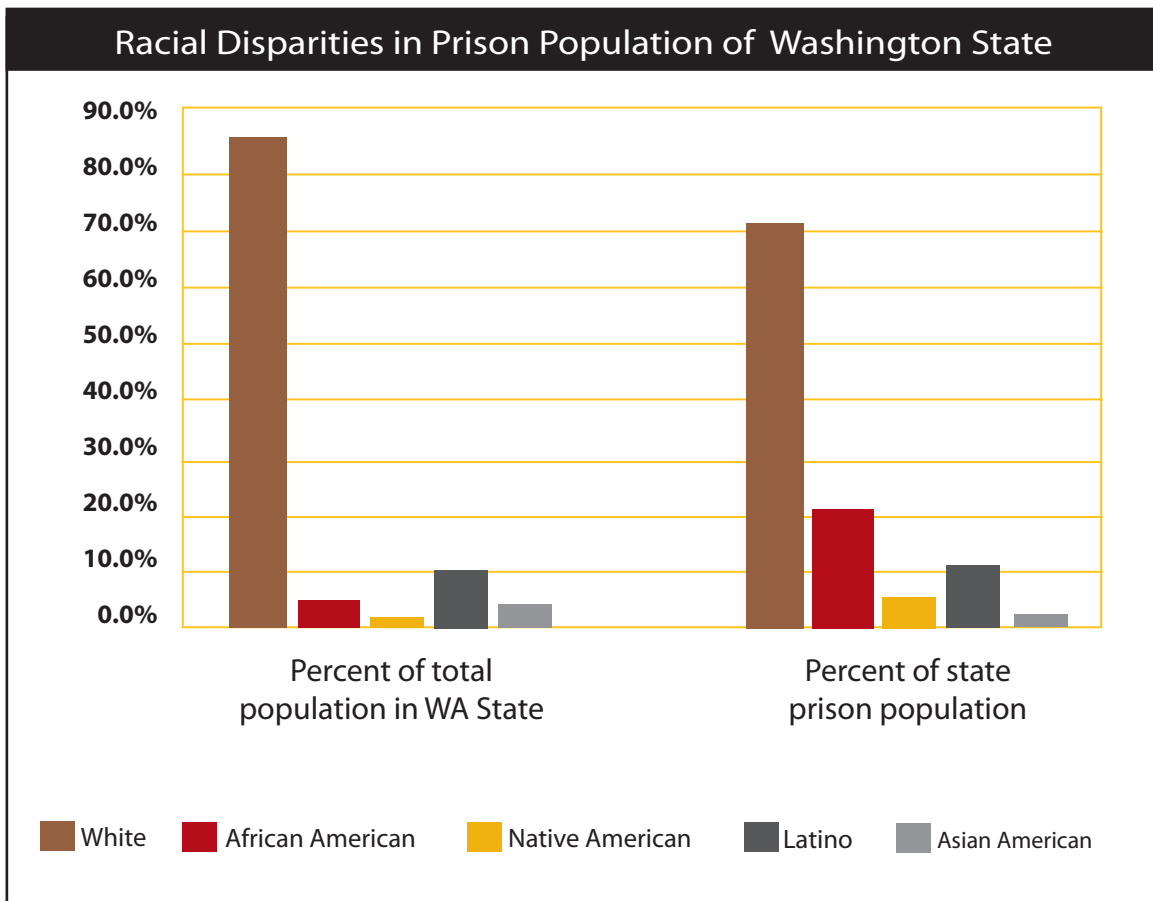


Source: American Community Survey 2006, as cited in United Way of King County Community Assessment Review of Health and Human Services, [www.uwkc.org/kcca](http://www.uwkc.org/kcca)

# Criminal justice

People of color comprise a disproportionate number of those incarcerated in Washington State. While African Americans make up only 3.2% of Washington’s overall population, they account for 19.2%, or one-fifth of the state’s prison population. Native Americans are also overrepresented in Washington prisons. Native Americans comprise only 1.6% of the total state population, yet they account for 4.5% of those incarcerated in Washington prisons.

As part of the City’s efforts to address Race and Social Justice, the City conducts a community survey every two years to measure public opinion of the Seattle Police Department to better inform Police Department practices. The survey also examines individual perceptions among various communities of color toward Seattle Police. Generally, these surveys have shown that communities of color expressed higher levels of concern about police conduct and racial profiling.



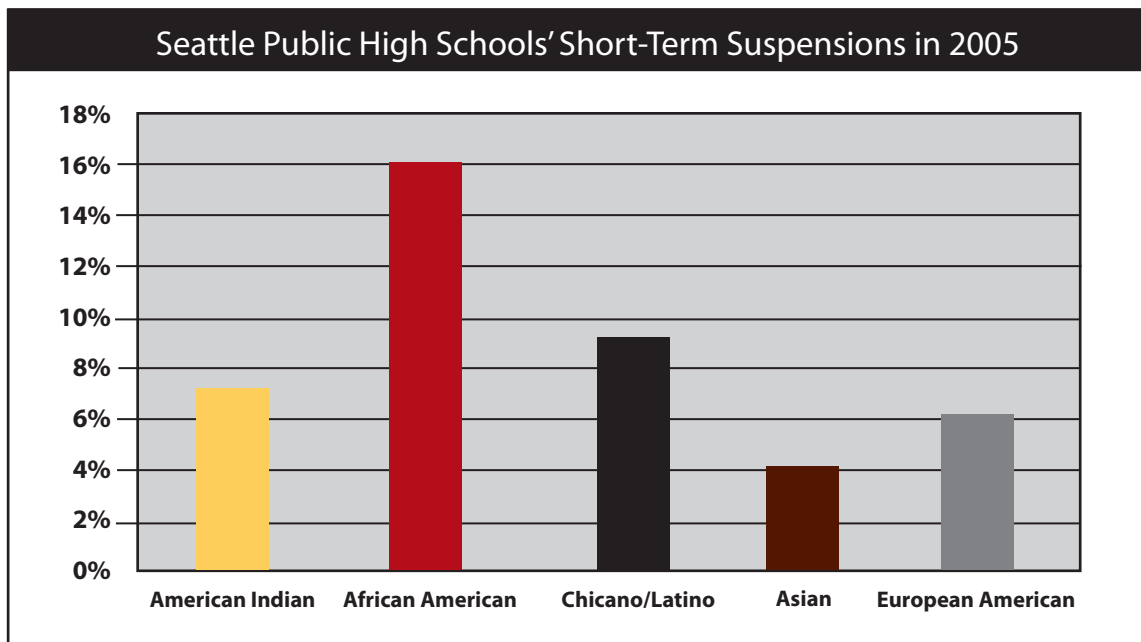
WA State Department of Corrections, Population Summaries Confinement Statistics as of December 31, 2007, [www.doc.wa.gov](http://www.doc.wa.gov)

## Education

**A**re we making the grade when it comes to meeting the educational needs of young people? In Seattle public schools, rates of high school completion vary based on race. In 2005 in Seattle Public Schools, only 42% of Native American students, 43% of Latino students and 47% of African American students completed high school, compared to 67% of their white counterparts and 70% of Asian American students. The rates of graduation for Asian American students vary significantly if the data is broken down into

specific ethnic groups. The grouping of Asian Pacific Islander students into a single category masks the fact that some communities lag behind others in graduation rates and other measurements of academic achievement.

Rates of discipline also are racially disproportionate in Seattle public high schools. In 2005 in Seattle Public Schools, 16% of African American students received short-term suspensions compared to 6% of white students.



Extracted from: Seattle Public High Schools Short-Term Suspensions in 2005, [www.seattleschools.org](http://www.seattleschools.org)

## Health

**A** healthy society is one in which residents can seek out affordable preventative health care, receive needed medication and live free from major sources of pollutants. In King County, African Americans are 2.6 times more likely to be affected by diabetes than whites and have a death rate 3.3 times higher than whites. The gap in the diabetes death rate between African Americans and whites increased during the 1990s and remains high. Pacific Islanders have the highest diabetes prevalence of any racial/ethnic group in King County, 3.2 times higher than whites.

The highest rates of hospitalization for asthma are found in Beacon Hill / Southeast Seattle and Downtown / Central Seattle, where the city's highest percentage of people of color live.

Disparities also exist in the prevalence and mortality of HIV /AIDS. The incidence of AIDS for African Americans is four times the rate for whites. For Latinos and Native Americans /Alaskan Natives, the rate is twice the rate for whites.



## Demographic shifts

Seattle is still changing, still evolving. The city's Asian population has more than tripled since 1970; the Latino and East African communities grew sharply during the 1990s. Seattle's African American community, which increased by over 300% after World War II, currently represents 8.4% of the city's overall population. The 98118 zip code in southeast Seattle is one of the top five most diverse neighborhoods in the country.

Immigrant communities represent the fastest growing population in the city. In 1980 the foreign-born population made up 11% of Seattle's overall population. By the year 2000 immigrants had increased to 17% of the city's population, and it is estimated that by the year 2010 immigrants will account for 20% of the city's total population – approximately 120,000 people. Over 80 different languages are spoken in Seattle Public Schools. Newly arrived immigrants experience unique circumstances as they adjust to life in a new environment.

These statistics are not anomalies. Practically any measure of Seattle's indicators reveals the same race-based divide. For a city that prides itself on our prosperity and diversity, Seattle resembles other American cities perhaps more than we like to admit.

Here then represents both the challenge and the possibility posed by the Race and Social Justice Initiative. The challenge: to eliminate racial disparities, to end institutionalized racism and the profound pain it has caused. The possibility: to create a city where race does not determine the potential of our people.

## Race and Social Justice: a black and white issue?

City employees involved in the Race and Social Justice Initiative sometimes have voiced the question, "Is RSJI primarily a black / white issue, or is the Initiative designed to address racism more broadly?"

Historically, racism in the United States was constructed to justify the enslavement of Africans as well as colonization and the genocide of indigenous peoples. To a great extent, however, our country's history of racism often has been framed as a black and white issue. In the last two hundred years, the enormity of slavery and Jim Crow laws reinforced this simplified notion of racism in the U.S.

Yet viewing racism as black and white does not complete the picture. It fails to acknowledge the complex ways that institutional racism affects all communities of color. The Race and Social Justice Initiative recognizes that African Americans, as well as other communities of color, all have unique histories in the long struggle for racial equality. If RSJI is to be successful, we must be willing to explore the many ways that racism has affected all of us.



On July 26, 2008, Mayor Nickels spoke at a ceremony to honor 28 African American veterans who had been unjustly court-martialed in 1944 at Fort Lawton (now Seattle's Discovery Park). The U.S. Army set aside the soldiers' convictions and restored their rights and privileges.



Julie Nelson and Glenn Harris lead an RSJI workshop with the Mayor's staff.

## II. What has been done? How well has it worked?

**F**rom 2005 to the present, RSJI concentrated on departments' RSJI work plans and Citywide issues. The five Central Concerns emerged from City departments' work plans in the first year of the Initiative. The various components of capacity building developed as departments' needs became clearer. A Coordinating Team within the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) oversees the Initiative on behalf of the Mayor.

**Departmental RSJI work plans and Change Teams:** Since 2005, the Mayor has required City departments to draft and implement RSJI work plans. Key elements of the work plans also are included in department directors' Accountability Agreements with the Mayor. Each department created its own Change Team to guide and support the department's work plan implementation and to support its RSJI activities. SOCR monitors departments' overall progress implementing RSJI work plans.

**Central Concerns:** As departments began to address the Initiative in the first year, the RSJI Coordinating Team looked for commonalities across departments to promote efficiency and synergy in addressing issues that cut across all City departments. Five common areas of work became known as the Central Concerns:

- **Workforce Equity:** Improve diversity of our workforce on all levels and across functions.
- **Economic Equity:** Change purchasing and contracting practices to increase participation by people of color.
- **Immigrant and Refugee Services:** Improve access to services for immigrant and refugee communities.
- **Public Engagement:** Improve access and influence of communities of color.
- **Capacity Building:** Increase the knowledge and tools used by city staff to achieve race and social justice.

For each Central Concern, the Mayor's Office designated specific departments to take lead roles. Interdepartmental teams have been established to coordinate work.

The RSJ Initiative also introduced another important component: a Citywide Core Team of about 40 people, representing most City departments. Core Team members received intensive training on institutional racism, group facilitation, problem solving and strategic action planning. Core Team members work with Change Teams, department managers and line staff to implement the Initiative.

The RSJI Sub-cabinet, consisting of department directors and/or designates and representatives of the Mayor's senior staff, also plays a key role in the Initiative's organizing structure. The Sub-cabinet develops proposals to address systemic issues, and serves as a forum for sharing RSJI best practices.



# Assessment 2005 – present

After three years' experience with the Initiative, in 2007 the Mayor decided it was an opportune time to assess the Initiative's accomplishments and challenges thus far, and to plan for the next phase of the Initiative. The Mayor's staff convened an assessment team of well-positioned and

creative RSJI leaders who reviewed documents (including departments' work plans), interviewed key stakeholders, and organized an RSJI forum to learn from other jurisdictions.

## Key assessment findings

### 1. Effectiveness of overall implementation

- ✓ **Broad goals understood:** RSJI's broad goals have been disseminated among department managers, change agents and Change Team members, and are understood, with most participants utilizing consistent language.
- ✓ **Identification of Central Concerns:** The City has established an organizing framework involving the five Central Concerns, providing an opportunity to collaborate across departments on areas of importance that cut across all City departments.
- ✓ **Most City departments embraced the Initiative:** Departments have established Change Teams that work within departments to develop and implement work plans. These work plans encompass both the Central Concerns and departments' own specific lines of business. A majority of departments have implemented their RSJI workplans on an annual basis. The degree of implementation has increased markedly from 2005 (the first year work plans were required) through 2008, as the Initiative became better understood and the Mayor's long-term commitment to the Initiative was demonstrated.
- ✓ **Effective management structure established:** An effective management structure for the Initiative has been established, with SOCR as the lead department and other departments' assuming leadership of specific Central Concerns. The management structure also includes department Change Teams, the Citywide Core Team, the RSJI Sub-cabinet and interdepartmental teams working on Central Concerns.
- ✓ **Capacity building lays strong foundation:** The Initiative developed and implemented a quality basic capacity building program targeted to Change Team members and managers. Managers participate in four components: a one-hour introductory orientation; an eight-hour training using the well-regarded PBS documentary, "Race: The Power of an Illusion," an eight-hour anti-racism curriculum and a four-hour follow-up skills-based training. Change Team and Core Team members participate in the first three training components. Core Team members also receive comprehensive training in addressing racism, group facilitation, problem solving and strategic action planning.

### 2. Making a difference through policy changes

- ✓ **Translation and Interpretation Policy:** A comprehensive Translation and Interpretation Policy was created in 2007 as part of the Immigrant / Refugee Services Central Concern. Mayor Nickels issued an Executive Order requiring departments to implement the policy, and assigned staff to establish an Interdepartmental Team (IDT) for ongoing consultation and implementation.
- ✓ **Outreach and Public Engagement Policy:** Mayor Nickels issued an Executive Order in March 2008 outlining the City's new Outreach and Public Engagement Policy, and instructing departments to designate liaisons to coordinate and implement inclusive public engagement processes and strategies.
- ✓ **Workforce Equity:** In 2007, the City's Personnel Department conducted an extensive workforce diversity analysis. Overall, the City's racial diversity exceeds the diversity of Seattle's working age population, and that diversity continues to increase. The City has done an excellent job of recruiting people of color for positions at every level, but particularly so for entry-level positions with the lowest barriers to entry, such as laborers and administrative assistants. In a few occupations, such as accounting, engineering and information technology, some groups of color are under or over-represented. The City has made a commitment to develop policies to increase upward mobility and professional development opportunities for employees.
- ✓ **Contracting Equity:** The City's percentage of contracting for non-construction goods and services with Women and Minority Business Enterprises (WMBEs) more than doubled from 2003 to 2007, from 5.3% to 11.4%. City dollars to WMBEs increased from \$16.8 million in 2003 to \$42.4 million in 2007. The City exceeded its 2007 WMBE spending goal by more than 40%. About three-fourths of departments exceeded their 2007 goals. Despite these increases, results were not uniformly positive. Use of African American, Latino and Native American business enterprises did not increase substantially.

✓ **Significant changes to business operations:** Under RSJI, departments have implemented significant changes to their business operations, resulting in greater equity for City residents – for example:

- **Budget and Policy Analysis:** the Executive Change Team and Core Team introduced an RSJI policy and budget analysis and toolkit for all departments to use when drafting budget and policy proposals for Mayoral consideration. The analysis and toolkit requires departments to consider the racial impacts of budget and policy proposals.
- **Department of Neighborhoods:** Neighborhoods created a new Race and Social Justice category as part of its Neighborhood Matching Grant program to support actions in the community geared towards achieving racial equity.
- **Human Services Department:** HSD revised its funding process for non-profit community agencies to make it more accessible for smaller organizations, including agencies that serve communities with limited English skills.
- **Seattle Public Utilities:** SPU created a new Environmental Justice and Service Equity division to ensure that all Utility customers receive equitable services, as well as have access to SPU decision-making processes.
- **Office of Housing and Human Services Department:** as the lead departments in the City's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, OH and HSD crafted a fundamental shift in the City's housing and shelter policies to acknowledge racial disproportionality in homelessness, and to focus efforts on people with the greatest housing needs.



Mazvita Maraire and Kathy Hsieh co-hosted the RSJI Resource Summit on April 1, 2008 at Seattle Center. About 230 City employees attended the event.

### 3. Areas to strengthen

**T**he Race and Social Justice Initiative is a work-in-progress. The Initiative's operating structure and work components have evolved over time, and not all parts have been equally strong. Five areas have been identified to strengthen the Initiative.

**Set and communicate clear goals and measurable outcomes:** During the initial phase of the RSJI, specific Citywide outcomes were developed in only a few areas. As the Initiative moves into its next phase, it is critical that outcomes be clarified, priorities determined, targets established and methods put in place to measure concrete results. Now that the Initiative has attained critical mass in terms of departmental penetration and employee participation, RSJI has the opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to chart its course forward. Although there is a general level of understanding of the Initiative among identified stakeholders, the rank and file of City employees do not fully understand the purpose, goals and focus of the Initiative.

**Hold departments accountable for outcomes and enforce expectations across departments:** Department directors' Accountability Agreements with the Mayor have focused on contracting equity, which has been an important initial focus. Other areas, however, have not received the same focus. In addition, not all departments have grappled with and implemented the Initiative to the same degree, including the need to prioritize resources for implementation. Change Teams have proven themselves to be critically important tools for departments to develop, implement and promote their RSJI work, but the effectiveness of Change Teams has varied, reflecting the different levels of commitment among departments. Some departments have not met expectations on implementation of work plan items.

**Achieve greater progress on all Central Concerns:**

Progress on Central Concerns has been uneven, and significant work remains on all of them. Work on Public Engagement was slow to get started, and additional challenges remain in Workforce Equity. While the City has met equal employment goals, some employees of color have expressed continuing frustration concerning the lack of equitable paths for upward mobility, and the lack of commitment across all departments to develop mentoring and educational opportunities to aid in advancement. Employees feel that as an employer, the City needs to recognize that racism has a powerful impact on employees' health and performance. Some City workers have requested that the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) develop expertise in working with employees of color on the impact of racism in the workplace.

**More effective use of the RSJI Sub-cabinet:** The RSJI Sub-cabinet has served as a valuable venue for information sharing and as a demonstration of senior leaders' commitment. People who attended felt it was a good place to learn more about RSJI Citywide, and to pick up ideas from another department that could be replicated or adapted to

their own. Sub-cabinet members appreciated the involvement of senior leaders. Sub-cabinet members, however, also expected the group to serve as a "barrier buster" at the management level. This expectation was not met. Those familiar with the Sub-cabinet felt that it was underutilized as a mechanism to develop system-level responses to issues and strategies shared across departments.

**Better deployment of the Core Team:** Core Team members receive specialized training to serve for two years as internal consultants. The Core Team is an important innovation that has great potential, but there has been mixed success utilizing Core Team members to full advantage – especially in the Core Team's first iteration (2005-07). Department directors and Change Team leaders who called on Core Team members to help with capacity building or to develop strategies for follow-up training, found that support effective. At the same time, senior leadership felt unsure if the resource has been deployed effectively. As departments strengthened their own RSJI efforts, their ability to utilize Core Team resources effectively also has improved.



At the RSJI Resource Summit (from left): Maria Rodriguez, Julie Nelson, Fabiola Greenawalt, and Brenda Anibarro.



# III. Moving Forward: The Next Phase of RSJI

## Vision

The Race and Social Justice Initiative envisions a city where racial disparities have been eliminated and racial equity achieved.

## Mission

The mission of the Race and Social Justice Initiative is to end institutionalized racism in City government and to promote multiculturalism and full participation by all its residents.

## Goals

The next phase of RSJI builds on the foundation created during the first three years of the Initiative. It moves us forward to address racial disparities internally within the City as an organization, as well as externally, in partnership with community members and stakeholders. We will carry out work to achieve the following goals:

1. End racial disparities within the City as an organization.
2. Strengthen the way the City engages the community and provides services.
3. Address race-based disparities in our community.

A fundamental question remains: "What difference will the Race and Social Justice Initiative make in the lives of City residents and businesses, as well as City of Seattle employees?"



The goals described in the following sections include strategies, actions and outcomes that will be implemented over the coming three years, 2008 through 2011, with a clear focus on making a meaningful difference. A more detailed timeline to guide this work will be provided to departments as part of the 2009 RSJI work plan drafting process. On an annual basis, departments will continue to develop and implement work plans in accordance with the direction laid forth in this plan. In the fall of 2011, this plan will be updated.

## Goal 1: End racial disparities in internal City outcomes

Eliminating racial disparities within the City as an organization requires us to continue working internally on three key strategies: improve workforce equity, increase city staff's knowledge and tools, and increase contracting equity.

### Improve Workforce Equity

When Mayor Nickels first announced the Race and Social Justice Initiative, Workforce Equity rapidly emerged as a paramount issue for City employees. As an employer, the City of Seattle has the responsibility to ensure that hiring,

promotion and discipline are not affected by race. For many City employees, proof of the City's commitment to Race and Social Justice rests with the integrity of its efforts to end racial inequities in the workforce.

The Workforce Equity Interdepartmental Team will commit to ensuring that the City's workforce diversity reflects the diversity of the population; increasing upward mobility opportunities for employees and increasing professional development opportunities that lead to promotions.

Workforce Equity	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to coordinate the Workforce Equity Interdepartmental Team's strategies to ensure that the City's workforce diversity reflects the diversity of the population.</li> <li>Focus additional efforts to increase upward mobility opportunities in low-wage occupational groups; increase workforce diversity where overall diversity is low or some racial/ethnic groups are under-represented</li> </ul>

Outcomes	Workforce Equity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City's workforce diversity reflects the diversity of Seattle's working age population.</li> <li>Opportunities for upward mobility for workers of color in low wage occupations are increased.</li> </ul>

### Increase the knowledge and tools used by City staff to achieve race and social justice

The City of Seattle RSJ Initiative has concentrated on addressing the root causes of disparity, rather than attempting to treat the symptoms. Training, education and developing tools have been necessary first steps in the process, since it was necessary to develop a common language and shared understanding of the issue. At the same time, City departments have not had the luxury of waiting until enough employees understood and supported the issues; work needed to begin simultaneously on analyzing and changing City programs, services, and policies.

While it is critical that Seattle City government make substantive changes to achieve real results, no change is possible without at least a basic understanding of the problem that needs to be fixed. As departments wrestle with developing and implementing annual RSJ action plans, it is critical that we continue to build the capacity of City employees to understand institutional racism and to learn to analyze policies, practices and procedures from a racial justice perspective.

Knowledge and Tools	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training to departmental managers who have not yet completed the management training series, and provide ongoing skill development opportunities for other managers and Change Teams.</li> <li>Identify core RSJI competencies for City staff and managers and clearly align training and competencies.</li> <li>Conduct a survey of City employees every two years to assess employee understanding of and work on the Initiative.</li> <li>Strengthen the organizational infrastructure of the Initiative, including more effectively deploying Core Team members and using the RSJI Sub-Cabinet to address Citywide issues.</li> </ul>

Outcomes	Knowledge and Tools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City employees have the understanding, skills and tools needed to eliminate institutionalized racism and work towards racial equity.</li> <li>Initiative has consistent Citywide visibility and employees have a greater understanding of the scope and depth of the Initiative.</li> </ul>

## Increase Contracting Equity

Communities of color have challenged the City of Seattle to create equity in economic opportunities for businesses. WMBE (Women and Minority Business Enterprise) contracting in construction has declined since the passage of I-200, a state policy which specifically prohibits preferential treatment and/or discrimination based on race or gender in public contracting. Economic inequity, which hurts the whole city, is perpetuated if some communities and neighborhoods are denied access to City contracts.

In the first phase of the Initiative, the Mayor emphasized the importance creating increased opportunities for businesses owned by people of color to compete. The City has taken simple steps such as dividing larger bid requests into smaller contracts, making them more accessible to businesses owned by people of color, and removing barriers to consulting contracts and purchases of goods and services.

Contracting Equity	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study and improve internal processes to help City employees make better contracting and purchasing decisions with respect to the City's contracting equity and other social goals.</li> <li>• Implement a job order contract, in which a prime contractor is hired to take orders for small construction-related projects and sub-contract 90% of them to other businesses.</li> <li>• Make overall improvements to the City's bid and contract-award processes.</li> <li>• Re-evaluate the City's bid and contract-award processes to determine if review of the prime contractors' outreach plans should be moved earlier in the process.</li> <li>• Encourage prime contractors to use sub-contractors at an earlier stage in development of bids.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City increases MBE contracting.</li> <li>• City increases the amount of sub-contracting to small businesses.</li> <li>• City increases the extent of MBE participation by sub-contractors in large consulting contracts.</li> </ul>

## Goal 2: Strengthen the way the City engages the community and provides services

Strengthening the way the City engages the community and provides services requires us to improve outreach and public engagement, systematically review existing services using RSJI best practices criteria, and improve immigrant and refugee access to services.

### Improve Outreach and Public Engagement

The City of Seattle employs a variety of outreach strategies to communicate with the people of Seattle about the programs and services that City government offers. The City also conducts numerous public engagement activities to learn the needs and concerns of constituents, and to inform constituents of City plans and actions. Public engagement activities range from basic customer service to formal community meetings and other ongoing methods of engagement.



Current RSJI manager Glenn Harris (left) and former manager Mickey Fearn at the RSJI Resource Summit.

Despite the expenditure of staff time and public dollars, the City's community engagement efforts are often seen as uncoordinated, inconsistent and not fully inclusive. Our public processes do not meet the needs of many communities within the City, especially people of color, who frequently view the City's efforts as "not for us" and "a waste of time."

In early 2008 the Mayor released an Executive Order pertaining to outreach and public engagement, along with a set of policies. The Executive Order requires departments' staff to undergo training on culturally competent public engagement and outreach, and requires departments who hire external public engagement consultants to utilize only

those consultants with proven expertise in conducting culturally competent public engagement processes. Outreach and public engagement liaisons will work in partnership with an interdepartmental team to train city staff, identify areas for improvement and coordinate public engagement efforts.

In the next phase of RSJI, we will strengthen our Citywide outreach and public engagement efforts to address race-based inequities and the imbalance of access and influence in our outreach and public engagement processes. We will work to ensure that all public engagement processes are culturally competent. We also will improve coordination across departments.

Outreach and Public Engagement	Actions				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each City department will designate a staff person as a liaison to coordinate outreach and public engagement activities. The liaisons will develop and communicate RSJI best practices for community engagement.</li> <li>• Outreach and public engagement liaisons will develop feedback and evaluation tools to receive feedback from City staff, community members and consultants on the effectiveness of our community engagement strategies, and make improvements as necessary across City departments.</li> <li>• Guidelines for equitable opportunities for public engagement will be developed in an Outreach and Public Engagement Toolkit. Training on the use of the toolkit will be provided to all City departments.</li> <li>• The City will track, recruit and facilitate the appointment of ethnically diverse boards and commissioners Citywide.</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="636 1134 1039 1192">Outcomes</th> <th data-bbox="1039 1134 1520 1192">Outreach and Public Engagement</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="636 1192 1039 1635"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' public engagement activities are more intentionally inclusive and culturally appropriate. Communities' cultural assets and knowledge are better utilized, and participation by people of color increases.</li> <li>• Best practices for outreach and public engagement activities are identified, shared and replicated.</li> <li>• All departments use the Outreach and Public Engagement Toolkit as a resource in their public engagement activities, to ensure more coordinated and effective approaches to City engagement activities.</li> <li>• All boards and commissions reflect the diversity of Seattle's communities.</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1039 1192 1520 1635"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Outcomes	Outreach and Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' public engagement activities are more intentionally inclusive and culturally appropriate. Communities' cultural assets and knowledge are better utilized, and participation by people of color increases.</li> <li>• Best practices for outreach and public engagement activities are identified, shared and replicated.</li> <li>• All departments use the Outreach and Public Engagement Toolkit as a resource in their public engagement activities, to ensure more coordinated and effective approaches to City engagement activities.</li> <li>• All boards and commissions reflect the diversity of Seattle's communities.</li> </ul>	
Outcomes	Outreach and Public Engagement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' public engagement activities are more intentionally inclusive and culturally appropriate. Communities' cultural assets and knowledge are better utilized, and participation by people of color increases.</li> <li>• Best practices for outreach and public engagement activities are identified, shared and replicated.</li> <li>• All departments use the Outreach and Public Engagement Toolkit as a resource in their public engagement activities, to ensure more coordinated and effective approaches to City engagement activities.</li> <li>• All boards and commissions reflect the diversity of Seattle's communities.</li> </ul>					



## Systematically review existing services using RSJI best practices criteria

Throughout the initial phase of the Initiative, departments have been asked to analyze their lines of business to eliminate institutionalized racism and promote multiculturalism. As indicated in the previous section, some improvements have been made. However, progress thus far has been limited and inconsistent.

In early 2008 the Mayor incorporated a Race and Social Justice analysis into budget and policy decisions. The Executive Change Team and RSJI Core Team developed a toolkit to provide a common approach to such analysis across departments. Tools include: RSJI best practices criteria, a Racial Equity Impact Analysis, resources and a glossary.

Best practices criteria for eliminating racial disparities include:

- Assessing conditions and desired impacts.
- Developing strategies to expand opportunity and access for individuals.
- Developing strategies to affect systemic change.
- Educating on racial justice and raising racial consciousness.
- Promoting racially inclusive collaboration and civic engagement.

The RSJI Toolkit contains additional information on each of these practices. Use of these tools to systematically review existing services will strengthen departmental programs and services in a more consistent manner.

Best Practices	Actions				
<p>All City departments will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key service and workplace issue areas to evaluate using the RSJI best practices criteria and Racial Equity Impact Analysis.</li> <li>• Results and recommendations from the Analysis will be used in conjunction with RSJI best practices to develop improvements.</li> <li>• Results of this process will be included in the annual year-end progress report.</li> </ul>					
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="734 1050 1209 1113">Outcomes</th> <th data-bbox="1209 1050 1528 1113">Best Practices</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="734 1113 1209 1291"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff increases familiarity with a racial equity framework through practice and application of tools.</li> <li>• A systematic racial equity review of City programs, policies, practices and procedures is established.</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1209 1113 1528 1291"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Outcomes	Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff increases familiarity with a racial equity framework through practice and application of tools.</li> <li>• A systematic racial equity review of City programs, policies, practices and procedures is established.</li> </ul>	
Outcomes	Best Practices				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff increases familiarity with a racial equity framework through practice and application of tools.</li> <li>• A systematic racial equity review of City programs, policies, practices and procedures is established.</li> </ul>					



Panel discussion at the Seattle Race Conference, November 3, 2007 (left to right): K.L. Shannon, Uncle Bob Santos, Germaine Covington, Delila Leiber and Carlos Marentes



## Improve Immigrant and Refugee Access to City Services

In 2007 the City launched an Immigrant and Refugee Initiative to improve access to services for immigrants and refugees. The Immigrant and Refugee Initiative developed Citywide standards and protocols for departments to translate key service documents into the City's most common ("first tier") languages, as well as for language interpretation for customers with limited English skills. Each department designated a liaison to serve on a Citywide Interdepartmental Team for the Immigrant and Refugee

Initiative. The Interdepartmental Team meets on an ongoing basis to coordinate implementation of translation and interpretation protocols.

Citywide implementation of translation and interpretation policies, practices and procedures will continue. Coordination with the Public Engagement Interdepartmental Team will ensure that immigrant and refugee communities' unique circumstances are considered as part of the outreach and public engagement strategy.

Immigrant and Refugee Access	Actions				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a Citywide translation and interpretation policy; establish the Customer Service Bureau as an initial point of contact; develop new and/or refine existing communication and outreach strategies with immigrant and refugee communities.</li> <li>• Use the Immigrant/Refugee Advisory Board to advise the Mayor and City Council on relevant issues and enhance outreach efforts with immigrant and refugee communities.</li> <li>• Make it easier for small immigrant and refugee-run community based organizations to apply for service funding, and work more closely with these organizations to meet their communities' needs.</li> </ul>					
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="987 1209 1240 1274">Outcomes</th> <th data-bbox="1240 1209 1521 1274">Immigrant and Refugee Access</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="987 1274 1240 1430"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' key documents are translated into first tier languages, and departments utilize language interpreters via the City's Employee Language Bank and external sources.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees experience improved knowledge of and access to City services and City funding.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees report increased customer satisfaction with services received at community-based agencies and City departments.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees have more opportunities to engage in the civic process and to communicate with senior staff and elected officials.</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1240 1274 1521 1430"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Outcomes	Immigrant and Refugee Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' key documents are translated into first tier languages, and departments utilize language interpreters via the City's Employee Language Bank and external sources.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees experience improved knowledge of and access to City services and City funding.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees report increased customer satisfaction with services received at community-based agencies and City departments.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees have more opportunities to engage in the civic process and to communicate with senior staff and elected officials.</li> </ul>	
Outcomes	Immigrant and Refugee Access				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' key documents are translated into first tier languages, and departments utilize language interpreters via the City's Employee Language Bank and external sources.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees experience improved knowledge of and access to City services and City funding.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees report increased customer satisfaction with services received at community-based agencies and City departments.</li> <li>• Immigrants and refugees have more opportunities to engage in the civic process and to communicate with senior staff and elected officials.</li> </ul>					

## Goal 3: Eliminate race-based disparities in our communities

The RSJ Initiative’s long-term goal is to achieve racially equitable outcomes in our community, not just within the confines of Seattle City government. We want to address and undo longstanding race-based disparities in people’s lives and in the institutions that shape those lives.

To address these race-based disparities in the next phase of the Race and Social Justice Initiative, we will focus on the following key impact areas: economic equity, environmental justice, criminal justice, health and education. It is important to recognize that all of these impact areas are inter-connected; none of these issues exist independently. To address a single area of disparity means acknowledging and understanding the broader system of inequality.

Strategies to address disparities require action on multiple fronts. As the Initiative moves forward in these areas, it is critical to develop complimentary strategies to link our work and to ensure coordination.

For each key impact area, City staff initially will work internally across City departments, and then externally with community members, organizations, businesses, and public and private institutions to develop a shared vision and a collaborative action plan to achieve racial equity. The diagram below illustrates this process:



Racial Disparities City-Wide	Actions				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSJI Sub-cabinet prioritizes action on key impact areas and designates team members.</li> <li>• Identify City of Seattle institutional barriers and opportunities.</li> <li>• Convene community members and other key institutions to develop a shared vision.</li> <li>• Develop action plans to affect community conditions and measure impact of changes.</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Outcomes</th> <th>Racial Disparities City-Wide</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional opportunities for racial equity within the City are identified and analyzed.</li> <li>• City, community and public and private institutions work together to eliminate race-based disparities that impact our communities.</li> </ul> </td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Outcomes	Racial Disparities City-Wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional opportunities for racial equity within the City are identified and analyzed.</li> <li>• City, community and public and private institutions work together to eliminate race-based disparities that impact our communities.</li> </ul>	
Outcomes	Racial Disparities City-Wide				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional opportunities for racial equity within the City are identified and analyzed.</li> <li>• City, community and public and private institutions work together to eliminate race-based disparities that impact our communities.</li> </ul>					

# Eliminating Racial Disparities

## Example: Green-Collar Jobs

### 1. Identify opportunity

Support the creation of green-collar jobs, jobs that improve the environment and provide family-supporting wage or career ladders to move low-income workers who are disproportionately workers of color into higher skilled occupations. Identify policies and programs to drive investment into targeted green economic activity and increase demand for local green-collar workers.



### 2. Convene internal partners

Convene City departments that have a role in the environment and conservation (for example, Office of Sustainability and Environment, Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities).



### 3. Analyze barriers and opportunities

Unemployment and under-employment are long-standing issues within communities of color. To spur the development of green pathways out of poverty, assess barriers and opportunities for achieving employment goals for communities of color.



### 4. Convene external partners

Meet with community based organizations and environmental organizations to assess institutional barriers to racial equity in the area of green-collar jobs.



### 5. Develop action plan

The City will work with community organizations and institutions to develop a shared vision and a collaborative action plan.



## Result

The City and community partners create an action plan to link policies and programs that drive green economic activity to efforts that benefit communities of color and work to end disparities in employment. This model focuses on systemic and institutional changes needed to address racial inequities.

## IV. Conclusion

**A**fter Mayor Greg Nickels took office in January 2002, he directed staff to address the racial divide that he had observed while campaigning. He called for a Race and Social Justice Initiative to focus explicitly on eliminating institutional racism in Seattle City government, and to work to eliminate race-based disparities across the city.

In the beginning the Initiative emphasized the need to “get our own house in order.” Unless we could demonstrate our sincere commitment to work to end racism within the City as an institution, we would lack credibility to engage with the community on critical race issues.

In its first phase, the Initiative concentrated on two key strategies: departments’ RSJI work plans and Central Concerns. In 2007 the Mayor decided to assess the Initiative’s accomplishments and challenges thus far, and to plan for the future.

The assessment found that overall the Initiative had been implemented effectively, and that it was responsible for a number of significant changes to policies and business operations. The assessment also pointed out several areas to strengthen, including enforcing expectations in department directors’ Accountability Agreements with the Mayor, and setting clear goals and measurable outcomes.

The next phase of the Race and Social Justice Initiative will continue to focus on eliminating racial disparities within City government. We will enhance identification and communication of City departments’ best practices. The

Initiative also will improve access to City government and the City’s outreach and public engagement processes.

From the beginning of the Race and Social Justice Initiative, the City has stressed the importance of its actions’ matching its rhetoric in both commitment and responsibility. At every stage of this undertaking, we have strived to ensure that the steps we take will lead the City of Seattle to achieve tangible results.

The Initiative also will begin to address race-based disparities in our community by focusing on key impact areas such as economic equity, environmental justice, criminal justice, health and education. To accomplish this, the City of Seattle will develop working relationships with community members, organizations, businesses, and public and private institutions, some of whom have years of experience addressing race-based disparities in our region. Creating a shared vision and active commitment to Race and Social Justice is critical to achieving social change across our region. We will assess our success using the measures that count most: racial equity in the lives of the people who live and work in Seattle.

As we move forward on our long-term commitment to end racism, we recognize both the heroes who came before us and the leaders who will follow. The work we do is not just for now. It represents our contribution to those in the future – some of them children, some not yet born – who will admire our spirit, who will learn from our mistakes, and who will build on our accomplishments.



Mayor Nickels addressed participants at the 2008 RSJI Resource Summit.