



THE PROSPERITY AGENDA

Developing a New Orleans Economy Rooted in Racial Equity

DIVERSE, BUT NOT EQUITABLE

New Orleans Racial Demographics

Population: 338,424
59.5% Black
34% White
5.6% Latinx
2.9% Asian
0.2% Native American

—U.S. Census 2020

"New Orleans is openly racist. Business owners brag about how little they pay their minority workers."

—Community Stakeholder

"I'm a server in a restaurant at a hotel and I love my job. I get \$9/hour and some tips. I cannot even afford to pay my bills. I don't have a lot of choice on how to spend my money. \$15/hour would allow me to live comfortably. I just need to get paid more to provide for my family."

—Community Member



Many racial biases are held in the hospitality and healthcare industry. They are diverse and inclusive, but not equitable. Many people of color find jobs in these industries, but can they progress? People of color often don't get the customer-facing jobs because of racial bias.

—Community Stakeholder

Jobs like housekeeping and hospitality are looked down upon as if they were not meaningful jobs. These jobs are really important to our city and community. But people in these jobs aren't paid enough.

—Community Stakeholder

RACISM AND SYSTEMS-WIDE BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES WITH LOW INCOMES IN NOLA

Health

The highest life expectancy average in the state is in the Lakeview neighborhood, where the average is 88.1 years. The lowest average in Louisiana is in the Hoffman Triangle neighborhood, where the life expectancy is 62.3 years, a difference of more than 25 years.

—Louisiana Budget Project

Home Ownership

54% of White families live in homes they own.
41% of Latinx families live in homes they own.
41% of Black families live in homes they own.

—The Data Center 2018

Criminal Justice

Black men in New Orleans were 50% more likely than white men to be arrested. Black women in New Orleans were 55% more likely than white woman to be arrested.

—Vera Institute of Justice

What NOLA Community Stakeholders are Saying about Racial Equity

Racial equity is the work that ensures that all people regardless of racial or ethnic background have the same opportunity. That they have access to sharpen their talents and abilities. Racial equity means we get rid of the false hierarchy of human value.

Racial equity these days is a buzzword. It's the flavor of the day. People use it so often it loses its meaning.

Racial equity means everyone gets a fair share of resources. Those resources could be financial, coaching, mentoring, opportunity, or education. It is not enough for one family to make it out of poverty. We need to see consistent and comparable data that shows positive improvements for people of color across the community.

A racial equity lens means finding out what additional resources are needed to level the playing field for people who have been, and continue to be, left out.

There is structural racism that keeps people of color from the same privileges white people have access to.

We need to think about the role of race in our society. Race is a part of our identity and culture, but race should not predict your place in society.

After George Floyd, people renamed street signs, took down statues, but these are all symbols. Symbolism means nothing as long as the underlying policy still exists.

DEFINITIONS

Racial Equity

can be measured by improvements in these areas:

- Life expectancy
- Infant mortality
- Educational attainment
- Physical and mental health
- Employment and housing
- Income and wealth

We have made progress on racial equity when someone's race can no longer be used to predict their life outcomes. By working towards racial equity, health and wellness outcomes for all groups will also likely improve.

—Racial Equity Action Leadership

White Supremacy

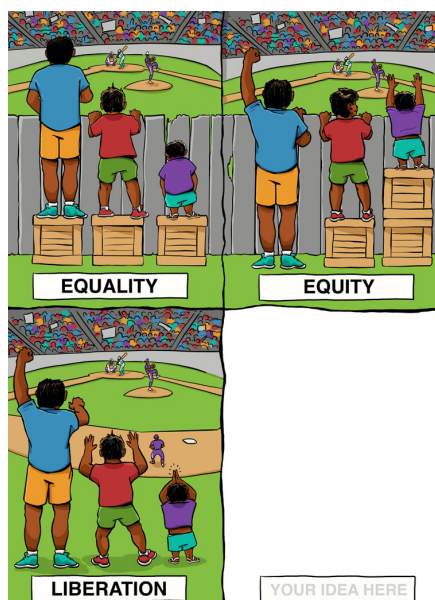
is the idea that white people are inherently superior to all other people of the planet. White Supremacy rests on the pseudo-science of race and eugenics and was created by a small group of elite Europeans as a way to justify unprecedented violence and destruction of entire ecosystems and peoples, most acutely those of African descent.

—Movement Generation

Radical Individualism

is the falsehood that we are a society made up of individuals (rather than relationships) and that the conditions of our lives is a function and reflection of our individual merit, rather than systems, structures and patterns. Mythologies such as, "The self-made man," or "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps," or, "Poor people are lazy," give this paradigm meaning in our culture.

—Movement Generation



Artwork by: Angus Maguire beclouded.net

The Difference Between Equality, Equity, and Liberation

What do you see in this picture? What do these pictures say to you?

What other solutions could address the challenges in this picture? What does everyone have the right to?

What other things could the baseball game represent?

New Orleans Economic Data

Searching for Holistic Economic Development

What community stakeholders are saying

"Workforce development programs tend to funnel people into jobs that still pay minimum wage and don't allow people to thrive."

Workforce makes the assumption that Black and Brown folks are not prepared, that they don't know how to work, that they need soft skills because they don't know how to communicate or how to act.

In workforce development, people are recruited into really big industries. But in our economy, most jobs come from small and medium sized businesses - that's the missing piece. Small business owners can come together to speed up the market.

"We need to look at who gets to participate in our economy through a racial equity lens. We need one system that braids together economic development, workforce development, and small business development for the economic betterment of all people in New Orleans."

While African Americans account for a growing share of business owners in New Orleans—from 21 percent in 1997 to 40 percent in 2012—their receipts have remained stagnant at roughly two percent over that time frame. The share of businesses owned by Hispanics and Asians has remained approximately four percent and five percent, respectively, and received roughly one percent of receipts each.

—New Orleans Prosperity Index

DEFINITION

Economy

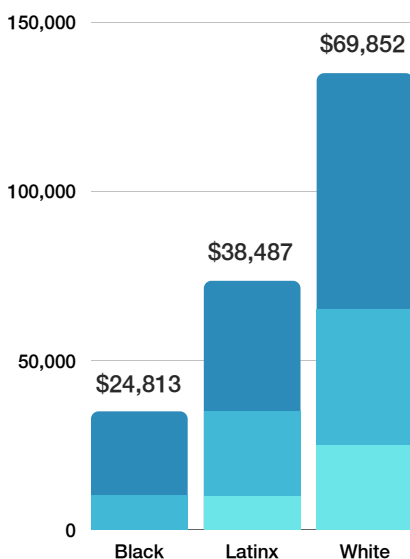
means management of home. How we organize our relationships in a place, ideally, to take care of the place and each other. But "management of home" can be good or bad, depending on how you do it and to what ends. The purpose of our economy could be turning land, life and labor into property for a few, or returning land, life and labor into a balanced web of stable relationships.

Economy does not mean money, or exchange or financial markets, or trading or Gross Domestic Product. These are simply elements or tools of specific economies. Economies ("how we manage our home") can be measured in many ways: How healthy are the soil, people, water, animals? How much wealth is generated? Who owns the wealth? What even constitutes wealth? Is it money? Well-being? Happiness?

—Movement Generation

HOUSEHOLD EARNING

Median Household Income



According to MIT, the cost to live in New Orleans in 2018 for one adult with one child was \$24/hour or \$49,778 annually.

Annual costs are:

- Rent and utilities for a two bedroom apartment at \$12,033
- Food at \$6,877
- Gas and car maintenance at \$10,689
- Insurance and health costs at \$8,003.

—The Data Center

\$7.25 IS THE MINIMUM WAGE FOR NEW ORLEANS PARISH.

The unemployment rate of households of color in New Orleans is 3X more than the rate for White households.

—Prosperity Now 2016

Half of all black families in New Orleans earned less than \$25,000 in 2018.

—The Data Center

Households with Zero Net Worth



—Prosperity Now 2016

Developing an Equitable Economy

When people of color own businesses, they tend to hire people from the community and create good jobs. But entrepreneurs of color don't have access to money to grow their business and hire more people.

—Community Stakeholder

If you are trying to achieve racial equity, why would you invest in the petrochemical industry, when they have caused enormous health disparities? We need to determine what the upcoming industries are, like green energy jobs. We need to provide money so people can get trained for jobs that allow them to make a living.

—Community Stakeholder

ROLE OF EMPLOYERS

"Authentic community engagement starts with internal structures. You need to make sure that your internal climate and culture is promoting equity. It's fascinating to me that after George Floyd was killed, many companies claimed that Black Lives Matter but their entire board of directors is white. You can't authentically engage people unless you are equitable in your own structures."

—Community Stakeholder

"It is not about having black people in high positions, unless they can exercise power. Black people in high positions are often more aligned with their white coworkers. You can't assume that because they're black that they represent the community. That's why you need to include external voices in internal processes."

—Community Stakeholder

"Hiring diverse talent is hard work. There was a white male director who was retiring from the engineering department. There are no minorities in our hiring pool to move to that job. But one of our goals is balancing race in executive positions. We needed to draw from a larger pool to create access. We ended up hiring a young Black Cuban-American man. Creating diversity takes time and effort."

—Community Stakeholder

EDUCATION

"There is an obvious connection between workforce and education, and especially early childhood education. Health and maternal health too. It is about the whole wellness circle for families in the community."

—Community Stakeholder

"Black and Brown children are not being prepared for jobs other than hospitality and retail positions. The educational system was never designed to make Black and Brown children thrive. So the system is doing what it's supposed to be doing. To create transformation, we need to retool public schooling. We are no longer preparing kids to work in factories."

—Community Stakeholder

We are not preparing our Black students for high paying jobs. When these young people become adults, they can't compete for jobs in New Orleans, let alone nationally or globally.

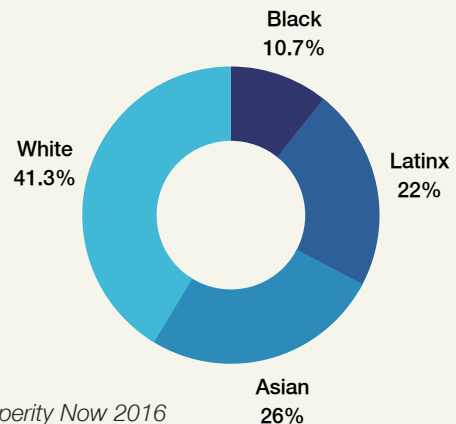
—Community Stakeholder

Louisiana's most segregated schools reflect very different realities for students

	Schools with largest concentration of white students	Schools with largest concentration of minority students
Student body statistics		
Minority students	5%	99%
Economically disadvantaged students	60%	93%
Student performance score	C	F
Teacher statistics		
Teacher retention	87%	57%
Certified teachers teaching in their field	87%	78%
Overall school stats		
A or B schools	94%	10%
D or F schools	0%	58%

—Louisiana Department of Education

BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER



—Prosperity Now 2016

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Collaborating with Families to Build Financial Wealth and Power



A lot of money is spent in the name of people with low incomes, by the time it lands on families, it's coins. Families with low incomes need to be able to decide where the money goes.

—Community Stakeholder

"You have to believe in the potential of people despite all odds. Support those who want to become entrepreneurs despite all odds. It's like raising a child. You may have the best intentions, but sometimes your child fails. You have to keep encouraging your child every step of the way so that one day, your child can advocate for herself."

—Community Member

"We have to enable structures that facilitate deep community engagement. To go beyond participation and build power."

—Community Stakeholder

"I started getting pushback from people who provide training. They were not able to get children [of color] in class. Public transportation did not reach the school. But there may be an alternative solution: for instance, could we partner with a credit union to help kids buy a car so that they can attend training and get a certificate? With that, they were guaranteed a stable job. But the regional employers [outside of New Orleans] who offered this training were not interested in this solution. It was their institutional bias that stopped them from wanting to find solutions."

—Community Stakeholder

"It takes commitment to make change happen. The timeline for change spans election cycles. Schools and churches are more effective because their boards don't transition every four years. We need consistency, collective standards, and buy-in to make progress towards racial equity."

—Community Stakeholder

Organizers in the education space are people that target key policy issues through advocacy. They work in coalitions. They work with parents to have deeper conversations with families about data, the future of work, and political education.

—Community Stakeholder



Do We Have the Data Needed to Make Change?

"When we give money, we have to make sure it funds minority business and the community in ways that really change the lives of impacted people. Organizations have to be able to show that they are hiring people who are at risk, homeless, or people with mental illness and disabilities. Organizations should show us that people have not returned back to incarceration. This is all measurable. But they can't show us their success rates. They don't have the capacity to collect data."

—Community Stakeholder

We are trying to use data to make policy decisions, but nonprofit think tanks have avoided conversations about race and the impacts of racism on policy. We are trying to reverse the last 50 years of whitewashed data to be explicit about child poverty, unemployment numbers, and the effects of COVID-19 on Black and Brown communities.

—Community Stakeholder

Giving money to nonprofits and delivering outcomes for populations in poverty has not been the most efficient or measurable. That's when the broader community starts to think about inefficiency, bureaucracy, and waste. It is important to be very transparent about the metrics that show how each dollar equals a specific outcome. Some nonprofits will execute more than others.

—Community Stakeholder

Racial equity assessments measure the problem. They are not a plan to move things forward. No one is holding organizations accountable to follow through with action. Simply showing numbers that confirm how many black children are living in poverty is pointless. We need data that shows why barriers to equity exist.

—Community Stakeholder

FROM TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION TO COLLABORATION AND ACTION

"We need a holistic approach to look at issues from a 360 degree lens. In policy discussions, especially with racial equity and workforce development, the viewpoint is always one dimensional. We are looking at the problems from one side, but never the flip side. People are not collaborating. Collaboration is not systematic, that's the problem. People are talking to each other, but they are not collaborating to change systems. Sending reports to one another is not enough. For example, childcare centers and employers could work with transportation centers to ensure that families can be on time to work."

—Community Stakeholder

"We never take a systematic approach to developing communities and bringing prosperity. We all take an individualistic approach. We have community colleges doing one thing, the transportation authority another, and childcare centers doing something else. We have to connect all the dots to increase accessibility."

—Community Stakeholder



THE
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For follow up questions, please contact our Design Team at design@theprosperityagenda.org

10 Ideas to Make Progress on Racial Equity

144 community members with low incomes ranked the ideas they thought could have the biggest impact on racial equity in New Orleans

1. **Quality education for children:** All children deserve good schools. We need to support schools to set children up for success throughout their lives.
2. **Fair treatment of low-wage workers:** Low-wage workers provide a lot of value to our city. They should get paid for the value they generate. They deserve more respect and dignity at work.
3. **Workforce training and entrepreneurship:** Support working adults to enter high paying jobs. Include training on how to start or grow a business. That way, they will have more choice and opportunity.
4. **Community-led racial equity work:** The work of ending racism should be led by the community. The city should provide money. Other groups should be involved.
5. **Advocacy and engagement:** We need to tell the truth about racism in New Orleans. We need to make it easy to get involved in efforts that end racism.
6. **Support mission-driven organizations:** Learn about organizations that lead equity work in New Orleans. That way, we can support those who are making a difference.
7. **Cross-sector collaboration:** Everyone in New Orleans should commit to getting people out of poverty. That way, we can help more people.
8. **Address our own biases:** Learn about ways to recognize racism. Learn from people who have different experiences. That way, we can make decisions that end racism.
9. **Data-informed decision making:** We need to collect data on solutions that combat racism in New Orleans. That way, we can make better decisions to end racism.
10. **Climate change and poverty:** The effects of climate change will harm poor communities the most. We need solutions that end racism and stop climate change at the same time.

WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE SAYING

"There is this app called Varage Sale where you meet up and buy things people no longer need. When they find out where I live and that I work in downtown New Orleans, they'll say: 'Oh my gosh, I don't come there. I'm so sorry.' Then they ask me: 'Would you mind meeting me in Metairie or could we meet at a more neutral place?'" It's crazy because if you come to visit me, you can see that I live in a beautiful red brick house with a very nice lawn, great flowers, and a beautiful gate. But that's not what they care about. All they think is that she lives in the Ninth Ward. You're basically projecting where I reside on me as a person. It feels as if you assume that I am dirty, impoverished, hostile, and aggressive; it just makes me feel judged."

—Community Member

"If you're going to live your life, you should be able to live it freely and happily. You should be able to have a choice and go anywhere you want to go. If I avoid racist places, I feel like I'm confined, as if I'm in a prison cell."

- Community Member

"There are some successful programs in New Orleans, but we are so far behind that our ancestors were not able to help us. Our kids have no opportunities. They can't buy property, they are in financial debt; its a generational thing."

-Community Member

"We need training and education that is free, so that people of color can get certified. That is a foot in the door for Black-owned businesses. We need people to invest in their business in order to support these entrepreneurs."

- Community Member

"I strongly believe that no one is poor. What does it mean to be rich? I don't have millions, but I consider myself to be rich."

- Community Member