

# **Racial Equity in Iowa City and Johnson County**

## **~ Report Summary ~**

The Coalition for Racial Justice developed a report stating that **significant and troubling racial disparities exist** in our community in education, juvenile justice, adult criminal justice, economic well-being, housing, and representation in community leadership. The report reveals that children and adults in the greater Iowa City area experience different opportunities and quality of life depending on the color of their skin or ethnic background.

The Report presents data, broken down by race/ethnicity, on education, juvenile justice, adult criminal justice, economic well-being, housing, and representation in community leadership. To create the Report, we gathered existing data from multiple sources to take a statistical snapshot of families and youth in our community. These areas were chosen because of their importance in shaping individuals' opportunities and well-being.

### **Race Matters**

The Report does not attempt to provide ready explanations for why racial disparities exist, nor do we believe that eliminating disparities will happen overnight. But we do believe the overview can help members of the community better understand the extent of racial disparities and provide benchmarks to assist us in measuring community progress toward racial equity. As the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Race Matters" toolkit explains, "It is easier to change what we measure rather than what we don't."

The Coalition for Racial Justice is committed to shifting the local conversation towards an understanding of racial equity. The Minneapolis Foundation defines racial equity as a condition where "race and ethnicity no longer adversely shape an individual's or group's experience with power, access to opportunity, treatment and outcomes." A Racial Equity approach uses data to assess how different groups are faring in a community and to evaluate the success of programs designed to improve those conditions.

### **Models for Achieving Racial Equity**

Several community models exist for improving racial equity. Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative is one model that seeks "to end institutional racism and race-based disparities in City government." Members of the Coalition for Racial Justice are available to provide information about the models and tools that have been developed and to facilitate discussions about conducting racial equity impact assessments in our community.

We hope the Report fosters dialogue among residents, elected leaders and other local officials, and community organizations. Our goal is for people of all races and from all sectors to work together to create a community that is a model for achieving racial equity and inclusion.

## Key Recommendations

- A Racial Justice Roundtable composed of people of diverse backgrounds and from key sectors should be convened to provide leadership on using a racial equity lens to addressing racial disparities in our community.
- Racial Equity Impact Assessment tools should be used to assess programs, policies, practices and budgets, and formulate concrete strategies to eliminate any inequities based on race or ethnic background in public policy and organizational practices.
- Leadership by people of color should be honored and built upon to increase the civic participation in public commissions, boards, and meetings.
- Local funding opportunities, community awards, and leadership development opportunities should be available for organizations led by people of color.

Additional questions are raised in the report for each area discussed.

## Changing Demographics

Issues of racial disparities won't resolve themselves without intentional efforts; if left unresolved, the disparities will continue to grow given the changing demographics. Johnson County is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. The 2010 Census found that 17 percent of Johnson County's population was comprised of people of color, up from 11 percent in 2000. Coralville is the most racially diverse municipality: 23.5 percent of Coralville residents were people of color in 2010, compared with 14.6 percent in 2000. People of color comprised 20.3 percent of Iowa City residents in 2010, compared with 14.2 percent in 2000. And 12 percent of North Liberty's population were people of color in 2010, compared with 5.9 percent in 2000.

## Contact the Coalition for Racial Justice

- Find out more about the coalition or this report
- Schedule a presentation about racial equity and/or request a racial equity toolkit for your group or organization
- Be included in the Community Racial Justice Mailing List, which provides information about local racial justice efforts and events

**Coalition for Racial Justice website:** <http://racialjusticecoalition.com>

**Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/RacialJusticeCoalition](http://www.facebook.com/RacialJusticeCoalition)

**Email:** [coalition.racial.justice@gmail.com](mailto:coalition.racial.justice@gmail.com)

## About The Coalition for Racial Justice:

In June 2010, the Consultation of Religious Communities (CRC) of Johnson County established a community task force on Race, Poverty and Public Safety in response to numerous reports received by its affiliated religious leaders about problems faced by African Americans in Iowa City. The group reorganized in Spring 2012 and changed its name to The Coalition for Racial Justice to serve as a broader community coalition. The Coalition is committed to joining together to promote racial justice through action, education and empowerment. The Coalition has organized several actions toward achieving racial equity since its inception, including co-sponsoring the "Iowa City Million Hoodie March" on March 26, 2012.