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Local Government Role in Advancing Equity and Inclusion

Track 7 Project

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Introduction

When I first had the idea to write a report on how local governments can play a role in advancing race equity and inclusion, I could not have imagined the amount of resources and topics that I could focus on. I was relieved to find information on how the Office of the City Secretary could directly participate in the efforts to advance equity in our local communities. The complexity of race inequities and the effects to each and every member of our communities is daunting. “Across America, communities of color tend to have less access to government resources and less communal experiences with government as a force for good.” and “Local elected officials and city staff must commit time and space to listen to the lived experiences of communities of color and intentionally consider these experiences.” (NLC Municipal Action Guide). It is important that cities understand that “in order to thrive, cities must strengthen untapped and underutilized assets and deliberately rectify by race, place and income,” and if we invest the time and resources to advancing equity, we could raise the standards of living for everyone in our community. (McFarland)

History of Inequality

In order to address a problem we first have to understand that there is a problem and identify the problem. This is what we know:

“Race Outcomes Gap. People of color fare worse than their white counterparts across every age and income level when it comes to societal outcomes. They experience significant disadvantages in education, 1 economic stability, 2 health, life expectancy, and rates of incarceration. 3

- Racial Leadership Gap. BoardSource’s Leading with Intent: 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices found that people of color comprise 10% of CEOs, 10% of Board Chairs, and 16% of Board members.⁴ Compared to 40% of the working population, ⁵ these figures indicate a large gap between race demographics of the working population and social sector leadership. Building Movement Project’s recent report, Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial

Leadership Gap, highlights that the racial leadership gap is not a pipeline problem, nor is it due to differences in education, skills, or interest; rather, it is a structural problem within the sector.” (Awoke to Woke to Work)

For centuries, whites have benefited from exclusionary laws and practices, while other groups were barred from citizenship, denied opportunities, and restricted from full participation in American society. Examples include Naturalization reserved for whites (1790), Indian disposed of lands (1830) Nonwhites barred from testifying (1854) African Americans denied citizenship (1857) Jim Crow segregation begins (1887) Land laws discriminate against Asians (1913) Immigration quotas favor Nordics (1924) The national housing act of 1934 was passed to improve the lot of those who might not otherwise afford to own a home. The act was implemented using a neighborhood grading system (known as redlining) labeled minority neighborhoods as too unstable for lending resulting in entrenched segregating and benefits largely only white families. Minorities denied Social Security/excluded from unions (1935) The national labor relations Act of 1935, excluded agricultural and domestic employees, the predominance of African Americans in these occupations created disparities in labor protection that exist to this day. The serviceman readjustment act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill, is often credited for helping to build American middle class. Tuition benefits were theoretically offered to African American veterans, but largely could not be used were they were excluded from white colleges, and there was not space in overcrowded African American colleges. Banks and mortgage companies refused to load to African Americans.

“Today, the average white family has eight times the wealth of the average nonwhite family. Even at the same income level, whites have an average of two or three times as much wealth. Whites are more likely to be segregated than any other group, and 86% of suburban whites still live in places with a Black population of less than 1%. Today, 71% of whites own their own home, compared to 44% of African American. Black and Latino mortgage applicants are 60% more likely than whites to be turned down for loans, even after controlling for employment, financial and neighborhood characteristics.”

The City of Waco also explored this data for a City Council Retreat held on May 23, 2019. The goal is everyone in Waco thrives, including people of color. The United States is expected

to see people of color become the majority by about 2044. Waco's population is already more than 56% people of color. Data from the ACS 2012-2017 reveals areas of disparities that exist in the Waco community for people of color, particularly in the areas of health, financial security, and education.

The poverty rate by race and ethnicity in the City of Waco for the past six years has improved, similarly to that of the nation, primary due to economic improvements. However, people of color remain the highest concentration of poverty in Waco with 1/3 of all black residents falling below the poverty line and 31% of Hispanics. (Appendix) There are additional gaps for people of color in their health care coverage under health insurance. People of color statistically speaking, are less likely to be covered under an insurance program, which could lead to higher costs for health care and/or restricted access to healthcare at the expense of the individual and the community. Household income by race / ethnicity for the City of Waco in 2017 shows that 51% black households have incomes of less than \$25,000, which is substantially more than white and Hispanic households. The disparity is also seen at the other end of the income chart where almost 29% of white households in Waco make more than \$100,000, while only 8% of Hispanic households do a 3% of black households make over \$100,000. Jobs in Waco that pay over \$40,000 annually, which is only 40% of jobs in the Waco area and the number of people of color accessing these jobs has grown significantly between 2009 – 2015 (the latest year data is available). In fact, people of color are increasingly seeing themselves in these jobs; however, as of 2015, only 20% of jobs paying over \$40,000 in Waco were filled by people of color; while you will remember that 56% of the population is made up of people of color. Waco Data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the year 2017 revealed that race/ethnicity by job type for all private employers in the Waco area show that people of color tend to be in service worker and laborer type positions, while the management, professional, and executive level positions are predominantly filled by white. Educational attainment for Waco residents that are over the age of 25 is approximate 46% of Hispanics in Waco have less than a high school degree, which is why you likely see that their access to non-labor positions is restricted. 29% of white Waco's have at least a bachelor's degree from college, which is just slightly below the national average, while 8% of Hispanics and 7% of black Wacoans have at least a bachelor's degree. These disparities are not unique to

Waco. All across the County the data reveals the same, there are disparities that are not fully being addressed. There is a link between health, education, financial security and poverty. Cycles of poverty not only limit the populations affected by it, but also limit the ability of a community to thrive and compete economically. Our local communities' success and sustainability is tied to the success of its residents and businesses. (Appendix)

“Despite the collapse of the housing market during the Great Recession, homeownership still remains one of the greatest sources of American’s wealth. Unfortunately, decades of discriminatory housing practices and market practices, coupled with a recession that disproportionately harmed household of color, have contributed to the fact that today, only 41% of Black Households and 45% of Hispanic households own their homes, compared to 71% of White households.” Because inheritances and down payment assistance is more common in white families, African-American families find themselves eight years behind White families on the path towards building home equity” (the ever growing gap) “At the root of this are a number of discriminatory practices—including, among others, employment discrimination, racial discrimination in the criminal justice system, housing segregation and unequal access to educational opportunities—that have continued into the present even as some acts of past discrimination decline. Today, as a result of this continued cycle of racial injustice, Black and Latino families face a number of barriers towards achieving financial security at almost every turn.”

Cities Role in Advancing Race Equity

In light of this information, Cities have an obligation to discover and understand the inequities in our communities. The question becomes, how we create more “inclusive cities and neighborhoods that can meet the needs of all the members of our communities? How do we create cities where people from all “racial, ethical and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically?” (NLC article) The National League of Cities, the Alliance on Race Equity, Race Forward and Center for social inclusion provide resources and tools for local governments to examine the role of government in advancing racial equity. This work takes a hard self-examination on identifying institutional racism such as policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color unintentionally or inadvertently. Examples include federal housing administration rules, location of city facilities,

hospitals, street lighting, street signs and barriers to services. Cities can identify how they can actively insert racial equity into decision making processes and discussions.

Cities must recognize the disparities that exist and acknowledge that the city can, through its values, activities, encourage people to understand the root causes of those disparities. Cities should attempt to examine the policies and rules they develop to limit fostering additional disparities. The goal is to focus not on just service but take a holistic view on changing policies and practices that can advance equity. Many plans recommend creating a racial equity team in senior leadership, hiring a race equity officer, appointing a race equity taskforce who evaluates policies, ordinances and resolutions before they are presented to Council. Cities can create a team of department heads that look at housing, transit, police, parks and municipal court policies to examine any barriers to service. Interdepartmental teams can be established to focus on contracting equity, workforce equity, and community engagement.

Cities must also recognize that these discussions are difficult and “people find it hard to talk about race without feeling blame, shame, guilt, and grievance.” (Race Equity and inclusion Action guide) As uncomfortable as these discussion may be it is important to have these discussion and elected officials and senior management must provide a framework and common language to help communicate and create coordinated efforts to advance have comprehensive and systemic discussions and understanding of race equity. Training and leadership creating a message to build a framework and common language to help communicate and create a coordinated work plan to advance equitable outcomes in our cities.

The City Secretary’s Office can have a role in advancing equity by providing opportunities for communities to sit on Boards and Commissions and have a voice at the table. Cities can easily implement a model for improving equity on boards and commissions by examining opportunities to recruit, train, appoint and recognize diverse boards and commissions that represent their communities. Boards and Commissions service can be an important leverage point for advancing equity and can be instrumental in shaping key policy decisions, as well as designing and providing input on administration of city services. Boards and commissions can ask questions and provide city leadership with awareness to barriers to serves and proactively work to lower or remove these barriers.

In order to appoint diverse boards the City Secretary's Office or Community engagement Offices can work with community partners to encourage leadership development. Cities can also coordinate City Academy courses that teach residents about the operations and functions of city government. Leadership Development can incorporate information related to race equity and around key issue areas such as economic development, health, housing, and transit and workforce development. Casting a wide net would provide Council Members an opportunity to appoint a diverse and knowledgeable leaders to boards and commissions. To enhance the application pool cities can provide lists of vacancies and serve opportunities to its community partners and grassroots organizations so that the community to encourage groups to apply for boards.

In order to sustain an environment of inclusion that allows for meaningful and authentic civic engagement departments coordinated boards and commission appointees can standardize new member orientations, provide manuals for volunteers, and train staff liaison and other internal support staff on equity initiatives. Training in ethics and parliamentary procedures can also be provided. Boards and commissions should evaluate the time and days that boards and commissions meet to eliminate any barriers to service.

Boards and Commissions requirements for service should be clearly established to make the appointment process equitable and to meet the goals of the boards. City staff can help determine the potential influence of boards and commission in advancing equity and facilitate connections between council, staff and members. When appropriate Council can provide opportunities to call for community volunteers to advice on key issues facing the community.

A data-driven approach is necessary but can be tricky. Boards and Commission coordinates can request voluntary boards and commissions diversity survey that can be used to track the process in reaching goal of equitably representing the community. Collecting demographics of the applicant pool can also allow cities to compare the applicants to those actually appointed. This data is only collected in aggregate form to measure progress of diversity. Local government scan also consider a race equity taskforce that is a community based to address issues of racial equity through education of inequitable circumstances, research best practices and make recommendations to address racial inequity in the community and governmental entities. Community specific advisory committees can also be

valuable to gathering perspectives. The City of Durham created the Mayor's Hispanic/Latino Advisory group to "improve opportunities and quality of life of Hispanic/Latinos in the city of Durham through civic engagement by promoting the interests and needs of the community at-large and to serve as liaisons and consultative body between the Hispanic/Latino residents and city government officials in order to promote and protect equal opportunities for all."

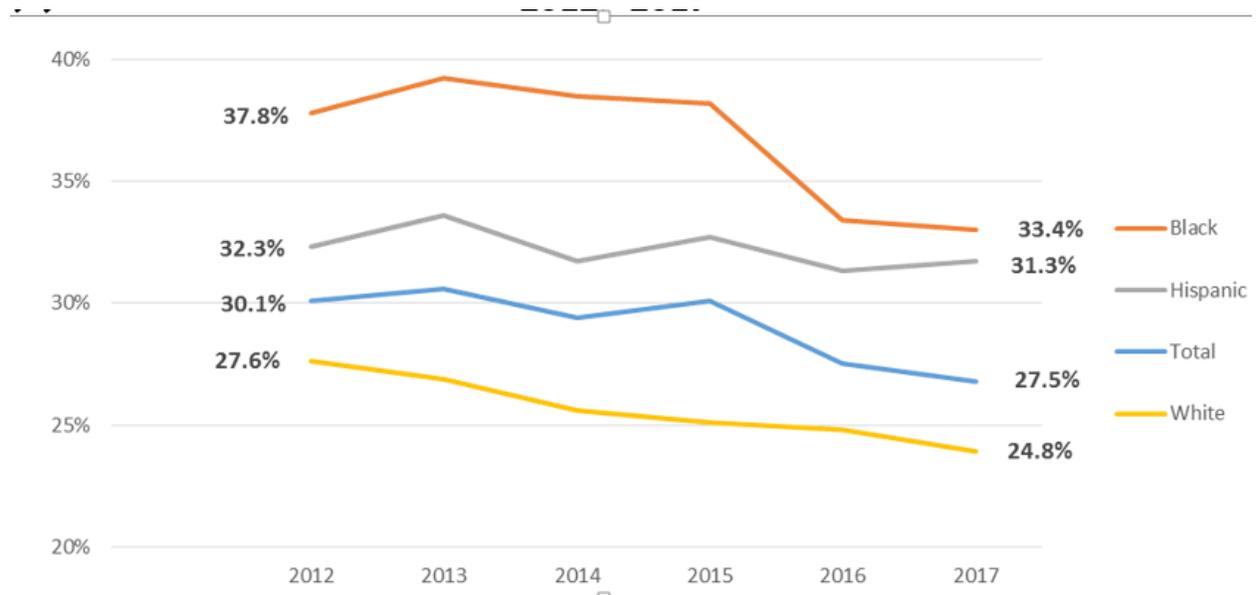
"The Durham City Council is currently seeking applicants to serve on the newly established Mayor's Council for Women. The purpose of the Mayor's Council For Women is to improve the opportunities and quality of life of women in the City of Durham through civic engagement by promoting the interests and needs of the community at-large; and to serve as a liaison and consultative body between women and the city government officials in order to further promote and protect equal opportunities for all." Our Boards and Commissions should also strive to engage stakeholders who have active authentic connections to their communities. Boards and Commissions should engage a diverse mix of stakeholders and provide opportunist to design solutions and in every area of government

The futue of our cities children, families, and loved ones depends on the work we decide to do today. It is the role of govenrment ot provide people of all races with clean environments to live with decent affordable housing, good jobs, and high quality schools. For decades, low incomeand communitis of color have been denied the benefits that white americans have benefited from. It is like beginning a game of monolply late when all the property has been baought up prosperity is limited. We must evalaute our roles in doing what is right and discover the barriers that still exist to create a sustainable and healthy community.

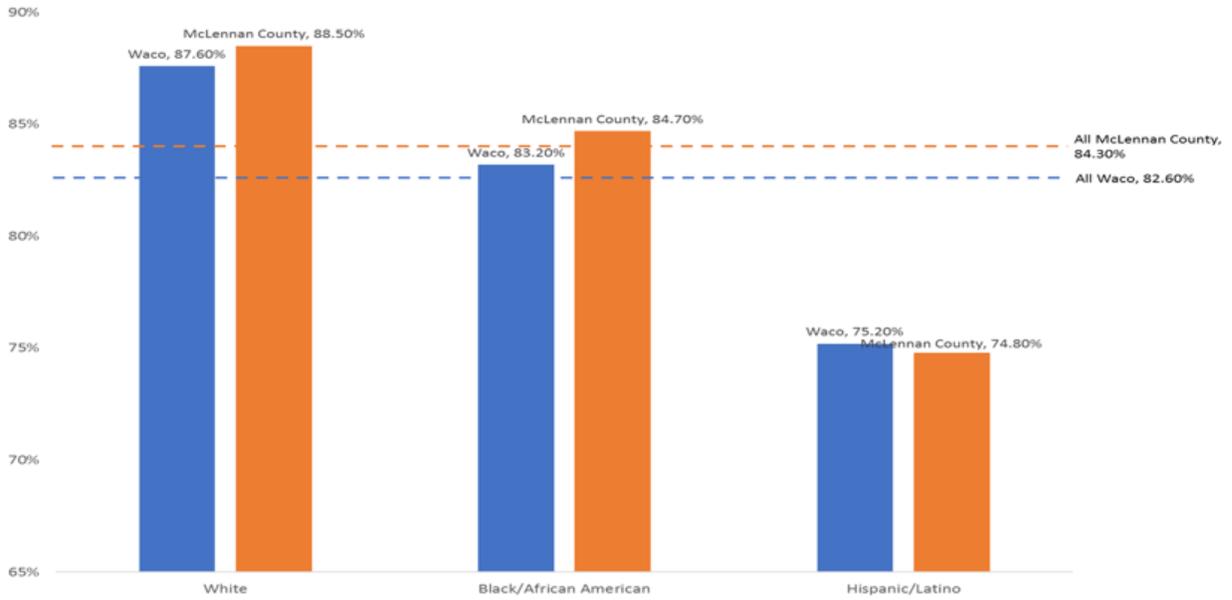
Race/Ethnicity		
	Waco	McLennan County
White	43.01%	56.75%
Black/African American	20.90%	14.19%
Hispanic or Latino	32.06%	25.64%
Other	4.03%	3.42%

Data Source: ACS 2012-2017

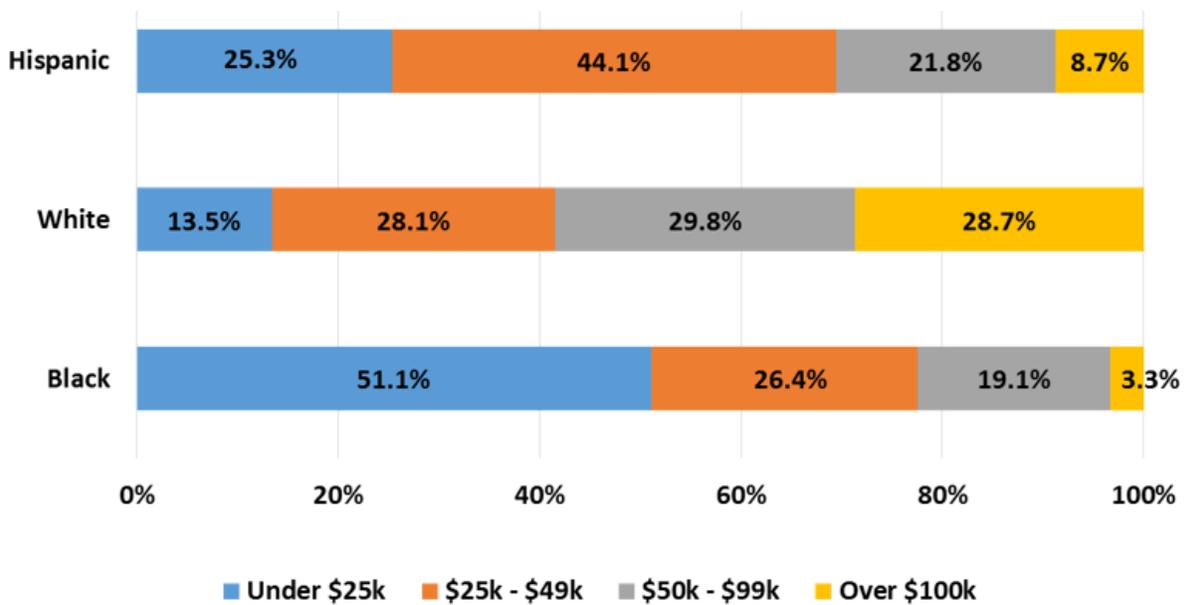
Poverty Rate by Race

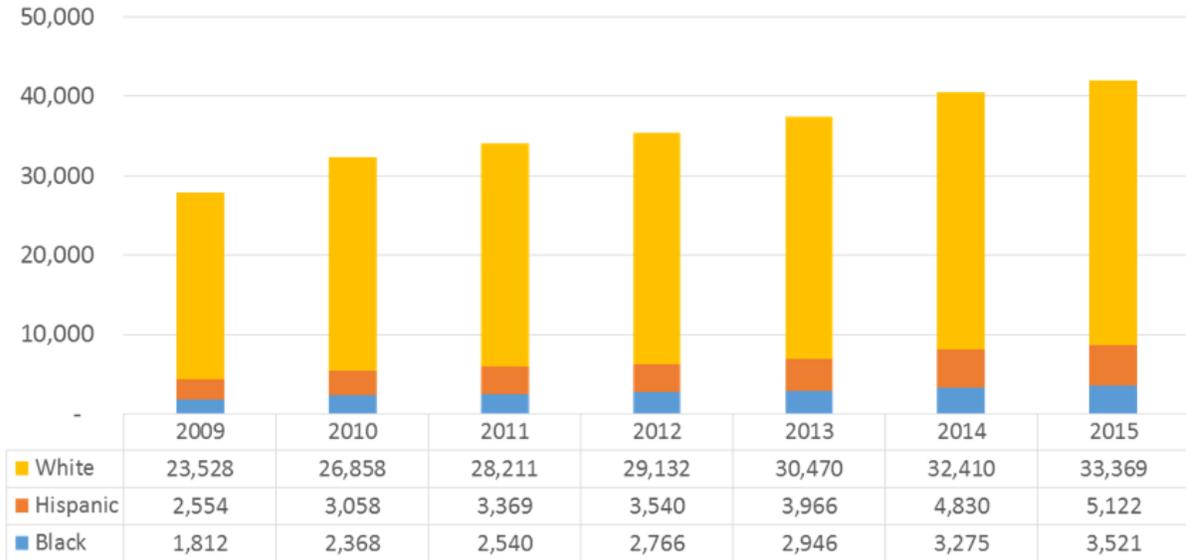


Health Insurance Coverage by Race/ Ethnicity



Household Income by Race and Ethnicity



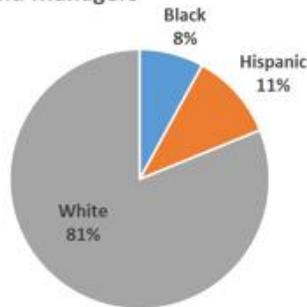


With wages greater than \$39,999 annually

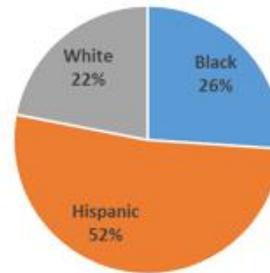
Job Category in Waco by Race/ Ethnicity

2017

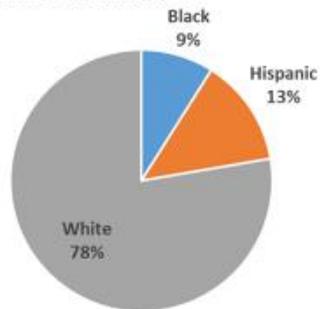
Executives and Managers



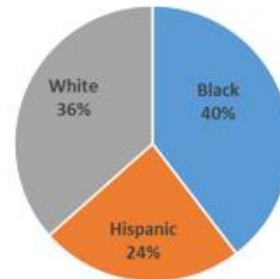
Laborers



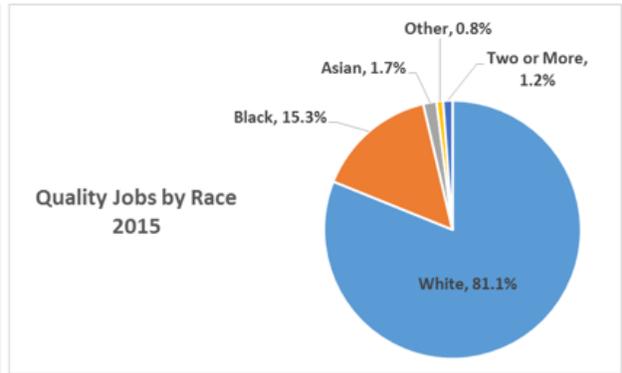
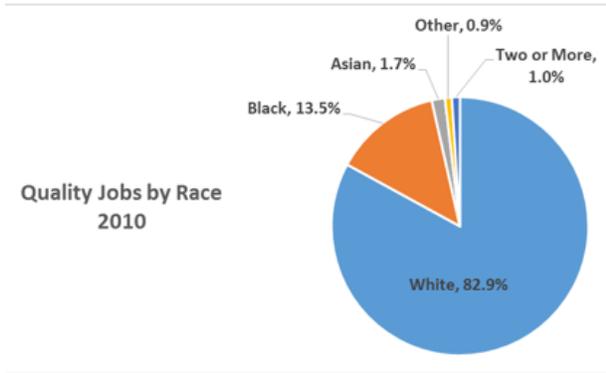
Professionals and Technicians



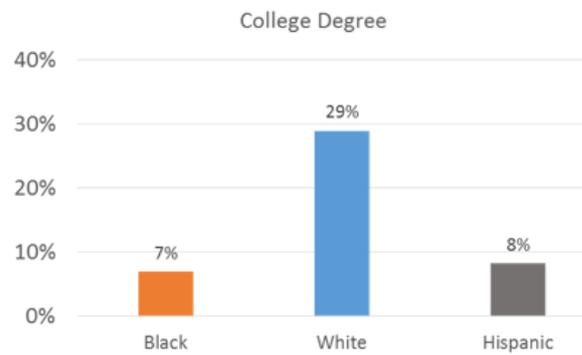
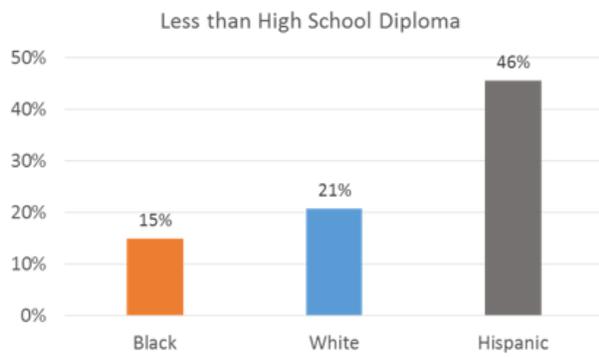
Service Workers



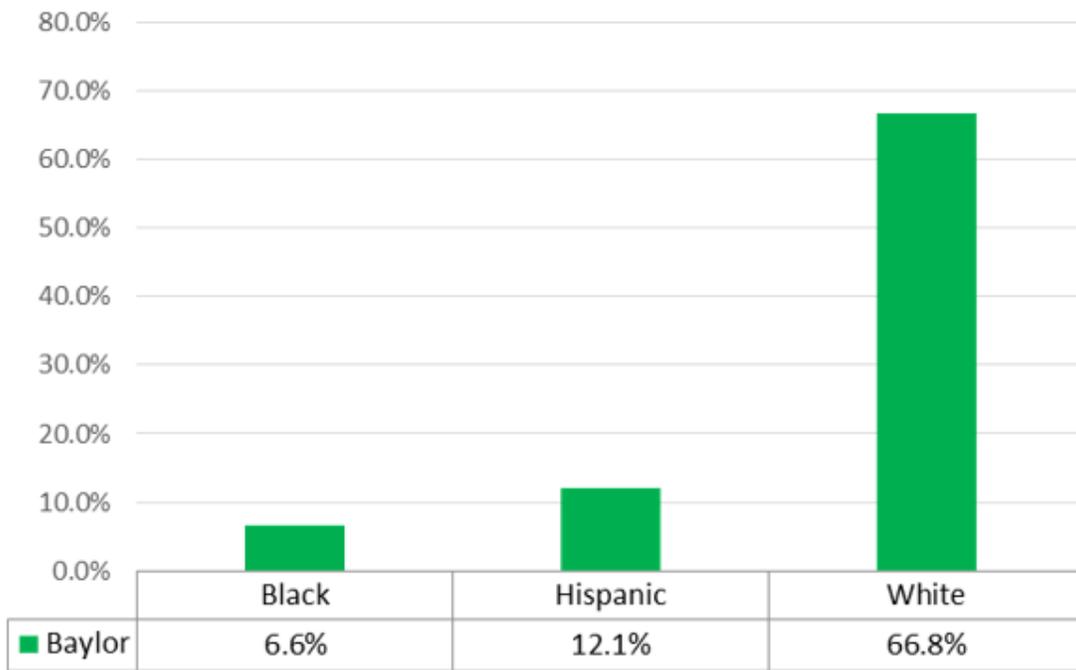
Jobs by Race Comparison



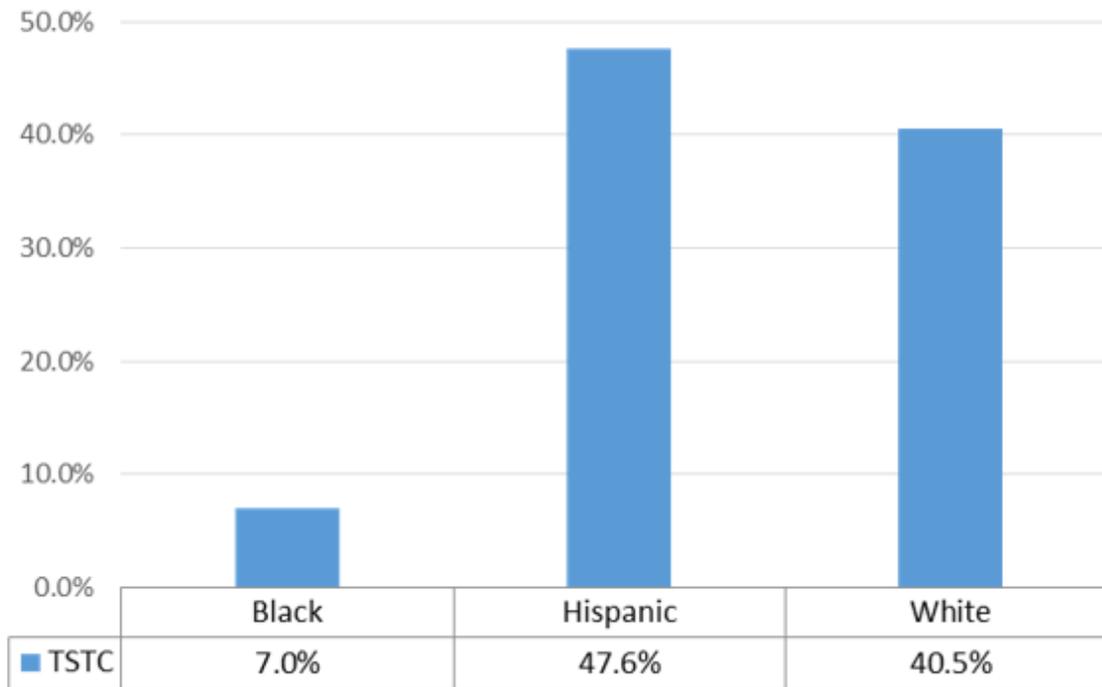
Educational Attainment of Waco Residents (Over 25 years of age)



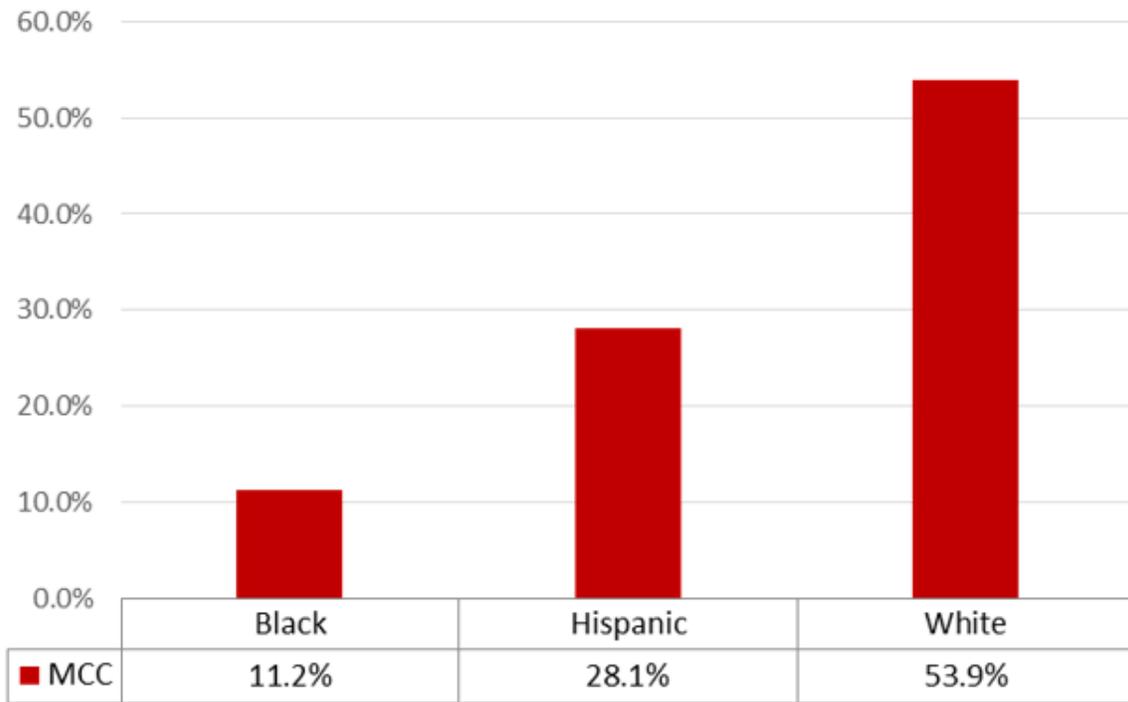
Race Ethnicity for Graduating Students at Baylor University



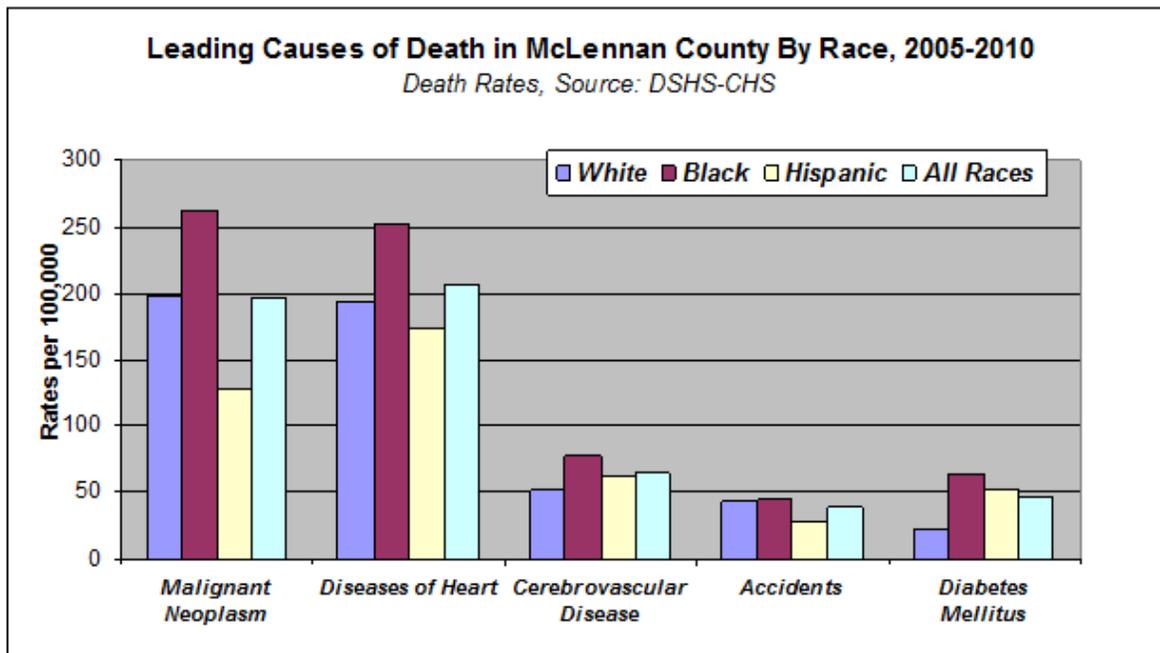
Race/Ethnicity for Graduating Students at TSTC



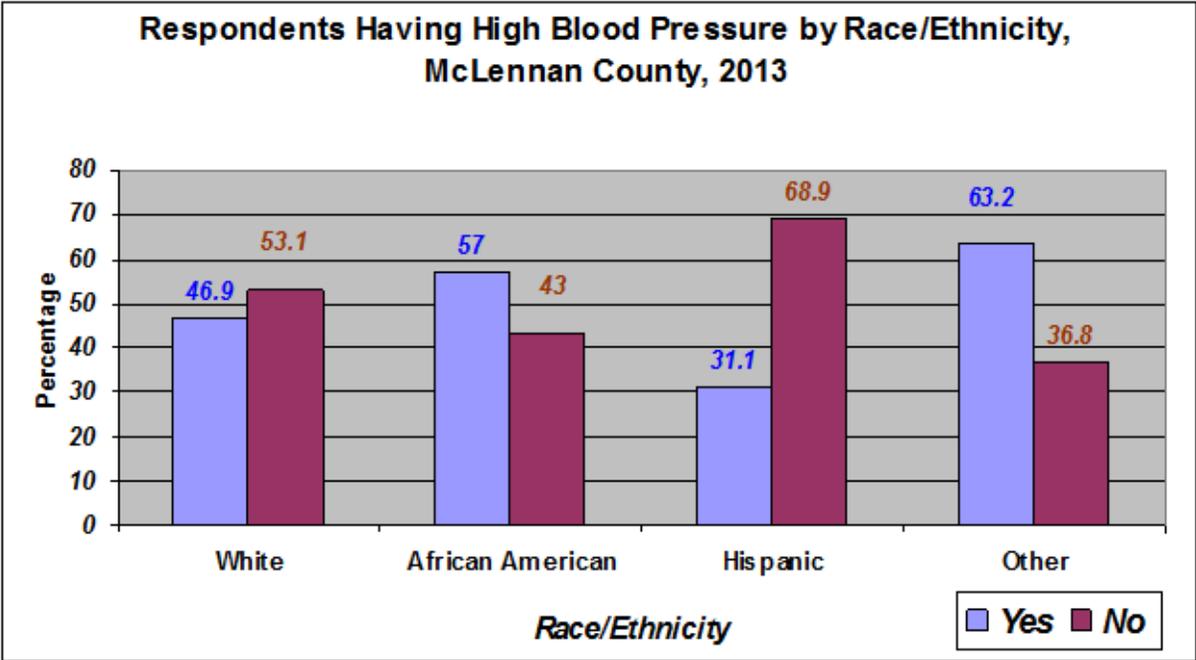
Race and Ethnicity for Graduating or Certificate Students at MCC



Leading Causes of Death in McLennan County by Race, 2005-2010



Findings from the Community Health Needs Assessment



The Ever Growing Gap Data (Appendix B)

Today, as a result of this continued cycle of racial injustice, Black and Latino families face a number of barriers towards achieving financial security at almost every turn. For many Americans, having a job that pays a decent wage is not only a matter of having the dignity of being able to provide for their families, it's also foundational to longer-term financial security. For Black (8.6%)¹⁰ and Latino workers (5.8%),¹¹ that foundation is uneven at best, as these workers are unemployed at much higher rates today than their White counterparts (4.4%).¹² Although the lingering effects of the Great Recession have undoubtedly contributed to these inequalities, this has been the unfortunate reality for Black and Latino workers since the 1970s.¹³

Even when Latino and Black families are employed, they face a median household income gap that sees them earning about \$13,000 and \$20,000 less per year, respectively, than the median White household earns (\$50,400).¹⁴ Adding to this disparity is the fact that not every dollar earned is equal between these communities. For every dollar a White household earns, they see a wealth return of \$19.51, whereas Black and Latino households see a wealth return of just \$4.80 and \$3.63, respectively, for every dollar they earn.¹⁵

Over two-thirds of Black and Hispanic households (67% and 71%, respectively) lack the savings necessary to subsist at the poverty level for three months in the event of an unexpected income disruption, such as a job loss or medical emergency.¹⁶ By comparison, a little over a third of White households are in a similar financial position. Put differently, Black and Latino families face financial insecurity at about double the rate of White families. For low-wealth households, meeting everyday financial needs often means relying on alternative financial services, such as non-bank remittances, prepaid cards or check cashers. Today, 46% of Black households and 40% of Latino households use these services—more than double the usage rate among White households (18%).¹⁷

While there are a number of reasons why Black and Latino households turn to these services—such as banks moving out of poorer rural areas, high overdraft fees and mistrust of financial institutions—the reality is that fees and interest associated with these services end up stripping families of much-needed financial resources. In some instances, these services take away as much as 10% of a household's income.¹⁸ For Black and Latino households who are living on the financial edge, spending this much of their limited resources just to carry out day-to-day financial transactions is a burden they cannot afford.

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