



CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES
CATHOLIC HOUSING SERVICES
SERVING PEOPLE OF ALL BELIEFS



HOUSING & HOPE

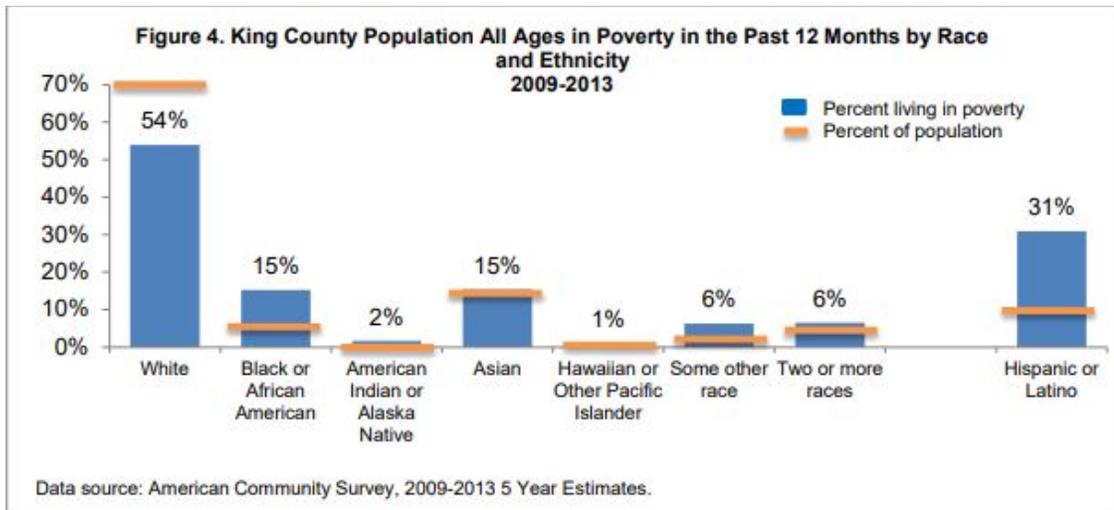
A monthly email series on housing & homelessness.

Communities of Concern

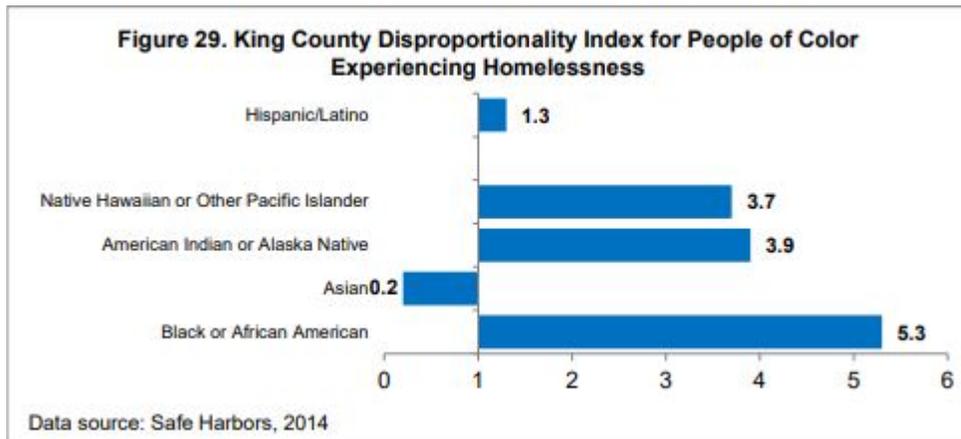
CCS/CHS believes that everyone has the right to safe and affordable housing. We believe in community-identified solutions to uphold the dignity of those we serve. Communities are best positioned to identify specific paths to economic development and stability. We further recognize that housing isn't just individual, but necessary for community health. Because of this, CCS/CHS has numerous programs focusing on what we call *communities of concern*. This month, the Housing & Hope series focuses on how CCS/CHS uplifts our communities of concern: through community-oriented and community-led solutions, with various Housing Initiatives, and by working alongside other non-profits.

Who is a community of concern? Here at CCS, [communities of concern](#) are poor and low-wage earners in the Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and People of Color communities. We focus on these socioeconomic groups because of historic inequities and how those inequities impact present day needs. These populations have experienced systemic racism and are, to this day, frequently excluded from economic opportunities. In [Seattle](#), racial disparities in poverty levels are based in a history of housing discrimination, segregation and redlining, a legacy that continues today. Even as [King County becomes wealthier and more prosperous](#), the number of individuals experiencing homelessness continues to [grow](#). To break the cycle of poverty, CCS/CHS's Housing Initiatives approach these communities based on their self-defined needs. By building relationships and understanding communities and their needs, we can see how poverty and homelessness are problems that need broad approaches.

In a [previous](#) Housing & Hope email, we explored racial disparities in housing. Because BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, they face additional barriers to housing. [Additionally](#), 9% of Black adults have faced an eviction in King County, where they make up 5.5% of the total population. Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and People of Color experience poverty at a [higher rate](#). Those populations also experience higher rates of food insecurity and have fewer educational opportunities.

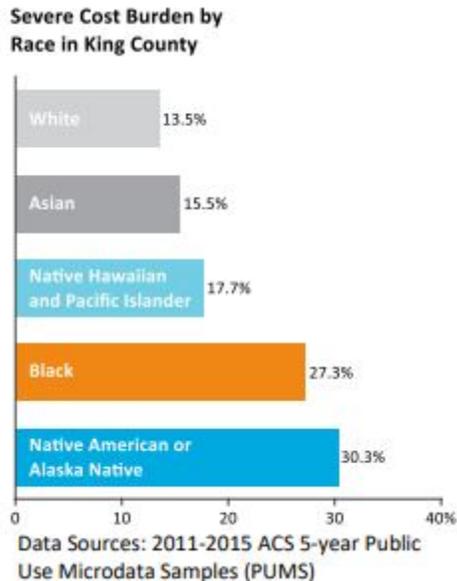


Source: Understanding King County Racial Inequities, United Way of King County



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The COVID-19 crisis has exasperated these inequities, increasing the vulnerability of communities of concern. A [2020 study](#) assessing the impact of COVID on poverty in King County found that a lack of community-relevant supports plays a direct role in our housing crisis. The report also indicates that the Latino community is the most likely to be cost-burdened by housing, but are underrepresented in public housing.



Source: Overview of COVID-19 Impacts on BIPOC Communities in King County, Seattle Foundation

Given these realities, CCS/CHS focuses on three specific communities of concern: Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and People of Color communities. Within our organization, these populations are represented by their own community leaders and work towards self-identified goals for community stability. The programs targeting these communities therefore involve differing objectives, strategies, services, and partners.

CCS/CHS, through Housing Initiatives, connects leaders with the resources their communities need. The strategically named [Communities of Concern Commission \(CoCC\)](#) works with CCS/CHS and other nonprofit organizations to reduce poverty in communities of color and poor rural communities in Washington State. Like our Housing Initiatives, the CoCC promotes capacity building by assisting nonprofits in the development of community-owned assets. These assets can be housing, community facilities, and more, all with the overarching goal of poverty reduction. They represent and support Washington’s Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and People of Color communities. CCS/CHS has supported CoCC, primarily by providing executive-level staff, since the commission formed in 2008. The CoCC has allocated 1.2 million to 15 organizations. This year, the CoCC became a 501c3 non-profit, with a coalition of leaders from Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and People of Color from 23 member organizations.

The [Village Spirit Center of Community Change and Healing](#), a CCS/CHS housing initiative, serves the Black community in Seattle’s Central District with the motto of “live abundantly.” The Village Spirit Center makes spaces with transformative services that can create wealth and assets for this underserved community. Other CCS/CHS housing initiatives that aim to elevate the social and economic realities of Black families include Spruce Park Apartments, Monica’s Village, and Imani Village, all located in King County.

As is typical with our CCS/CHS communities of concern Housing Initiatives, we have partnered with the [Black Community Impact Alliance](#) to achieve these aims. The BCIA looks to improving the lives of Black children and families by

creating a path to access services, supplying education on how to manage resources, and ensuring that tax-payer funded initiatives are improving the lives of the Black community.

The CoCC continues to support the work of CCS/CHS and Seattle's Black community with the upcoming Elizabeth Thomas Homes in Rainer Beach. CoCC provided necessary predevelopment financing to FAME-Equity Alliance that is slated to begin construction on these homes is slated to begin in 2021. The Rainer Beach location was chosen to support the long-standing Black community and to fight gentrification of that area. The building will have more than 100 affordable housing units, maker spaces, and a food innovation center. By supplying space for more than just housing, the Elizabeth Thomas Homes are an investment in education and entrepreneurship.

To support the Latino community of Western Washington, CCS/CHS has [the Creating Futures for Farmworkers initiative](#), the topic of a previous Housing & Hope email. This initiative brings awareness and support to the agriculture workforces in our state. Beyond the Creating Futures Initiative, CCS/CHS works closely with community-led organizations like the [Latino Civic Alliance](#). LCA, a nonprofit, serves the Latino communities in Washington by encouraging civic engagement, fostering youth leadership, and supporting farm workers. "Equity work is key," said José Ortiz, CCS/CHS regional Network Builder, LCA Board Member, and advocate for Latino farmworkers and youth. José is one member of the team working to open a Latino Civic Center in downtown Burien. This exciting project that will host classes on civic engagement and parenting skills with overall goals of mental health support. The Latino Civic Center will include space for education, a radio station, a recording studio, and be partially staffed by CCS.

By engaging with community leaders directly, CCS/CHS supports the needs specifically identified by each community as crucial to long-term development and stability. Additionally, by supplying a space for this kind of work, the CCS/CHS Housing Initiatives allows community leaders to share the responsibilities of poverty reduction for these populations, and to enact lasting change through housing and community investments.

To learn more about the Communities of Concern Commission or stay up-to-date about the development of the Elizabeth Thomas Homes and other projects, please visit their new [website](#). To learn more about the work of CCS/CHS as a partner in advancing economic justice and community development, please visit our [website](#) or contact LeahD@ccsww.org.

If you would like to learn more about a particular issue as it relates to the impact of race on experiencing homelessness, please contact Leah at LeahD@ccsww.org. If you received this email from an outside source, please [sign up](#) if you would like to receive our monthly Housing & Hope emails directly. For an archive of each month's story, please visit the [series homepage](#).

