

The United States was built on the backs of slave and immigrant labor primarily benefitting white households. For 400 years, systemic racist policies across all sectors of society have ingrained socio-economic inequities that have impacted black families the hardest. The Black Lives Matter movement was started by local community activists to raise awareness of systemic discrimination. The Black Lives Matter movement is demanding that the systematic and state-sanctioned violence against Black people in America must end.

The Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC) supports the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement and other social justice movements to end systemic inequity and to support justice and equality for marginalized people, and in particular, black people. As a nonprofit organization and public housing authority, we provide affordable housing to low-income families and individuals. As a community service provider, it is our mission to support our families whose lives are impacted by systemic inequality.

The federal, state and local governments have a long history of systematically adopted housing policies that benefit white people over all other races. Following are a few examples.

Segregationists created and pushed governments to adopt single family zoning to separate people by race. Public Housing Authorities built racially segregated housing. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) subsidized mass production builders to create subdivisions with legal deed restrictions that were exclusively for white families. The FHA then created and insured 30-year mortgages so that white people could buy these homes. The FHA adopted maps with redlines around black neighborhoods and refused to insure mortgages in or around these redlined neighborhoods while also promoting the construction of highways through black neighborhoods to separate them from white neighborhoods. All of these activities were legal until the Civil Rights Act and Fair Housing Act were adopted in the 1960's.

Housing is a determinant of health, wealth, education, safety, and access to services. Seventy percent of the AAHC's residents and participants are black, while 12% of Washtenaw County's residents are black. Consequently, the housing the AAHC provides and the policies the AAHC adopts, can disproportionately positively impact black families.

Black people and their families are more likely to experience the collateral consequences of the criminal justice system, including arrests, incarceration, lost income, fines, inability to post bail, family trauma, family separation and death. The AAHC supports a change in our police response system to reduce militarized police responses. The AAHC supports a change in our community response to mental health and medical health emergencies by providing medical and mental health crisis teams as first responders and police and fire as secondary responders if needed.

The City of Ann Arbor can help reverse a history of racial segregation in the City by continuing to support affordable housing developments in all its neighborhoods. City support includes site plan approvals, development funding, property tax reductions, fee reductions, and property donations. City support also includes funding for supportive services for low-income residents to address food insecurity, mental health, youth programs, evictions prevention, life skills, job creation, crisis management and community building to reduce the need for police services.

The Ann Arbor Housing Commission Board supports the Black Lives Matter movements' call to action.

Resolved, that the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC) is committed to adopting policies to address and reverse historically racist government programs that have disproportionately impacted black families;

Resolved, that the AAHC is committed to requiring its staff to take Implicit Bias training and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training; and

Resolved that the AAHC is committed to listening to and supporting its residents and elected Resident Councils; and

Resolved, because low-income families, especially black families, are less likely to have adequate health care and have poorer health outcomes, the AAHC advocates for investment in mental health, substance use disorders and medical health services and the AAHC partners with local mainstream service providers as well as non-profits so that our families have access to health care, mental health services, and counseling; and

Resolved, because low-income families, especially black families, are more likely to contract and die from COVID-19, the AAHC increased our efforts to keep our residents safe and housed. AAHC partnered with the City of Ann Arbor and local non-profits to provide additional food, cleaning supplies, and computer tablets for school-aged children. In addition, the AAHC developed a strategy to prevent a wave of evictions for non-payment of rent including rent reductions and fee waivers. The AAHC also dedicated funding to help people secure housing and maintain housing with private landlords by paying for security deposits, application fees, damages, court fees and moving costs; and

Resolved, because low-income families, especially black families, are more likely to hold low-wage jobs, experience unemployment, and are less likely to receive sick and vacation pay, the AAHC has a Family Self-Sufficiency program and partners with income and wealth building programs administered by local educational institutions, government agencies and non-profits to move families out of poverty and into economic self-sufficiency; and

Resolved, because low-income households, especially black households, are less likely to inherit wealth, and have fewer assets, the AAHC has a homeownership program and partners with state and local programs to help our tenants become homeowners; and

Resolved, because low-income children, especially black children, are more likely to be suspended from school and have lower graduation rates, the AAHC partners with local non-profits to provide summer and after-school programs to help our young tenants succeed in school and graduate; and

Resolved, because low-income households, especially black households, are more likely to experience the collateral consequences of the criminal justice system, including arrests, incarceration, lost income, fines, inability to post bail, family trauma, family separation and death, the AAHC removed all tenant screening barriers except those required by HUD, adopted a housing first policy, adopted a harm reduction policy and works with local non-profits and mainstream service providers to prevent evictions; and

Resolved, because low-income households, especially black households, are more likely to experience job discrimination, the AAHC is committed to contracting with tenants and black-owned businesses and hiring black staff; and

Resolved, because Washtenaw County is the 8th most racially segregated county in the United States, the AAHC is committed to reducing racial segregation and increasing housing choices by developing affordable housing and providing project-based vouchers in high resourced communities and supporting anti-discrimination ordinances based on source of income; and

Resolved, because black individuals and families are more likely to experience homelessness, the AAHC has a homeless preference for its waitlist and partners with local non-profits to provide permanent supportive housing for its units that are set-aside for homeless households; and

Resolved, that the Ann Arbor Housing Commission Board supports the Black Lives Matter movements' call to action. The AAHC Board supports and directs AAHC staff to partner with City Administration, the Ann Arbor Police Department, and the Independent Community Police Oversight Committee to transform our community's police response system and to advocate for affordable housing, mental health services and other community programs that support racial equity.