



2020 Vision

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BIPOC Engagement in Seattle



OFFICE OF ARTS & CULTURE
SEATTLE



Office for Civil Rights
Seattle

2020 VISION:

BIPOC Engagement in Seattle

Genuine conversations grounded in history lessons, story telling, music sharing, sharing cultural foods, spaces safe for kids and actual healing. We tryna heal these ancestral wounds so some spiritual healing would be amazing.

This report began in 2019 and is dedicated to the vibrant, brilliant and beautiful Indigenous, Black and Brown communities of greater Seattle. This report is made possible with support from The Seattle Public Library Foundation, The Seattle Public Library (SPL), Seattle Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture.

A PANDEMIC UPDATE

Listening closely to community voices has been a critical part of equitable civic response to COVID. This approach is reflected in The Seattle Public Library's Public Engagement pandemic efforts with local community groups and our Seattle Together city partners.

In 2019, well before COVID-19 hit, community members were helping The Seattle Public Library, the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, and the Seattle Office for Civil Rights embark on an intensive community listening project focused on civics and racial justice.

With key support from The Seattle Public Library Foundation, our goal was to deepen our insights from BIPOC community members on what racial justice and social justice can be and become. Along the way, we hosted an Emergent Strategy community workshop and author reading with renowned activist and organizer Adrienne Maree Brown. We also created an online survey and did engagement work with a wide range of different community partners who are people of color.

In this way, community-led research helped shape the community-recommended practices included in this report. At the time, we wanted to create space for communities most affected by racism to explore common ground with each other as civic leaders. This framing broke the ice on broader topics such as decolonizing, racial justice and social justice. By listening we saw how BIPOC communities are asking the City to leverage equity resources in ways that build power and unity.

What we did not know was that the community had also given us a vital blueprint for responding to COVID-19.

In this way, our working title of this project, "2020 Vision," was quite literal. The community members who participated in this research gave partners like SPL and other city teams a dynamic 2020 vision for responding to a health crisis of staggering proportions. Community insights in particular helped shape the Library's public engagement partnerships during the pandemic, including programs such as Love in the Time of COVID, Reflections Dance Festival, BLOOM Food Justice Initiative, Soul Clinics and more. They also shaped core parts of the city wide pandemic response called Seattle Together.

Find out more at www.spl.org/2020Vision



After over two years of a global pandemic that has only increased already larger inequities, listening to community is more relevant than ever.

We hope that these initial insights are a useful starting place for amplifying community voices and deepening civic inclusion as the Puget Sound area continues to imagine recovery.

Contact us: If you are a member of a BIPOC-led community group working in community-led co-design and have questions about how this report might apply to your work, please feel free to reach out at publicengagement@spl.org

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT WITH BIPOC COMMUNITIES:

What We Learned



Following are preliminary findings on how Seattle’s BIPOC communities might like to be engaged. Community members shared these insights through a special community workshop with activist and visionary Adrienne Maree Brown, along with surveys and community dialogs, in the spring of 2019. Overall, 250 BIPOC community members took part in making this report.

Note: Some of the qualitative data used in this report is based on 34 in-depth surveys and follow-up conversations with engaged community members to check for understanding.

Look for italicized direct quotes from BIPOC community members who shared their insights at the top of each section.

Breaking bread helps! As is smaller more intentional groupings of folx for discussion groups. A sort of family group one can establish early on in the event/series that we can reflect with together and create a safe, open, vulnerable, judgement-free zone with.

More community dinners for POC with rotating social justice topics – centered in movement building and healing and building deeper relationships.

More opportunities to celebrate and express joy among our BIPOC communities. Food, music, dancing, and intentional conversations/discussion, healing practices (ie exercise, yoga/asanas, meditation/breathing exercises), come together with food.



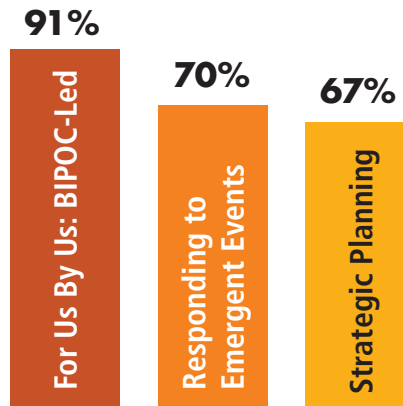


Ethical Demographics

It's important to recognize how data has often been used against communities of color. With that in mind, we invite our readers to consider how to challenge narrative making that is Othering to BIPOC communities overall and to think in culturally specific ways about understanding data in anti-racist ways. To be more transparent in this report, we structured our demographic data collection to allow community members the option to participate as they saw fit.

Top 3 Frameworks

When asked what **overall frameworks** worked best for starting projects, BIPOC respondents ranked these approaches as their top 3 choices.

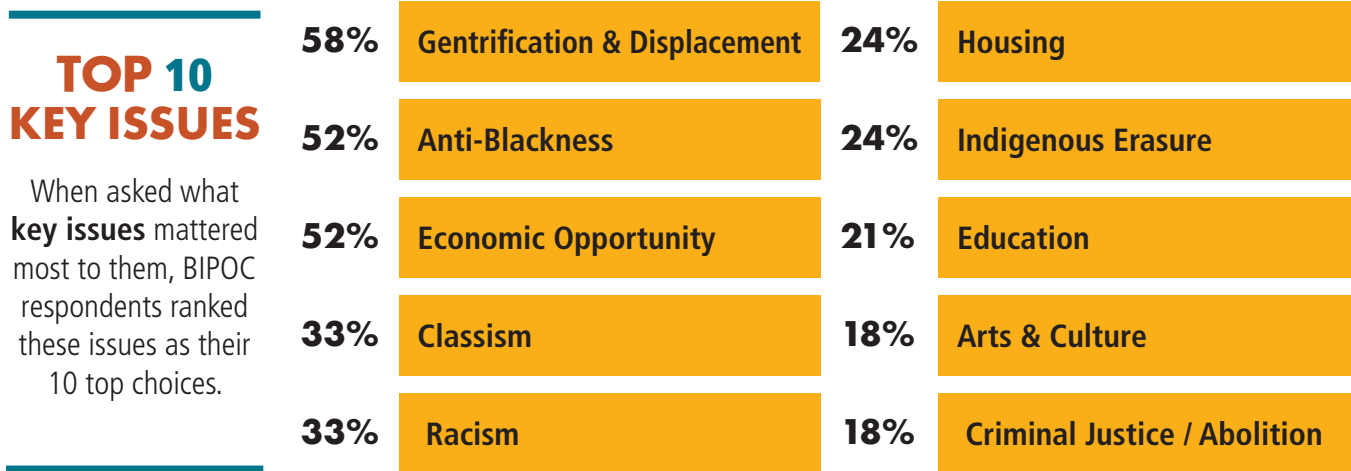


TOP 5 DESIRED ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

When asked what **engagement strategies** resonated most with them, community ranked these approaches as their top 5 choices.



Ethical Demographics



TOP 20 APPROACHES FOR Building Affinity AMONG BIPOC PEOPLE

When asked what **“big tent” approaches** might help BIPOC communities to build affinities with one another, these 20 approaches rose to the top.

- Self-Care/Healing Arts **67%**
- Community Organizing **61%**
- Indigeneity/Connecting with Our Roots **58%**
- Arts & Culture **55%**
- Economic Opportunity/Development **55%**
- Anti-Racism/Social Justice **52%**
- Mental Health **52%**
- Civic Engagement/Leadership **48%**
- Housing/Homelessness **45%**
- Mass Incarceration/Abolition **42%**
- Food Justice/Food Security **39%**
- Access Needs/Disability Rights **36%**
- Environmental Equity **36%**
- Religion/Spirituality **36%**
- Youth Leadership **36%**
- Entrepreneurship/Small Business **33%**
- Families/Kinship Care **33%**
- LGBTQIAA **33%**
- Music **33%**
- Education **30%**



WHAT BIPOC MEANS TO COMMUNITIES

One of the primary sensibilities that communities we engaged shared is that they want “for us, by us” approaches that prioritize leadership from Indigenous, Black and Brown people. The feedback also placed community emphasis on relationship building, responsiveness to emergent events and strategic planning.

I think that the term BIPOC can mean a couple of different things depending on who you're talking to. It either means Black, Indigenous AND people of color (recognizing that Black and Indigenous POC are at the center of most radicalized oppression) while still recognizing the spectrum of POC identities. or it could mean a unique identity for JUST Black and Indigenous people of color without that inclusion of the spectrum. Folx seemed confused, so it might be nice to clarify!

What does common ground look like for BIPOC communities as they advocate for racial justice and social justice? How can we listen to those who are most affected by racism? What does it mean to accountably put their lived experiences front and center? When asked, community members frequently told us to be mindful about using the new term BIPOC. When used without intention or shared histories, it can feel like erasure of culturally specific identities for Native Americans, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, Asians, Latinx/Latino/Hispanic people and beyond.

That said, mindful BIPOC-centered organizing can also deepen cross-cultural understandings and collective anti-racist organizing. Also, social justice terms still change often. With these things in mind, this report uses the terms BIPOC, people of color, and the phrasing Indigenous, Black and Brown throughout to help us see different communities in a shared light that also reflects the unique realities they respectively face.



CONTEXT

For me, it means that Black and Indigenous people have specific issues that face them and you have to break them out of POC as a term. I think there is a lot of divides between the B/I/POC community, and even within the POC community (East Asian, SE Asian, S Asian etc.).

How do we intentionally create space for communities most affected by racism to explore common ground collectively around decolonizing, racial justice, and social justice?

Moving from a place of curiosity, this report is a very modest step towards valuing the many connections between the different communities who have only relatively recently been called BIPOC.

Our hope is that sharing pre-2020 community feedback, gathered directly from local voices, allows BIPOC communities and civic leaders of color to build power and unity with institutional support guided by principles of racial justice and social justice.

BIPOC communities continuously deal with social injustices and how racism compounds them. Seattle-area communities that are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have been dealing with a gravely more expensive city that is increasingly exclusionary — racially and economically. In 2015, Seattle declared a state of emergency around homelessness. Stagnant wages, housing and food insecurity, educational inequity, hate crimes, and mass incarceration and other injustices are affecting civic life.

Seattle is on Indigenous lands. It is also one of the last sites of U.S. settler expansion. Recent decades of gentrification have gutted the neighborhoods where the city's Indigenous, Black and Brown communities have historically lived, which fits a pattern of deeper historical violence.

With all of this at play, how can libraries, arts and cultural centers, urban planners, and other equity workers listen closely and carefully to communities of color, while understanding their broader histories? Seattle's renaissance of new BIPOC cultural spaces in historic communities of color are welcome beacons of change. The Central District, Hillman City, Beacon Hill, Chinatown-International District, Rainier Beach and other historically diverse communities have all had flourishing and long-standing BIPOC-led projects that can offer guidance.

And how does this bring healing and accountability into view?



MORE INSIGHTS

Doesn't "decolonize" actually mean returning the land to the Indigenous folks who steward it? Anyways again healing for us all in ways that are aligned with our beliefs and that are able to hold complex space for the legacies of violence that are woven into our spiritual practices. Return folks to right relationship with land spirit and self. Somatics Ceremony and ritual.

Communities that are labeled "people of color" in the United States all must survive racism. Connecting how communities of color have survived might also help map additional common ground. Indigenous communities of Turtle Island must work to preserve Tribal Sovereignty, so treaties are honored. That said, although Native Americans are often the most affected communities, genocide keeps our understandings of how deeply inequity in Indigenous lives is underreported. Conversely, racial justice organizing is a tactic that Black and Brown people have used to challenge white supremacy. African American communities still often have had to deal with anti-Blackness and parochialism from white people and other people of color, too. Yet, Black Americans have furnished one of the longest and most effective struggles for civil rights in the U.S. Communities hailing from Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America, Islands and the Middle East have specific histories that connect to imperialism, militarism and colonization.

BIPOC community members often have ethnic and national identities that are dearer than the narrow racial categories that the U.S. greets them with. Understanding these histories can help build community trust across respective cultures while avoiding monolithic views. In our research, community members shared that cultural work, community organizing, activism, food justice and land stewardship, trauma-informed care, healing arts, educational justice, public health, housing and food security, restorative and transformative justice, and abolition are all ways to create common ground, too. We look forward to sharing more on those points in future research.



WHITE ALLYSHIP

Shit, say it. I am honestly uninterested in helping white folks address their supremacy; that's their own work and I have many white allies who do that work beautifully. Perhaps 10% of my energy goes into building these kinds of connections. 90% of my most joyful work is done in my own community.

How can the city of Seattle start to intentionally build relationships with people of color that are accountable and reparative, while building white allyship (e.g. accomplices and co-conspirators in anti-racist work)? Over 80% of the respondents showed that they had concerns about white allyship. Roughly 70% of respondents reported ambivalence (e.g. a “maybe”) when asked open-endedly how they felt about white allyship. The remaining 11% of the group said that they were uninterested. Most respondents who responded unfavorably indicated a lack of trust or concern that working with white people to end racism would be draining or inauthentic. That said, 19% of the group was very interested in white allyship. Overarchingly, these trends suggest that BIPOC communities may need institutions to take a big step back and work to consensually build trust with communities of color while understanding a variety of different needs, including being mindful of doubts that racialized community members feel when engaging with whiteness.

CONNECTING WITH THE SEATTLE'S RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

This is a ranked list of city departments that community members wanted to engage with:

- Seattle Office of Arts & Culture **85%**
- The Seattle Public Library **85%**
- Seattle Office of Civil Rights **70%**
- Seattle Department of Community Planning & Development **70%**
- Seattle Department of Neighborhoods **64%**
- Citywide Change Team Co-Leads **52%**



OUR HOPE

Our hope is that this initial feedback gathered directly from community members allows BIPOC communities and civic leaders of color to leverage equity and inclusion resources in ways that build power and unity.

Stay tuned for follow-up conversations to continue understanding what BIPOC communities need to recover from COVID.

