

The People Speak: Forward Movement Now

THE UTAH BLACK AGENDA – 2nd Working Document

UTAH BLACK ROUNDTABLE

June 30, 2017

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OPENING STATEMENT

Change has come to Utah. For many decades past, things remained status quo. However, with the large influx of immigrants for other countries, the increasing employment opportunities and the arrival of many African Americans from the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the face of Utah began to be noticeably different.

While researchers used statistics to raise concerns about the changing demographics and offered limited resolutions, the people had already articulated the situation and began to work toward solutions. The collective voice of the Black/African American people in Utah, without a formal written agenda but through action, adopted a three prong approach: **Stand Together, Build Alliances and Move Forward**. As a result, a few Blacks were elected to public office, a few moved into leadership positions at various businesses and organizations, the Utah MLK Commission was established and Juneteenth became an official state holiday. The collective voice of Black/African American can formalized into the Utah Black Roundtable. The approach is the same. The vision is clear: Equity and Equality in Utah for all.

In face of the current statistics and in light of the discontentment in the hearts of many Utahans, it is time for an intentional effort to move Utah to a more equitable state for all of its citizens/residents. An Ashanti proverb states “You must act as if it is impossible to fail.” Indeed, we must act. Now. The quality of life of our children and our children’s children depend on what we do today. We must act. Failure is not an option.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

Inequality and inequities exist in Utah today. While statistics will bear it out, you can just drive through the various communities and observe the facts. Or listen to the voices of people of color in Utah; most will tell you. Utah’s faces the issues of racial and economic divide just like any other state in this union. Because the number of Blacks in the state is small, many statistical reports simply code specific data on Blacks as an asterisk. The asterisk simply hides the problem, but the problem is still there. Since 1989, Project Success has been listening to the community and recording the concerns and solutions made. During the last three years, a concentrated effort has been through town meetings, panel discussions, and surveys to identify, discuss, and seek solutions to improve the quality of life of Blacks in Utah. Major

issues consistently brought forth were Education, Health, Criminal and Juvenile Justice, Community and Economic Development, Political Action, and Special Populations. The remaining part of this report is a brief explanation of each of these issues, strategic objectives to address the issue and pathways to achieve forward movement in each area.

Word of Caution: This report is neither exhaustive nor complete. However, the truth remains. There is work to be done and collectively, we must move the agenda forward.

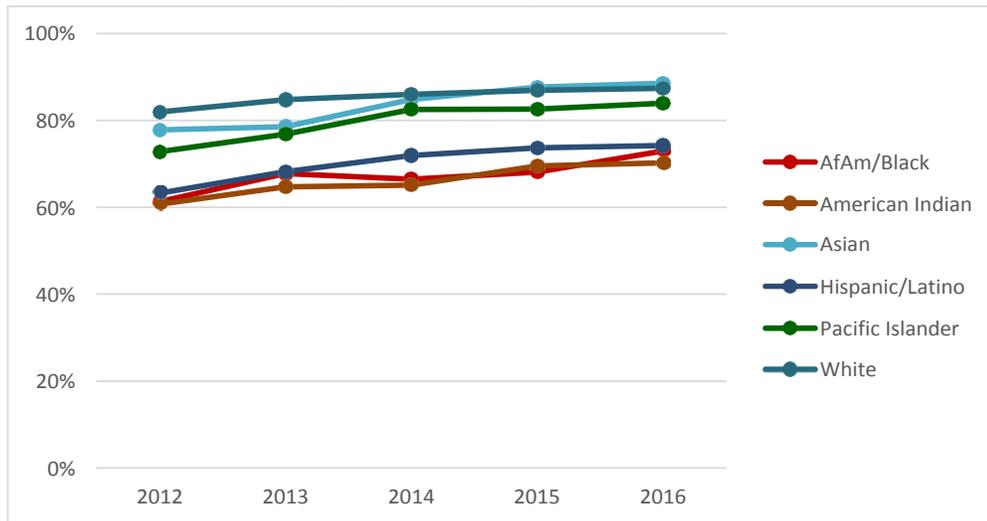


EDUCATION

Equity, academic achievement, excellence are the words that arise in any discussion on positive changes needed in education for Black students in Utah. The issues vary based not on public/charter/private schools, but on levels of education. Therefore, there are concerns related to Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade and a separate set of concerns for postsecondary/higher education institutions.

Issue: The quality of education, Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade received by Black students in Utah lag significantly behind that of White students.

Utah Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2016

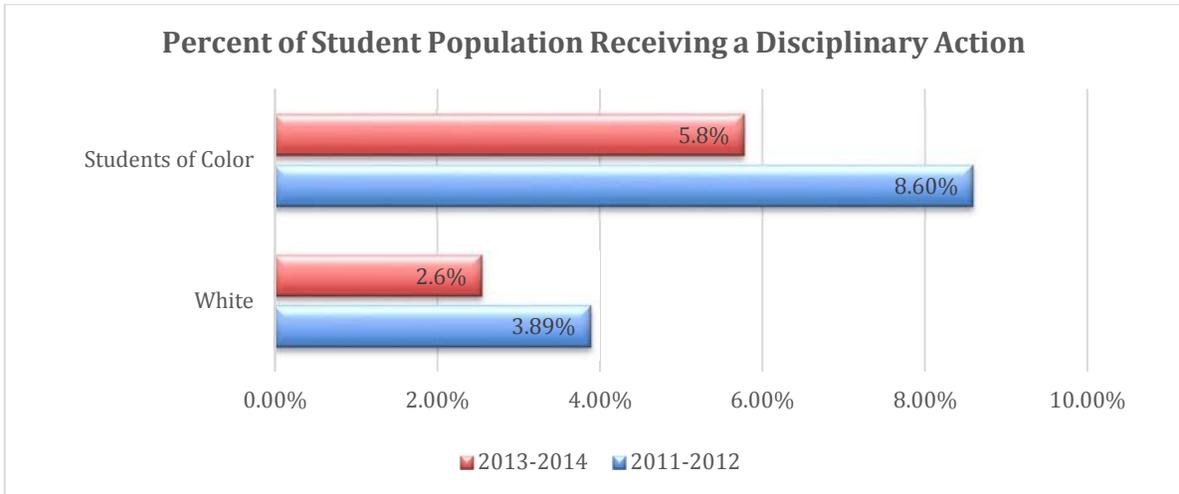


Utah State Board of Education, 2016

Graduation Rates Per Demographic

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
All Students	76%	78%	81%	83%	84%
Asian	72%	78%	79%	85%	88%
Black	61%	61%	68%	66%	68%
American Indian	57%	61%	65%	65%	69%
Hispanic/Latino	57%	63%	68%	72%	74%
Pacific Islander	69%	73%	77%	82%	83%
White	80%	82%	85%	86%	87%

Utah State Board of Education, 2016



From Misbehavior or Misdemeanor? A Report on Utah’s School to Prison Pipeline, University of Utah, 2017

Strategic Objectives:

- Systemic changes must be made in the way we teach our youth
- Written plans, with yearly measurable goals, to close the achievement gap must be developed and implemented
- Increase the number of administrators and teachers of color
- Eliminate the disparity in disciplinary actions against students of color
- Eliminate the push-out/ dropout rate
- Create Afro-centric charter and private schools

Pathways to Quality PreKingertan-12th grade education:

- Train teachers in culturally relevant strategies
- Aggressively recruit and hire more Black teachers and administrators
- Decrease the number of disciplinary actions against Black students through reeducation of educators on how to work with a diverse student population
- Offer accelerated remedial learning opportunities for those students who are academically behind

- Work aggressively to reduce the absentee rate in low income communities
- Define and execute solutions to keeping Black students in school.
- Increase the number of Black students in Advanced Placement, Honors and Dual Enrolment classes
- To improve college readiness, align high school graduation plans with college entry criteria and career opportunities
- Implement intentional transition strategies at each level of school change, e.g. elementary to Jr. High, Jr. High to Senior High, and Sr. High to post-secondary

Issue: While open enrollment is available at some post-secondary institutions, it does not guarantee success for Black students. There are many obstacles that hinder the completion of a degree or licensed program.

Strategic Objectives:

- Increase the graduation /completion rate of Black students at higher learning institutions
- Remove racist professors/ instructors
- Provide funding, not loans, for the furthering of a person's education
- Provide free tutoring or academic support to raise reading levels or improve writing skills
- Increase number of dual enrollment classes offered at high schools with a large percentage of Black students
- Increase number of licensed or certificate programs that can be completed or almost completed during the high school years
- Actively recruit, engage and reward Black students into majors which hold promise for the 21st century job market
- Create culturally sensitive mentor programs with Black professionals aimed at assisting college completion and successful entry into career field

Pathways to stronger post-secondary education:

- Hire more Black professors/instructors
- Offer entry level training for 21st century job skills
- Networking skills and guidance in field of study
- Provide career support to students of color
- Work closer with high schools to ensure students transitioning from high school to college have the necessary skills to succeed
- Offer tenure to Black professors
- Provide cultural sensitive coaches who are employed at the institution of higher learning
- Develop a pipeline for Black Students to enter Graduate Assistantships

HEALTH

In the Utah Health Department report, *Moving Forward 2016: Fifteen Years of Health Data for Blacks/African Americans*, disparities still exist between Utah's Black/African Americans and other groups. The largest disparities exist between the Blacks and Whites. Out of the thirty-seven indicators in the report, only seven show no disparity between Blacks and the overall Utah population. Major areas of disparity are no health insurance, fair or poor health, chronic alcohol drinking, diabetes prevalence, coronary heart disease deaths and colon cancer screening.

Issue: Black Utahans, like all other Utahans, want to live a long and healthy life. Due to barriers and obstacles of many forms, this is not the case for many people of color. These barriers must be removed and these obstacles overcome in order for “Life Elevated” (Utah’s slogan) to exist for all Utahans.

According to the Utah Department of Health, from 2005 to 2015, the disparity gaps for Blacks/Native American have increased in the following health measures:

- Poverty
- No Physical Activity

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Lung Cancer Incidence
- Fair or Poor health
- Births to Adolescents

Strategic Objectives:

- Provide access to affordable health care resources
- Decrease the number of Black smokers
- Demystify mental health
- Increase awareness of mental health and improve family support systems
- Increase the number of Blacks in the medical profession
- Decrease the number of unhealthy fast food chains and convenience stores in low income areas
- Increase the number of places to obtain fresh fruit and vegetables at affordable prices in low-income communities

Pathways:

- Reevaluate existing resources for affordable health care in Utah – increase funding in areas of high ethnic minority population or high low income areas
- Working with Black churches and organizations, begin the dialogue about mental health issues
- Train law enforcement officials on the proper way to deal with persons with mental illness
- Educate the young in schools on the importance of physical activity
- Work with communities to promote healthy living
- Establish fitness and wellness initiatives in the community
- Provide avenues for early detection of mental illness
- Provide access to healthy food for low income families
- Provide cultural competency training education to those in the medical profession who have had no or limited exposure to persons of color

- Recognize and value the role that culture plays in getting and receiving health care and health care messages
- Provide adequate free or reduced fee dental services for low income families
- Decrease the over prescribing of medications in ethnic minority communities
- Decrease the over criminalization of substance abuse and mental health encounters within ethnic minority communities



CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

The Black Family/community has been severely damaged by a broken criminal justice system. In addition, Black students are second only to the Native Americans in the number of referrals to law enforcement, thus contributing to an expanding school to prison pipeline.

Issue: The criminal justice system is engineered against people of color as evident by the disproportionately number of Blacks who are arrested, convicted and sentenced compared to their White counterparts who committed the same crime.

Black students comprised 1.3% of the total student population in Utah’s public schools during the 2013–2014 school year. The majority of these student population attend school in one of three districts: **Granite, Salt Lake and Davis**. Black students comprise 4.1% of the total student population in the Granite district, 4% of the total student population in the Salt Lake district and 1.3% in the Davis District.

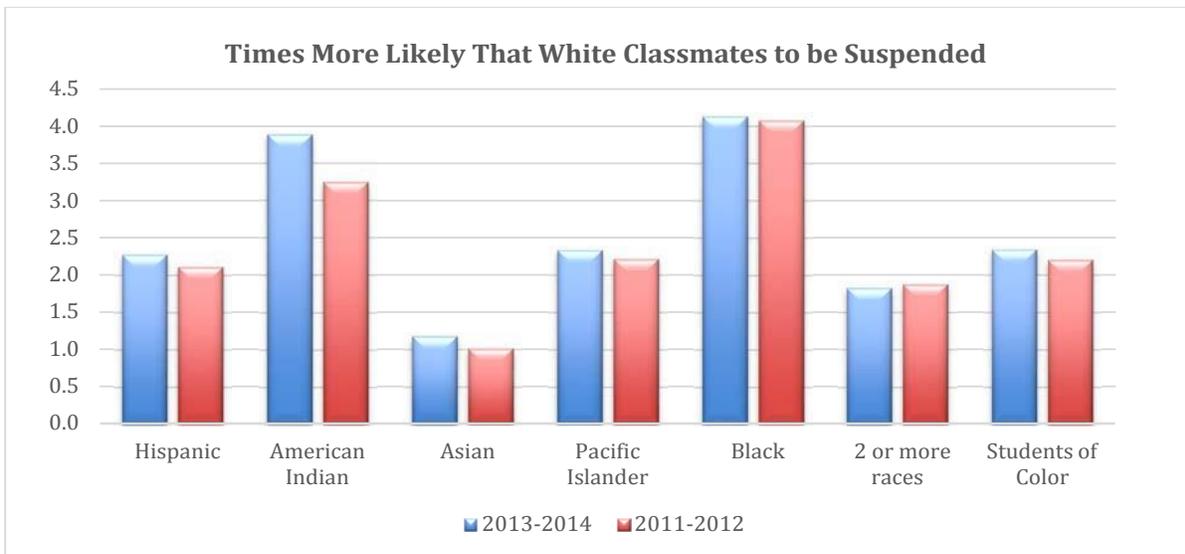
Some districts are performing worse than others for this student group. In the **Weber district**, black students are 7.5 times more likely to receive an action than white classmates. In the **Canyon district**, black students are 6.2 times more likely than white students to receive an action; and in the **Davis district**, black students are 5.9 times more likely than white students. The other districts, mentioned above, with large black student populations fare slightly better; black students are 3.3 times more likely in the Salt Lake district and 3 times more likely in the Granite to receive an action than their white classmates.

Misbehavior or Misdemeanor? A Report on Utah’s School to Prison Pipeline, University of Utah, 2017

DISTRICT PERFORMANCE FOR BLACK STUDENTS

District	Total Number of Black Students	% of Total Student Population	Times More Than White Classmates
Alpine	539	0.07%	5
Cache	112	0.07%	4.4
Canyons	384	1.10%	6.2
Davis	909	1.30%	5.9
Granite	2,183	3.10%	2.9
Jordan	563	1.10%	4.9
Murray	164	2.50%	3.7
Nebo	197	0.06%	5.9
Ogden	254	1.70%	3.1
Provo	139	0.09%	3.9
Salt Lake	1,027	4.00%	3.3
Weber	271	0.09%	7.5

Misbehavior or Misdemeanor? A Report on Utah’s School to Prison Pipeline, University of Utah, 2017



Misbehavior or Misdemeanor? A Report on Utah’s School to Prison Pipeline, University of Utah, 2017

Strategic Objectives:

- Revise the sentencing structure in Utah
- Provide tangible and culturally appropriate support for reentry to society for released offenders
- Work to decrease the number of women entering the criminal justice system
- Eradicate the school to prison pipeline
- Overhaul/renovate a broken criminal justice system

Pathways:

- Support Ban the Box, removing the box on job applications “are you a convicted felon?”



- Begin the dialogue of race relations at police trainings
- Hire more Black police officers
- Establish mentoring programs between Black youth and law enforcement officers
- Demand accountability and transparency for police actions
- Demand equitable opportunities for alternative sentencing programs
- Monitor data to ensure consistent enforcement and equitable disciplinary action across schools
- Create Citizen Review Panels within law enforcement departments
- Ban discriminatory housing restrictions for people with a felony from renting in certain jurisdictions and stop rewarding landlords for such discriminatory practices

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. But what happens if the village is weak or non-existent. What shall we do then?

Issue: Strong and healthy families do not exist in a void. They must be surrounded by and nurtured by strong, caring communities that provide avenues for gainful employment for the adults, infrastructure such as affordable healthy food options and viable transportation, engaging activities for children and a safe environment.

Strategic Objectives:

- Reduce intergenerational poverty in the Black community
- Increase the number of Black homeowners in Utah
- Increase the number of Black owned business
- Diversification of the Utah workforce
- Provide access to and training in 21st century technology tools
- Increase the number of Blacks in high demand, high wage jobs
- Ensure Community Block Grant Funding and Community Strategic Plans incorporate specific strategies that address the needs of Blacks/African Americans
- Increase the number of Black/African Americans that serve on policy and advisory boards and commissions
- Offer incentive packages to companies increasing number of Blacks in management positions by 10% each year

Pathways:

- Identify and utilize existing resources for Black entrepreneurs
- Offer financial literacy workshops for all income levels
- Develop and implement a plan for wealth building among Black Utahans (estate planning, trusts, etc.)
- Identify banks and companies that discriminate against Blacks and publicly share that information
- Offer assistance in preventing identity theft and fraud

- Establish and implement clearly defined pathways out of poverty
- Significantly increase the number of summer jobs for Black youth
- Assist families along the path to home ownership
- Increase afterschool and summer programming for youth K -12 that is free or has affordable rates

POLITICAL ACTION

Everything is about politics. How much water goes down the toilet when you flush is a political decision? Where the school boundary lines are drawn are political decisions. In both cases, it affects the individual citizen. The right to vote is currently afforded to most Black Utahans. However, the small number does not seem to impact election results.

Issue: The lack of Blacks in policy making positions has led to our concerns not being adequately addressed and minimal funding in several critical areas such as housing, employment and health resources.

Congressional Delegation	1 Black out of 6 positions
State Senate	0 Black out of 29 positions
State Legislature	1 black out of 75 positions

The Salt Lake Tribune January 5, 2015

Strategic Objectives:

Increase in the number of Black Utahans on school boards, local government boards, state legislature and U.S. Congress.

Increase the number of Blacks registered to vote and voting in all elections

Remove any restriction on released convicted felons' right to vote

Pathways:

- Conduct strategic sessions on how to run for office
- Begin building treasure chest for those seeking office
- Build alliances with others who support our issues
- Organize plans of action to get Blacks out to vote

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

There are two groups of people who are much beloved in the Black community: senior citizens and young people. Due to the projected increase in population of both groups, systems must be in place to ensure a good quality of life. Such systems bring needed support to those who have carried the burden of all of us for many long years and bring active, hands-on approaches to raising Black youth into productive citizens.

Issue: As the number of elderly Black Utahans increases over the next 30 years, we must put in place systems and programs that support this special revered population.

Strategic Objectives:

- Provide safe, affordable and adequate housing for senior citizens
- Ensure that the elderly have enough to eat each day
- Develop a network of support for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren
- Eliminate the stigma of nursing homes

Pathways:

- Supply housing vouchers to elderly
- Provide diversity training for home health care providers
- Offer culturally appropriate training for caregivers

- Provide free and frequent sessions on how to sign up for marketplace resources or free clinic
- Develop a system of “patient advocates” to assist Black senior citizens as they navigate the health care system in Utah
- Provide free legal assistance for setting up wills and estate planning
- Provide workshops on parenting skills, health and wellness, financial support and other resources that are specifically designed for senior citizens
- Offered free and frequent assistance in preventing identity theft and fraud
- Provide social outlets for seniors

Issue: The median age of Blacks in Utah in 2014 was 19.6 years. The next 30 years predicts an increase in Black youth under the age of 19 increases. Support in the form of quality schooling, quality day care, adequate and safe housing and access to healthy food, and job opportunities must be in place in order for them to succeed.

Strategic Objectives:

Provide full day, free Kindergarten

Train Black youth in the latest in the field of technology and computer science

Offer exposure to a variety of careers

Provide job opportunities for summer employment

Pathways:

- Develop fun and educational opportunities within the communities in which they live
- Provide technology and free internet service to low income Black youth
- Provide cultural enriching experiences
- Create programs that instill positive self esteem
- Provide cultural competency training to day care workers

CONCLUSION- A CALL TO ACT

The struggle is real. The fight has been long. But a roaring lion kills no game. In other words, the time for talk is over. If we are to achieve our vision of a greater Utah, we must act. Act Now. What are you prepared to do to advance the cause of equality and equity for Blacks in Utah? In the words of Verner Woodson Tandy, we offer this word of advice: *Do something constructive so that your sons, your daughters and all who come behind them will be proud of you. We must fight until hell freezes over and then fight on the ice.*

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