



THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Racism and Rochester: A Statement from Rochester Area Community Foundation

Rochester Area Community Foundation shares the nation's outrage for the indignities, inequities, and violence perpetrated against George Floyd and so many of our nation's Black and Brown citizens.

We know from ACT Rochester's [Hard Facts](#) report that Rochester's racial disparities are deeper and broader than in New York State or our nation. If you are Black or Latino, you are more likely to be unemployed, attend an inadequate school, suffer health problems, and pay too much for your housing. We are one of the most segregated communities in the country, initially enforced by redlining and prolonged by insidious "social distancing."

This has to stop. We are forfeiting not just the lives and talents of our citizens but the future of our community. We have lost far too many gifted citizens of color who have left our area to seek fairer opportunities elsewhere. Too many companies do not see Rochester as a place to set up or expand their businesses. The extraordinary poverty of our area is predominantly a poverty of race and racism, and we are responsible for its perpetuation.

This has to stop. The [Greater Rochester Black Agenda Group](#) has proposed that we all identify racism as a public health crisis — because it literally kills people. In Monroe County, your chances of dying before 65 are 46% if you are Black, 52% if Latino, and only 26% if White. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated this difference as our many essential workers of color take risks so that others of us can safely shelter in place.

We have to start by deepening our understanding of each other. The [Racial Justice and Equity Initiative](#) helps organizations and businesses explore personal and structural racism. Or follow the lead of our Community Foundation board and adopt the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative [guiding principle](#) "address structural racism" and [Employer Pledge](#) to hire and retain diverse workforces. You can share [this list](#) of anti-racism resources with your family, friends, and colleagues.

We have to redouble our investments in change. The Community Foundation makes racial equity an explicit goal of its [grantmaking](#) and welcomes grant requests to combat racism. We have invested in strategy building, policy advocacy, exhibits and speakers, one-to-one and group dialogues, and more. We also conduct a poll on racial attitudes with the *Democrat & Chronicle* and Siena College, so we know that Rochester has an "army of the willing" who want to live in a fairer, safer, more integrated, and exciting multiracial community built for everyone. Please join us.

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