For Action4Equity, Black liberation encompasses the collective struggle to dismantle systemic oppression and ensure the full recognition of Black humanity, dignity, and rights. Policy, advocacy, and research are important tools in this pursuit; these tools are used to identify and analyze unjust systems, inform evidence-based strategies for dismantling them, and guide and empower marginalized communities to shape policies that meet their unique needs. By centering Black voices, experiences, and expertise in these efforts, we advance the cause of Black liberation and help build a more inclusive, equitable, and just community for everyone. This intersection represents a dynamic and essential space where knowledge fuels action.

This report signifies a collective commitment to equity and the pursuit of justice within the Black community of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County. We are on this journey with a profound understanding of the importance of recognizing and valuing the diverse experiences, perspectives, and contributions of Black people. Equity is at the heart of this endeavor, as we intentionally cultivate environments that support the full participation and leadership of the Black community.

Systems of power and privilege exclude and marginalize Black people, perpetuating disparities and negative impacts on Black individuals and communities — now and in the past. Dating back to policies such as the Three-Fifths Compromise, Fugitive Slave Laws, and the Dred Scott Decision of 1850, WS/FC has grappled with racist systems, structures, and institutions that have maintained two communities within WS/FC. Redlining, a consequence of policies enacted in the 1930s, has confined Black residents primarily to the East side of Highway 52, and white residents to the West side. The generational denial of equitably allocated resources and marginalization experienced by the Black community demonstrates the pressing need for systemic change.

The American Medical Association and the North Carolina Healthcare Association have declared persistent racism a public health crisis, as it drives widening disparities of care and disproportionately harms people of color. The detrimental impact of systemic racism is not limited to physical harm but extends to the social and emotional well-being of Black children and their families, with generational implications. Organizations like the Village of Wisdom in Durham, North Carolina, work to protect the intellectual curiosity and ambition of Black children from the negative impacts of systemic racism. Their model emphasizes the importance of cultivating culturally affirming spaces that combat negative stereotypes, encourage empowerment and advocacy, and preserve and celebrate Black cultural heritage. These spaces preserve and celebrate Black cultural heritage, foster rest, and allow Black people to imagine a life free of racism.

Systemic racism limits opportunities, access, and time for Black people to cultivate
and engage in these transformative spaces. Historically, the reimagining of civic life has been accessible primarily to those who possess time and resources, enabling them to shape the trajectory of Black communities. Nevertheless, we are steadfastly challenging this imbalance by calling for investments in protected time and culturally affirming spaces that allow Black individuals to think critically and dream widely about their desired future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Amidst the backdrop of challenges of limited economic mobility, gun violence, and racial disparities in education, health, and housing within our local community, it becomes imperative to approach equity through the unique lens of Black individuals. We must challenge traditional approaches and assumptions regarding justice and amplify Black voices and perspectives to lead these conversations. By lifting up the diverse experiences, perspectives, and contributions of Black people and placing their leadership in the center of transformational change, we are demonstrating our collective commitment to equity and advancing liberation.

Stacey Abrams, in her book Lead from the Outside: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change, emphasizes the importance of empowering Black people to lead and shape the change they want to see in the world. We must challenge the foundations of a political and social system designed to privilege some at the expense of limiting the agency of others, particularly those historically marginalized from the decision-making processes that impact their lives. In the spirit of Sankofa, we value ancestral wisdom while confronting the interwoven systems that perpetuate injustice. We advocate for the delegation of decision-making authority to our youth and communities for the transformation of policies, practices, resources, and the very structures of power entrenched across various systems.

This report seeks to lift up the humanity of those closest to the grips of oppression to challenge harmful, incorrect narratives. These narratives are encouraged by extractive forms of research that oversimplify statistics and often relegate Black people to stereotypes. This report authentically shares the history and embraces the tension between the often overlooked struggles and unyielding aspirations of Black WS/FC, vital narratives which so often go unheard in policy-making spaces.

Recommendation for Action
An equitable allocation of resources is essential to ensure the highest level of community participation. We recommend identification of a sustainable funding reserve and community-wide commitment to guarantee dedicated time and culturally affirming spaces where Black people can radically reimagine solutions for our collective future. Committed action to reinvest in Black-led work and spaces goes beyond symbolism; it’s an affirmative stride community transformation. This action acknowledges the scars of history but also charts a course towards liberation. A4E stands behind this report serving as a strategic blueprint, informing organizers and accomplices on how to effectively channel the information it contains to build connections, mobilize action, and forge a path towards a more equitable and inclusive future.

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