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Richmond Racial Equity Essays: Individual Essays

Richmond Racial Equity Essays

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## Introduction

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## Introduction

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The world is indeed a different place than it was when the idea for this essay project was conceived in 2019. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the tragic murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests, activism and increased awareness of racial inequities and injustice, the need for a diversity of voices and solutions are even more timely and necessary as we try to recover and move forward. We, as a nation and city have hopefully sharpened our commitment to live differently, work more purposely and pursue racial justice with even greater fervor. It is our sincere desire that this essay project helps lead Richmond in that direction, that the words of the essayists inspire us all to action.

The inspiration to create this essay collection came from numerous places. As urban planners practicing as a diversity, equity and inclusion consultant and a professor, we often sit in rooms with Richmonders from various sectors who are constantly talking about equity—what it is and how we get there. These conversations too often happen in silos. We wanted Richmond to have a broader and deeper cross-sector conversation about what equity, especially racial equity means for our city, in practice and from practitioners who could offer concrete strategies and solutions. Secondly, The Richmond Racial Equity Essays was inspired by and modeled after [The Just City Essays: 26 Visions of Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity](#), an e-book of 26 Essays edited by Toni L. Griffin, Ariella Cohen and David Maddox and published by J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City at the City College of New York, the *Nature of Cities* and *Next City*.

Using The Just City Essays as a model, we wanted to co-create a similar collection of essays. With the help of Duron Chavis, our vision morphed into a multimedia project to include video interviews and a virtual discussion series, focused on racial equity in Richmond. We ventured to capture voices from all walks of life and sectors in Richmond, representing the diversity of ideas, identities and perspectives in our city. We asked essayists to explore 1) what an equitable Richmond would like, especially as it relates to racial equity and 2) highlight the strategies that will help us get there. You will find in this collection, a multiplicity of ideas and perspectives. You will also see themes that are both complementary and intersecting **on topics such as housing, education, economic inclusion, transportation, language access, the environment and more**. Collectively, this anthology creates a platform for understanding racial equity and the different dimensions of racism, gives voice to some of the great work already being done, and highlights ideas and solutions that will help shape our collective future for the better.

This is, however, just a starting point for bringing together a broad array of thinkers and practitioners that are working toward social change. Hopefully this project is a catalyst for engaging other voices and perspectives that might not be represented here; to inspire others to discuss, assess and champion racial equity in their own communities and organizations. But ultimately, we hope this collection provides a framework for advancing racial equity in Richmond that leads to sustained action and the transformation of our beloved city.

Ebony and Meghan