

# Racism is on all our minds.

## Message from Florida Housing Coalition CEO, Jaimie Ross

The history of housing is a history of racism; deed restrictions that expressly prohibited non-whites from buying a home, redlining, and exclusion from federal lending programs are just a few of the easily verifiable facts about the racism that haunts us. And the history of racism in housing is alive and well today. We see it regularly in the Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) opposition to affordable housing. Vociferous objections to a development intended to serve lower-income households are cloaked in disingenuous arguments about additional traffic or overcrowded schools. When your professional life is all about affordable housing it is impossible to ignore the consequences of systemic racism. It is time that we talk openly about the racism inherent in so many of our systems. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on people of color stems from the disproportionate impact of poverty on people of color. The convergence of the two at this time in history evokes for me a quote attributed to Nedra Ruiz that has been hanging on my living room wall since 1985, “At the table of peace there will be bread and justice”.\*

In this acute moment in history, as people of color endure disproportionate impacts from COVID-19 and cry out for long overdue justice, the Florida Housing Coalition is committed to a sustained body of work to address racial injustice in housing focused on practical solutions. To this end, in addition to internal organizational commitments, concrete steps the Florida Housing Coalition is taking to further racial equity in housing are:

1. **Access to our conference.** Ensure access to our 2020 conference’s racial equity focused workshops, forums, and plenaries by providing a comped registration to everyone who needs financial assistance.
  2. **Public policy agenda.** Promote a robust public policy agenda on racial equity, to include identification of key public policies that support racial equity in disaster and recession recovery, rental and homeownership support, and economic development.
  3. **Research agenda.** Pursue a research agenda that examines the intersection of housing policy and racial equity in housing. This research agenda could include: addressing racial equity in our annual Home Matters Report, examines the impact of transportation policy on housing and economic development, identifying tools available for addressing disparities in housing and homelessness, understanding the role of the SHIP and SAIL program in shaping racial equity in Florida’s housing system.
  4. **Training & technical assistance.** Develop a suite of free training and technical assistance on best practices in equitable development and issues of race and housing.
- This suite could include: training on existing programs and regulations that specifically support people of color, building capacity in funding and expertise for nonprofits in non-white communities, supporting ground-level stakeholders in communities of color, supporting and training minority-managed faith-based leadership to build community equity in housing, developing materials on the Coalition’s Elevate online learning platform, and expanding our training on nonpartisan civic engagement on local government budgeting processes and voting.
5. **Continued leadership.** Continue our existing leadership on avoiding and overcoming NIMBY, inclusionary zoning, community land trusts, affirmatively furthering fair housing planning, ending homelessness through housing first, redevelopment without displacement, decriminalizing homelessness, investment in the most vulnerable households, and equitable development in general.
  6. **Honoring importance of Juneteenth.** The Florida Housing Coalition will be closed on Juneteenth each year in celebration and observance of this day commemorating the end of legal slavery.

*\*Originally delivered by Florida Housing Coalition CEO, Jaimie Ross on June 4, 2020.*