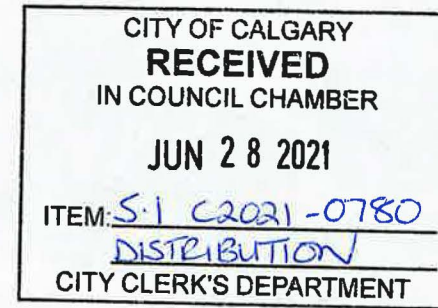


A nighttime photograph of the Seattle skyline. In the foreground, a multi-level highway interchange is visible with light trails from cars. The middle ground shows a dense urban area with various buildings. In the background, the city's skyline is dominated by several tall skyscrapers, including the Smith Tower. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds. The text "City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative

The Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is a citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in City government.



RSJI employs a comprehensive organizing strategy to advance this goal:

01.

Build foundational awareness
and move toward a shared
analysis.

03.

Utilize anti-racist tools to change
how programs, services, policies,
and budget decisions are made.

02.

Create capacity and will to shift
internal culture.

04.

Develop and sustain accountable
community.

2020: Year of the Pandemic and Racial Uprisings



In Seattle, Black Lives Matter protests began in March of 2020 and continued nearly every day until September 2020.

- Community demands included defunding the police department, funding research on participatory budgeting, and more accountability for police brutality.
- The City's response to these protests included selective engagement with Black community organizers, funding commitments that did not meet the criteria organizers were asking for and lacked control over police using harmful crowd control tactics on protesters.
- There were many lessons learned on how the City engaged with community organizers and what a holistic approach to public safety could look like.

Photo Credit: Dean Rutz / The Seattle Times

COVID exasperated existing racial disparities.

- A call was made by internal racial justice practitioners that the city's needed to approach COVID related issues and recovery with a racial equity lens.
- RSJI created a COVID version of our Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) to provide guidance on best practices for data collection, meaningful and accountable community engagement, and strategy development.

Healing and Transformational, Anti-Racist Organizing:

Grief and Racialized Trauma

Many realized that our dedication to race and social justice work comes with great costs to our lives and a need for collective healing spaces were held.

Internalized Racial Oppression

Manifestations of internalized racism negatively impacted organizing for change. Increasing awareness was not enough and caucuses were developed across the city to create space for the purpose of unpacking self-defeating behaviors associated with internalized racism.

Accountability

More work and learning is needed to implement a holistic approach to justice and accountability.



Future of RSJI



Budgeting for Racial Equity

Anti-Racist, Transformational
Organizing

Racial Equity Lab

Restorative Justice Principles
embedded in Community
Engagement

Protecting Racial Justice
practitioners inside the City.

Benefits of RSJI

Moral obligation to address centuries of institutional and structural injustices and redesign these systems while centering those most directly affected racism and other forms of oppression.

Legal obligation to address the limitations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which concerned itself with fairness and parity. Racial equity requires that we address past harms, generational trauma, and the roots causes of poverty and the condemnation of Blackness and Indigeneity.

Business obligation to create democratic institutions, systems and structures that center people. A culture of belonging will attract and retain diverse workers committed to creativity, innovation, and change, while providing essential services and programming designed to lift from the margins.

Thank you!

“ You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”

Angela Davis

