

Homelessness and Its Affect on Communities of Color

By Nicole Arcieri

People of color experience high rates of homelessness in the United States. African Americans make up over 40 percent of the homeless population but represent 13 percent of the general population, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The organization's data also shows that Hispanic identifying individuals make up 18 percent of the general population but 21 percent of the homeless population. Furthermore, "American Indians/Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and those of more than one race each make up less than 5 percent of the general population," according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The organization states that whites and Asians are underrepresented in the homeless population.

The reason people of color are disproportionately affected by homelessness runs deeper than surface level. "Those disparities, researchers say, are the result of centuries of discrimination in housing, criminal justice, child welfare and education," according to the article *'A Pileup of Inequities': Why People of Color Are Hit Hardest by Homelessness*, by Teresa Wiltz. African Americans are most likely to experience homelessness, and account for 40 percent of people experiencing homelessness, according to the article. "White communities have had a much longer time to build and pass along generational wealth, which serves as a buffer to homelessness," a spokesperson for the Center for Social Innovation said.

The Center for Social Innovation published a guide—*Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities*—outlining ways in which cities, individuals, and organizations can address the problem. For local and non-profit organizations, the guide recommends making sure that there is greater ethnic and racial diversity among team members and staff. For municipalities and

governmental organizations, fair housing protections should be implemented, according to the guide. If an individual wants to get involved, they can take part by working with community-based organizations whilst continuing to educate themselves on the topic. The guide has a much longer list on ways people can help on individual and organizational levels, but these are just a few ways we can get started and make a change.