



## **The State of Black Asheville – report by Dr. Dwight Mullen**

### **Reading Comprehension**

- In Asheville City Schools, Grades 3-8, 30.1% of black students reached Grade Level reading proficiency compared to 86.7% of white students and 59.4% of Hispanic students. (2015-2016 School Year, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction)
- In Buncombe County Schools, Grades 3-8, 37.9% of black students reached Grade Level reading proficiency compared to 68.4% of white students and 44.2% of Hispanic students. (2015-2016 School Year, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction)

### **Mathematical Proficiency**

- In Asheville City Schools, Grades 3-8, 26.3% of black students reached Grade Level proficiency in mathematics compared to 80.1% of white students and 55.5% of Hispanic students. (2015 -2016 School Year, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction)
- In Buncombe County Schools, Grades 3-8, 34.9% of black students reached Grade Level proficiency in mathematics compared to 65.8% of white students and 49.1% of Hispanic students. (2015-2016 School Year, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction)

### **Public Housing**

- The Housing Authority owns nine “public housing” communities with 3,340 residents; 65% of the residents are black. (Asheville Housing Authority)
- The Housing Choice Voucher program also provides rental assistance for 2,710 other residents with tenant-based vouchers in the private rental market. (Asheville Housing Authority)

### **Home Ownership**

- 62% of black families rent their homes, and 38% own their homes (American Community Survey 2014).
- 47% of white families rent their homes, and 53% own their homes (American Community Survey 2014).
- The average sales price for a home in the Asheville area is \$317,785 (NC REALTORS® July 2016)

### **Detention Center and Death Row**

- Buncombe County has nine individuals on death row. One third of these individuals are black, even though blacks comprised just 6.6% of Buncombe County's population at the time (NC Department of Corrections, American Community Survey 2014)
- In 2016, 80 of 151 individuals on North Carolina's death row were black. (NC Department of Corrections)
- Black males (16 + years) make up 5.6% of population and 28% of detention center population

### **Women and Children**

- Over the 2010-2014 period; the infant mortality rate for blacks in Buncombe County was 15.9 compared to 6.1 for whites. (NC Health and Human Services)
- Over the 2010-2014 period; the low birthweight rate for blacks in Buncombe County was 14.0 compared to 7.8 for whites. (NC Health and Human Services)
- Over the 2010-2014 period; the prenatal death rate for blacks in Buncombe County was 22.2 compared to 10.5 for whites. (NC Health and Human Services)

### **Disease Related Risk Factors**

- Over the 2010-2014 period; the mortality rate for black males in Buncombe County was 1,192.0 compared to 867.1 for white males. (NC Health and Human Services)
- Over the 2010-2014 period; the mortality rate for black females in Buncombe County was 798.5 compared to 626.3 for white females. (NC Health and Human Services)
- Over the 2010-2014 period; the cancer mortality rate for black males in Buncombe County was 305.0 compared to 193.2 for white males. (NC Health and Human Services)

### **Health Care Coverage**

- In Buncombe County 21.4 % of blacks are uninsured compared to 15.6% of whites. (American Community Survey 2014)
- In the City of Asheville 18.2% of blacks are uninsured compared to 16.8% of whites. (American Community Survey 2014)

## Income

- The median household income in the State of North Carolina is \$46,693 090. (American Community Survey 2014)
- The median household income in the City of Asheville is \$44,077. (American Community Survey 2014)
- The median black household income in the City of Asheville is \$24,090. (American Community Survey 2014)
- In the City of Asheville 37% of blacks live below the poverty level compared to 15.5% for whites. (American Community Survey 2014)
- In Buncombe County 39.3% of blacks live below the poverty level compared to 16.3% for whites. (American Community Survey 2014)

## Employment

- The black unemployment rate in the City of Asheville is 18.7% compared to 6.4% for whites. (American Community Survey 2014)
- Blacks own 3.1% of businesses in Buncombe County or 858 of 28,498 firms. (US Census Bureau 2012)

2010 - 2014 ACS 5 Year Estimates	Total Population	Below 100% FPL
<b>Buncombe County Total</b>	238615	16.5%
<i>Buncombe County White Population</i>	211700	14.7%
<i>Buncombe County Black Population</i>	15206	39.3%
<i>Buncombe County Other/Two or More Races</i>	11709	19.4%

2010 - 2014 ACS 5 Year Estimates	Total Population	Below 100% FPL
<b>Asheville Total</b>	82735	18.2%
<i>Buncombe County White Population</i>	67846	15.5%
<i>Buncombe County Black Population</i>	10476	37.0%
<i>Buncombe County Other/Two or More Races</i>	4413	13.7%

## Historical Cultural Information Specific to our Community: Moving toward understanding and reconciliation

- The YMI, built in 1892, is one of the oldest (possibly the oldest) black cultural centers in the United States of America. (YMI)
- The 18,000 square foot building was designed by one of the architects that helped to design the Biltmore Estate which is why the YMI building looks so similar architecturally to the Biltmore Estate (YMI)
- The YMI is set up to provide economic opportunity to the black community of Asheville by renting the first floor store space to black businesses
- In 1977, the YMI was almost demolished for falling into disrepair and no longer meeting city codes. Nine local black churches banded together to raise funds to keep the YMI's doors open.

### **Stephens Lee High School**

- Stephens-Lee High School was built in 1923, on a site just above the former site of Catholic Hill Elementary School. For several decades Stephens-Lee was one of the only black public secondary school serving the greater Western North Carolina area. Students were bussed in from five different counties.
  - Almost all of the teachers had master's degrees, some even had PhDs.
  - Stephens-Lee held classes in all typical areas of study, but also provided classes in dance, industrial arts, photography, home economics and beauty culture, radio repair, play production, welding, drama and manual training to name a few (Black Highlanders Collection).
  - In 1965, the Asheville City School System began to desegregate. Stephens-Lee students were first moved to South French Broad High School and then finally to a desegregated Lee Edwards High School now renamed Asheville High.
    - The entire process of desegregation in Asheville placed the burden of desegregation disproportionately on the African American community (With All Deliberate Speed 5). All black elementary schools were closed, and the former students had to be bussed to the white schools.
      - This resulted in two little known race riots in Asheville, North Carolina.
      - First, on September 29, 1969 black students walked out in protest of the problems mentioned above (With All Deliberate Speed 7). The police were called and in the midst of the chaos, damage was inflicted on the building. The school was shut down for a week and a citywide curfew was established in response to the race riot.
      - Second, on October 18, 1972 a race riot broke out over an interracial couple. Eight students were hospitalized in the fight between black and white students (With All Deliberate Speed).
    - Stephens-Lee was torn down in 1975, all that remains of this important institution is its gymnasium, an alumni group and the stories the members have to tell.

### **YWCA**

- The black YWCA of Asheville started as an "Employment Club" in 1913. The club first met in the Young Men's Institute and was dedicated to helping women of color in the community to find jobs (YWCA).

- In September of 1921, the Phyllis Wheatley Branch officially opened on College St (YWCA).
- The space provided a home to the Red Cross Auxiliary, The Flower Guild, the annual dance for NC Association of Black Educators and all African American schools in the city used the gymnasium for intramural sports, concerts, plays, dances, and prom.
- From College st, the Branch moved to Asheland Ave and then finally to South French Avenue in 1962 (YWCA).
- In 1965, Elvia Thelma McRae Caldwell was hired as the executive director of the central YWCA branch giving her jurisdiction over both the white and black YWCA branches (YWCA). Mrs. Caldwell was the second African American to be hired as executive director in the country and first in the South. She was charged with the task of desegregation.
- This was likely one of the only desegregation transitions of an institution in Asheville led by an African American. The YWCA still thrives today striving to eliminate racism and empower women.

### **Asheville City School System**

- Studies have shown that students are more able to identify and learn from teachers of similar race and socio-economic backgrounds. There are 73 secondary teachers in ACS, only 8 % (6 teachers) are black.

### **Colleges and Universities**

- Over the last ten years, UNC Asheville has averaged a 3.2% Black or African-American student population, totaling an average of 120 students per year.
- Similarly, Appalachian State University has held 3.3% average, but had a total average of 541 Black or African-American students due to the larger total student population.
- In contrast, based on trends from 2004 to 2013, Elizabeth City State University held an average white student population of 16.5%, Fayetteville State University 17.1%, North Carolina A&T 7.2%, North Carolina Central University 11.7%, and Winston-Salem State University 16%, all of which are historically black universities.
- In 1981 Consent Decree established “minority presence enrollment shall equal or exceed 15.0% of the total combined headcount enrollment in the predominantly black institutions and shall equal or exceed 10.6% of the total combined headcount enrollment in the predominantly white institutions” by the 1986-87 academic year.<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] United States . Department of Education. *Consent Decree: North Carolina v. Department of Education*. Raleigh: United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, 1979. (pg. 21) Print.