

Uniting TO ADVANCE EQUITY

GREATER BUFFALO RACIAL EQUITY ROUNDTABLE

Voices are being raised louder than ever, and people are listening. With a spotlight on social and racial injustices, we are in a pivotal moment in our nation's history with an opportunity to accelerate much needed change and close racial equity gaps. In 2020, the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, through its 35 members and more than 250 partners, moved its work forward with increased urgency and intentionality.

Convened by the Community Foundation in 2015, the Racial Equity Roundtable is advancing a 10-point strategic agenda to close racial equity gaps in our community. The agenda is based on data from its report entitled "The Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo's Great Opportunity."

Here are a few highlights of the Roundtable's 2020 work toward a goal of achieving an expanded, inclusive economy.

Youth Employment Coalition

The newest initiative of the Roundtable is made up of 30 organizations working together to create a strengthened, more coordinated youth employment system that effectively connects 16- to 24-year-old youth to career pathway opportunities in Buffalo.



⌘ This past summer, 76 students completed the Northland Workforce Training Center's Summer Youth Academy. Students were offered paid internships to attend the training that focused on learning advanced manufacturing skills to competitively prepare them for our future global economy. ⌘

Business Leaders Task Force

Increasing purchasing with businesses of color and building their capacity to grow is the focus of the Business Leaders Task Force, a group of 12 major local employers committed to advancing racial equity. In 2020, the group continued its Buffalo Purchasing Initiative pilot project with strong results. By the end of year two, the participating businesses have increased their spend with businesses of color in Western New York by more than \$15 million.



Breaking Barriers members join a community demonstration in June to call for social justice reforms.

Reentry Coalition

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, the Reentry Coalition's 80 partners took an important step forward to reduce the high number of individuals who are rearrested after their release from jail with the opening of the Service Link Stop. This one-stop shop, located just steps away from the Erie County Holding Center, provides reentering individuals easy access to programs and services from more than 20 on-site partners that can assist with everything from housing and basic needs to job training and mental health services.



Community partners at work in the Service Link Stop when the doors opened in the Fall of 2020.

Boys and Young Men of Color

For young men of color, 2020 was an extremely important year to lift their collective voice to advocate for better life outcomes. The Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council, a group of young men committed to becoming leaders in our community, was active and engaged. When the COVID-19 crisis hit, the young men started meeting daily on Zoom to talk about the challenges they were facing and take action together. They gathered safely with masks to collectively call for social justice change in our community and assist with needs.



⤴ Watch how the young men of Breaking Barriers are creating a unified voice that advocates for racial equity, social justice and policy change by scanning the QR code with your phone's camera.

Narrative Change

Changing the narrative by increasing an understanding of the disparities in our community has been a focus of the Roundtable's Community Engagement and Awareness workgroup. An ongoing partnership with WBFO has led to the creation of the Racial Equity news desk and the hiring of a full-time reporter of color. During 2020, journalist Thomas O'Neil-White was embedded in the community, telling stories of how the COVID-19 crisis disproportionately impacts communities of color. These stories illuminated how leaders in our community in the same industry have had very different lived experiences based on their race.



⤴ WBFO reporter Thomas O'Neil-White interviews Dr. LaVonnie Ansari from the Community Health Center of Buffalo during a Facebook live conversation about race and COVID-19.

The Buffalo Niagara Partnership played an important leadership role in meeting a critical moment for businesses in 2020 when it committed to strengthening inclusive workplaces with urgency. The Buffalo Niagara Partnership was ready to meet the need through its Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, which includes a workplace academy, executive exchange, and the first diversity and inclusion survey created for businesses to better understand their collective needs.