

EVERYONE WINS WHEN **EVERYONE IS COUNTED**



# BLACK CALIFORNIANS COUNT!



According to 2016 Census Bureau estimates, there are over **2.5 million Black residents in California.**<sup>1</sup>

## UNIQUE CHALLENGES

### GENTRIFICATION & DISPLACEMENT

Due to soaring housing prices and suppressed wages, Black communities have been plagued by gentrification, which has often led to displacement of their communities. For instance, according to Colorlines' Gentrification Report, the ratio of Black residents in Oakland neighborhoods fell by nearly 40 percent between 1990 and 2011.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Black homeownership in North Oakland dropped from nearly 40% in 1990 to 25% in 2011.<sup>3</sup>

The effects have been devastating. First, gentrification and displacement has caused rampant homelessness. Black Americans are seven times more likely to be homeless than their White counterparts. Black Californians from South LA are experiencing homelessness at some of the highest rates in the LA region.

In the City of LA, the Black population is 9%, yet Blacks are more than 47% of those experiencing homelessness. 20% of all homeless individuals in the City of LA live in South LA.<sup>5</sup> While Black people are already considered a hard-to-count community, homelessness on top of being Black makes them even harder to count (Homeless people often lack a mailing address and access to the internet, which further complicates access to the new census questionnaire.) Second, because of gentrification, Black populations are being pushed out of traditional Black American neighborhoods, in cities like Oakland and Los Angeles, and into new geographical areas—such as East Contra Costa County and the Inland Empire—that lack the infrastructure (e.g., social services, community-based organizations, telecommunications, transportation, job opportunities, etc.) that might typically support an accurate count.

### MASS INCARCERATION

While Black residents represent 6.5% of California's population, they represent 29% of the State's prison population.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Black men are nine times more likely to be incarcerated than their Asian and White counterparts, respectively. As such, a focus on the count of close-quarter populations will be necessary to accurately count California's Black population.

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER

## IMMIGRANT FEAR

With over 150,000 Black immigrants, California is home to the largest Black immigrant community in the nation. However, an accurate California count will be challenged by national rhetoric and statements that have stoked fear among immigrant communities. According to a Congressional Hispanic Caucus letter to the U.S. Commerce Secretary on January 16, 2018, “new qualitative research from the Census Bureau confirms that survey respondents and focus group participants are expressing an ‘unprecedented’ level of concern regarding the confidentiality of the data they provide to the Bureau and whether that data will be improperly shared with other government agencies, especially immigration officials.” This “concern” may impact response rates of California’s large African immigrant population, particularly if federal policies and rhetoric continue to trend in the current direction.

## DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT

While levels of trust in government continue to decline among all populations, Black trust is at an all-time low. According to the Pew Research Center’s National Election Studies poll, the percentage of Black people who trust the government in Washington always or most of the time is at 15% compared to 23% for Latinos/Hispanics and 17% for Whites.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, trust in government has been lowest among Black people compared to their counterparts in every year since 1958 except 1979, 1980, 1993, 1996 and 2010–2015. Factors contributing to such distrust include slavery, Jim Crow laws, employment and housing discrimination, state violence towards Blacks, and mass incarceration.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TRUSTED MESSENGERS

The importance of partnering with trusted messengers in reaching the Black community cannot be underscored enough. For instance, according to a study conducted by Nonprofit Vote, Black voters contacted by nonprofits were 31% more likely to vote during the 2014 midterm elections.<sup>9</sup>

Nonprofit Vote Executive Director Brian Miller said “[n]onprofits are trusted messengers with deep roots in communities overlooked by others.” As mentioned above, the Black community is made up of all types of demographics: including Christians, Muslims, agnostic, atheists, etc.; men, women, transgender, gender non-conforming; heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, etc.; never, currently, and formerly incarcerated; homeowners, renters, and homeless; and U.S. born and foreign born, among many other demographic categories. Different strategies and tactics will need to be developed to educate and engage each demographic within the larger Black community.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA#viewtop>
- 2 <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/gentrification-report-Black-and-latino-displacement-remaking-bay-area>
- 3 Id.
- 4 [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/06/Black-families-homeless\\_n\\_1324290.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/06/Black-families-homeless_n_1324290.html)

- 5 LA County Homeless Service Authority 2018 Ad Hoc Committee Report on Black People Experiencing Homelessness
- 6 <http://www.ppic.org/publication/californiaschanging-prison-population/>
- 7 <http://www.people-press.org/2017/05/03/public-trust-in-government-1958-2017/>
- 8 Id.
- 9 [associationsnow.com/2015/12/nonprofits-rocked-vote-2014/](http://associationsnow.com/2015/12/nonprofits-rocked-vote-2014/)

For more information about the Census Policy Advocacy Network, please contact [CPAN@AdvanceProj.org](mailto:CPAN@AdvanceProj.org) or visit [AdvancementProjectCA.org/CPAN](http://AdvancementProjectCA.org/CPAN)