



Healthy Black Families, Inc.

Work and Perspectives on  
**The Affordable Housing Preference Policy**

Presented to the  
City of Berkeley, City Council Work Session  
February 21, 2023

[www.healthyblackfam.org](http://www.healthyblackfam.org)

# Healthy Black Families, Inc.

**Mission** – Providing people with knowledge, skills and strategies to make social systems and policies more equitable for Black people and communities.

**Vision** – To accomplish this mission, we organize individuals, families and the organizations that serve them, into communities empowered with skills to advance social equity and justice, with a focus on Black individuals and families.



# Organizational Values

**Human dignity** – We are conscious of and actively support the basic right of every human being to have respect and to have their basic needs met so that each person has the opportunity to develop their full potential.

**Health/Healing** – We promote the wisdom of mind and body soundness that flows from meeting spiritual, emotional and physical needs through self-awareness and preventive discipline. This includes an understanding that knowledge of self allows for maintenance of internal balance that promotes positive feelings.

**Community** - We foster depth and commitment as we engage people individually and in groups so that both independent creativity and interdependent cooperation are maximized.

# Advocacy History

The Berkeley Black/African American community, including leadership from HBF and other CBOs, has been resisting displacement and advocating for housing preference and preservation policies that include the 'Right to Stay, Right to Return and Right to Own' for many years.

In 2015, Healthy Black Families began advocating for reparations and Right to Return for displaced community members in conversations with City leaders and in collaboration with community organizations and members (Friends of Adeline, AAHRC, NAACP, etc.)

# Displacement History

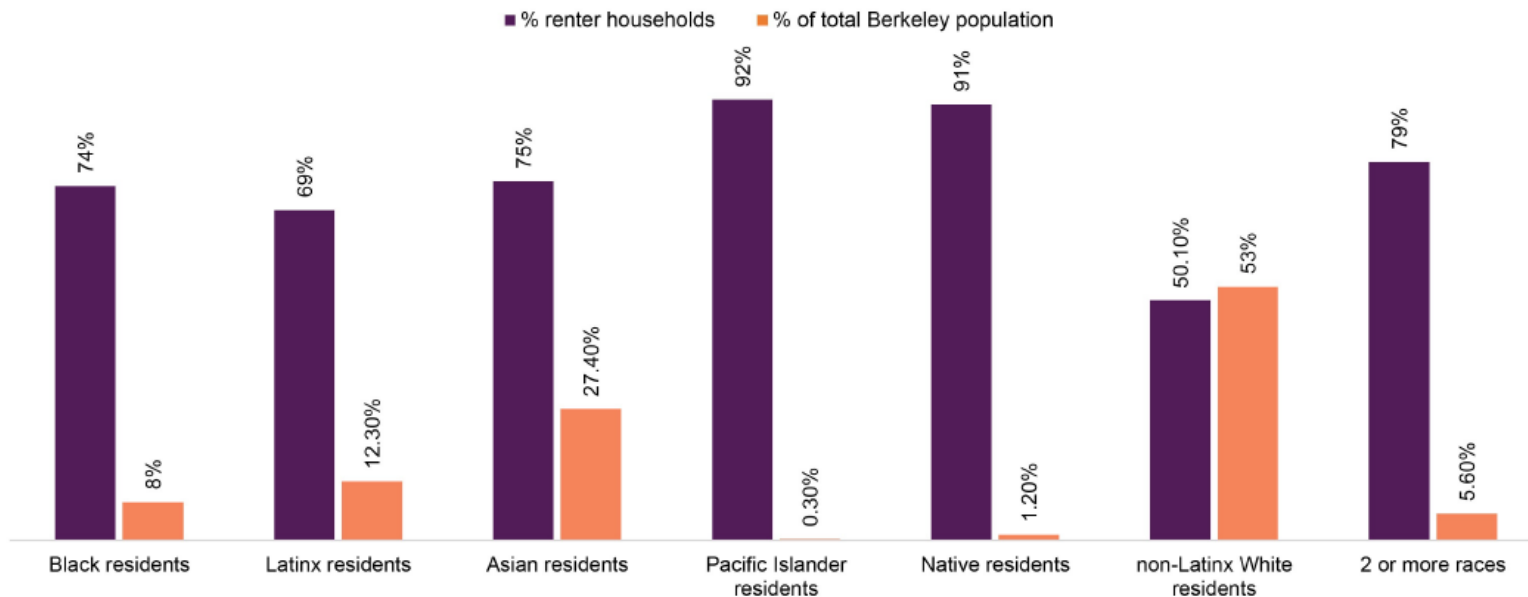
The City of Berkeley has experienced historical and unprecedented mass displacement of its Black and Brown residents and families. As displacement continues, the Black and Brown residents of Berkeley continue to be the most vulnerable and impacted, with ongoing threat of evictions, housing displacement, homelessness, separation of families and the loss of homes and neighborhoods. This loss of housing impacts all social determinates of health.



53% of Berkeley renter households were rent burdened in 2019: a total of **13,794 households**

**Berkeley residents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color are disproportionately renters rather than homeowners and are therefore disproportionately vulnerable to high rents and rent burden.**

Percent Renter Occupancy vs. Percent Berkeley Population, 2019



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 5-yr estimate

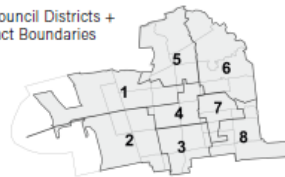
## Increase in rent & displacement of low income renters

2019, the estimated average rent in Berkeley was \$3,165 per month.

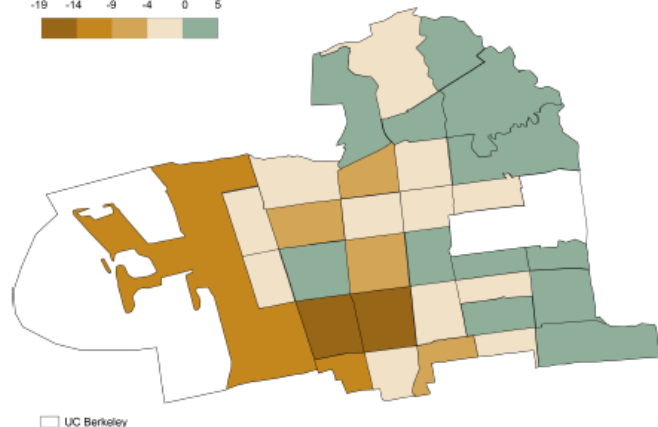
Between 2005-2019, the median gross rent paid (including estimated cost of utilities) in Berkeley increased by over 50%, and:

- Households earning \$200,000 or more per year increased by 124%
- In contrast, households in Berkeley earning less than \$75,000 per year decreased 22.8%
- Black residents, who are primarily renter households, decreased by 21% - a rate higher than any other racial or ethnic group

Berkeley Council Districts +  
Census Tract Boundaries



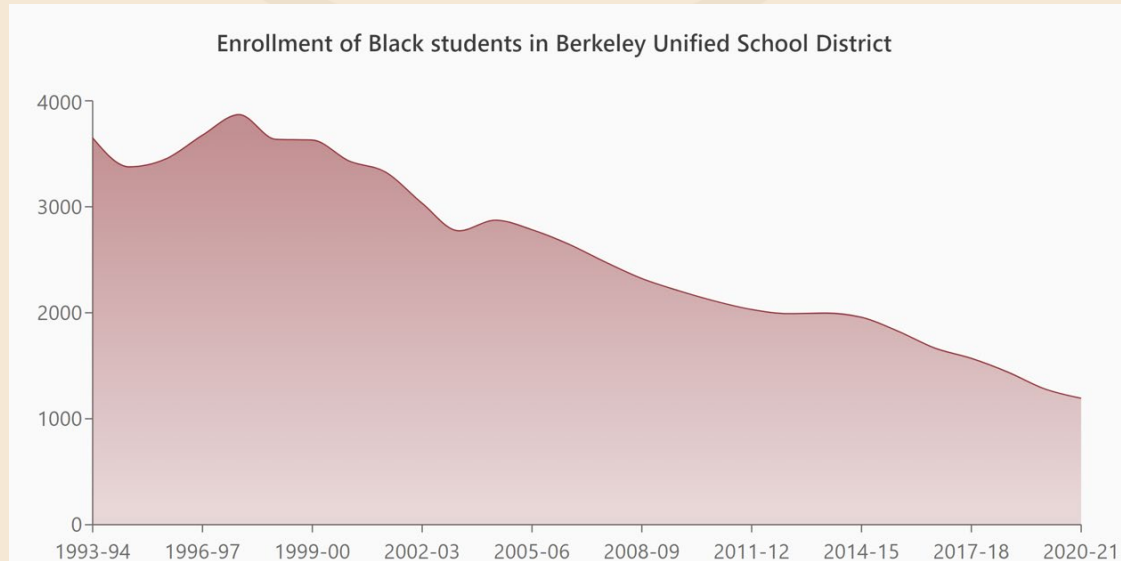
Change in Black Population, 2005-2019



# Community Impact

According to Berkeleyside, the Black population in Berkeley dropped 13% since 2010 and 28% for families with children.

While other families have the ability to live in Berkeley, people of color and families with children are being displaced from the community.





# Affordable Housing Preference Policy History

- Healthy Black Families supported the City of Berkeley in administering the Affordable Housing Preference Policy Survey
- To lay the foundation for a fair and just housing policy, Healthy Black Families supported the process by holding focus groups and implementing the Right to Return, Right to Stay, Right to Own survey to harvest the voice of the Black community.
- The Berkeley Black Community Leadership Group determined the need for a secondary survey after reviewing the Berkeley Considers Affordable Housing survey. That review brought forward that there were additional questions needed to document the unique experiences and needs of the Black community.

# Affordable Housing Preference Policy History

- It is vital that the voices of the most vulnerable in the community be centered as this policy is passed and implemented.
- The intention of the preference policy was to create opportunities for displaced Black community members to return to the community and be supported to stay in the community through providing affordable housing and other wrap around services.
- There is also an opportunity to create pathways to ownership through supporting policies such as Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA).

# Race-Based Preferences

In its current state, the affordable housing preference policy is incomplete.

- The community was clear in voicing the need for the policy to be race specific in order to accomplish the intended goals.
- Due to current politics in the State of California around race specific policies, the City has decided to remove these elements of the policy.
- Our commitment is to continue to research historical exclusionary policies that targeted Black people and document these in order to justify amending the policy to include race-based preferences.
- We ask for the commitment and cooperation of the City and its Commissions as we pursue this research.

# Process Focus



- As we move to implementation of the Affordable Housing Preference Policy, **how can we ensure that the intentions that generated this policy remain our focus?**
- How do we center and prioritize the needs of Berkeley's displaced **community members** as processes are developed, as outcomes are measured and as people are placed in affordable housing?

# Outcomes Focus

Economic oppression is institutionalized. If uninterrupted, systems, by their structure, replicate oppression.

In Berkeley, we see this manifest in the housing space as mass displacement of Black, Brown and poor people from the community. Historic disinvestment requires re-investment on a historic scale

The Affordable Housing Preference Policy (and other tenant focused initiatives like TOPA) is a viable strategy to interrupt this institutionalized, systematic oppression and create a community that embraces the needs of workforce, moderate, low and very low-income members of the Berkeley community.



# Human Dignity

The true norm for progress and for the economy is the flourishing of humanness. The transition from less human conditions to truly human conditions.

Investments are not value free. Purchasing is always a moral, not simply an economic act.

At HBF, we are conscious of and actively support the basic right of every human being to have respect and to have their basic needs met so that each person has the opportunity to develop their full potential. We hope that the City will support these values through the support, passage and implementation of the Affordable Housing Preference Policy.



# References

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