

**COMBATTING RACISM IN LONGMEADOW:  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COALITION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE TO  
THE SELECT BOARD**

Spring 2021

## **INTRODUCTION**

As with all communities in America, Longmeadow has long suffered the painful and traumatic legacy of both systemic and overt racism. Indeed, even by the mid-twentieth century, there were no Black families living in town. And, perhaps not surprisingly, when families of color finally did attempt to call Longmeadow home, their reception was hostile. For example, the current First Lady of New York City, Chirlane McCray, whose family moved here in the mid-sixties as only the second Black family in town at the time, famously recounts the petitions neighbors circulated in an attempt to force them to leave. Today, she widely cites the racism and bullying she experienced during her high school experience in Longmeadow as the primary driving force behind her later career as a writer and poet.

And because some things have ostensibly changed (for example, previously explicit redlining practices have ceased), it may be tempting to dismiss such instances as relics of a long-gone past. However, in many ways, Longmeadow remains an inhospitable—and often openly hostile—destination for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). For this reason, it lacks the kind of racial and ethnic diversity that is a necessary component of a thriving, desirable and appropriately modern town in the United States.

## **LONGMEADOW TODAY**

### *Demographics*

Sadly, Longmeadow's struggle with lacking diversity is strikingly obvious merely by looking around town. The actual data, however, is even more stark, as 90 percent of its residents identify as white.<sup>1</sup> Employment in town is likewise skewed: 96 percent of municipal employees identify as white and 98 percent of Longmeadow Public Schools (LPS) teachers do.<sup>2</sup> In fact, only seven out of over 400 individuals within LPS faculty and staff identify as Black or Hispanic in Longmeadow Public Schools and all 26 new hires in the most recently reported fiscal year were white.<sup>3</sup>

And although this data is instructive, data we do not have is perhaps equally so. For example, demographic information that might be used to track systemic inequality (or lack thereof), such as BIPOC vs. white household income in town is not readily available online—if it exists at all. Moreover, the Town Manager has confirmed that Longmeadow does not track home or business ownership numbers by race.<sup>4</sup>

### *Longmeadow in Our Own Words*

This segregated reality plays out in real and traumatic ways for residents of all ages that do not identify as white in Longmeadow. For example, the Longmeadow Coalition for Racial Justice held a public listening session and invited residents and non-residents alike to share their experience with racism in Longmeadow. Several shared accounts that highlight the lived experiences of non-white people in our town:

*I'm writing from the perspective of a light-skinned Latina...I've lived in Longmeadow only one year, most of that during the pandemic. From what I've seen, Longmeadow has a problem with white saviorism and the idea that racism and racial disparity happens "over there." — Anonymous*

*I have raised my children to be inclusive to other cultures and to respect people from all types of background. I will say I do not see that in Longmeadow. I moved here, as many families, because of the excellent school systems, but that same school system is lacking of diversity and inclusion. I have a second grader that is Irish/Puerto Rican. I am hoping this ignorance will be somewhat resolved by the time she gets to middle school, as unfortunately I only have bad experience in [sic] it. —Name Withheld*

*I am originally from Ethiopia and my wife is a white American. During the summer of 2015, we were looking to buy a house in Longmeadow and attended an open house. Upon seeing us, the seller's realtor puzzlingly asked us: "Is it too big for you?" In fact, we liked the house and decided to put in an offer. However, that same realtor requested to see the sale documents from our former house—and this was despite us being already pre-approved by a nationally recognized bank. This was overt racism and, at least in part because of this outrageous experience, we decided not to buy the house.—Bisrat Abebe*

Indeed, some of the most striking accounts were from young people in the Longmeadow Public Schools community. Issues related to the treatment of BIPOC in Longmeadow play out in very real and public ways on social media. For example, the Instagram page “BIPOC in Longmeadow” was created as an outlet for students of color to post their emotional and courageous accounts of what it is like to grow up non-white here:<sup>5</sup>

*[T]he normalization of racism at LHS and Longmeadow in general is the overall problem. The amount of times I've had someone call me a chink, make a joke about small eyes or flat noses, ask if I eat dogs/cats, or mock my parents' accent are equivalent to the amount of times I've witnessed students say/write the n word, draw swastikas, make jokes about illegal immigrants, or make other comparisons of BIPOC students to racist stereotypes. —Anonymous Post*

*[T]he amount of white students in general who say the n-word, who call people terrorists because their family is from the middle east, who joke about the [H]olocaust. It's unbelievable how much racism is allowed in our community. —Anonymous Post*

*I used to play tennis with the high school team. The coach would frequently make remarks to me and the other Asian teammates like, "it's just like playing the cello," "just pretend you're doing math," and "can you see the ball?" None of us played the cello or were notoriously good at math. —Anonymous Post*

*The amount of white boys I've watched/heard say the n-word during my 4 years at LHS is absolutely insane. They'll say it and then when someone calls them out, they try to dodge the consequences or justify it with, "My black friend gave me the n-word pass, so it's okay!". They'll use it as a nickname for their friends, use it in a joke, or use it to describe something. I feel horrible knowing I sat there too uncomfortable to say anything and defend my POC friends. LHS students have a long history of being racist, whether it's blatant or subtle, and I feel like it's definitely time for that to change. —Anonymous Post*

*I have been called a chink to my face by a white student but in telling the story it's something my friends laugh at. I don't feel comfortable calling people out so I just laugh along and even tell the story like a joke. Even in the actual interaction I was extremely taken aback but could only give an awkward laugh in response. It's not my responsibility to make the white students feel comfortable because racism does indeed exist. I just feel pressured to do so because this school system doesn't educate about racism enough. Racism needs to be taught as a serious issue not learned as a joke.*

—Anonymous Post

Not only does candid feedback such as this force us to reckon with the wisdom of Longmeadow's youth—and how the adults in town are failing to serve them—but it also gives us a window into how residents, visitors and potential future residents of color perceive their value and safety here. And, it shows us precisely how this behavior perpetuates. Whether we 'officially' see or acknowledge these issues, they happen daily and are captured in readily available, public forums—for everyone to see. And if we don't have strict mechanisms in place to hold the offending parties accountable in ways that force them to be invested in anti-racist behavior, giving such actions a 'pass' only reinforces—or worse, tacitly promotes it.

And, as we know from years of established research—and far too many from personal experience—bullying, harassment and the resulting isolation in one's formative years have deleterious effects that lead to a host of later issues with adult relationships; mental, physical and emotional health; and successful educational and career productivity.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, time and again we heard from alumni, many current students (mostly of color or allies) and from parents of these students that Longmeadow's reputation as an excellent school system relies largely on a narrow focus that privileges grade point averages, athletics and matriculation numbers—without regard for the quality of the character of the future adults it sends into the world. Unchecked privilege and entitlement are, after all, at the heart of racism and discrimination of all kinds.

## **SELECT BOARD ACTION AND CHARGES**

In light of these ongoing and pervasive issues and acknowledging the long overdue nature of the need for correction, on July 6, 2020, the Select Board declared racism a public health crisis and created a community Task Force to address systemic racial injustice within the town. Assembled by the Town Manager, the Task Force was populated with 9 Longmeadow residents with demonstrated interest, experience or expertise in the issues under review. In accordance with our charter, the Task Force discussed, researched and gathered data to report to the Select Board steps the town can take to reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in the dedicated work necessary to address the scourge of systemic racism.

We, the Coalition for Racial Justice Task Force, therefore submit the following recommendations to the Longmeadow Select Board for consideration.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESHAPE THE DISCOURSE AND ACTIVELY ENGAGE ALL CITIZENS IN EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE SCOURGE OF SYSTEMIC RACISM**

It is an inescapable reality of our economic system that nothing meaningful and sustainable can be achieved without deliberate action and the monetary resources to implement real change. In light of this,

the Task Force recommends a deep and strategic audit of the Town's budget in order to locate potential areas of realignment to prioritize some or all of the following recommendations:<sup>7</sup>

- The addition of a full-time 'diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) officer' to spearhead, consolidate, track and evaluate racial equity implementation.<sup>8</sup>
- Ongoing anti-racist training for all town employees.<sup>9</sup>
- The development of a dedicated liaison to coordinate efforts with the School Committee.<sup>10</sup>
- Collection of data on home and business ownership by race in order to conduct an equity audit.<sup>11</sup>
- Adoption of a regional or institutional collaborative approach to funding initiatives across western Massachusetts.<sup>12</sup>
- Establishment of a longer-term coalition or task force to support Select Board adoption and implementation of anti-racist efforts.<sup>13</sup>
- Provision of grants or funding for residents, institutions (e.g. Storrs Library) or partners looking to bring greater attention to issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism in Longmeadow.<sup>14</sup>
- Incorporation of diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racist social justice elements into already existing public events and spaces (e.g., Town Meeting, Longmeadow Days, town green, town signage, public meetings, town website).<sup>15</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO IDENTIFY MEANS OF PROMOTING RACIALLY EQUITABLE HIRING AND PROMOTIONS OF ALL TOWN EMPLOYEES**

As the demographic data presented above (however scant) demonstrates, Longmeadow and its town bodies lack diversity, and that problem will not be solved without deliberate steps and subsequent accountability metrics. Attracting and retaining diversity is a key step in making the town more hospitable and thus more modern and competitive in attracting top talent and a dynamic citizenry.

Ultimately, addressing this issue requires the improvement of policies and procedures around hiring and retention. Specifically, we recommend that the town should consider the following suggestions with respect to hiring, promotions/retention and planning.

### *Hiring*

- Use a racial equity toolkit to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions.<sup>16</sup>
- Include an explicit inclusion statement in every job posting and on the town website.<sup>17</sup>
- Develop inclusive position descriptions/language, standardize interviews and conduct blind résumé reviews. Specific, competency-based interview questions should be used to evaluate candidate abilities in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion.<sup>18</sup>
- Circulate positions and advertise with intentionality to diverse groups and professional networks, including majority BIPOC communities and schools, and BIPOC publications and posting forums—even those outside the greater Springfield area.<sup>19</sup>
- Avoid creating unnecessary barriers.<sup>20</sup>
- Ensure there are members of underrepresented groups, community members and/or equity experts on the review panel for applicants.<sup>21</sup>

- Interview only when the candidate pool is diverse.<sup>22</sup>

### *Promotions/Retention*

Although it has not historically been viewed this way, internal promotions and job openings are part of the hiring process, and thus they should follow all the same relevant standards and processes as external hiring recommended above. For example, at a minimum, the town should:

- Be transparent about the qualifications needed for promotion.
- Create an equitable internal hiring process to which all employees have access.
- Promote based upon demonstrated skill and competency for the role in question rather than on internal relationships and/or the inclination to nominate candidates for hiring and promotion that are similar to oneself.
- Create opportunities that will appeal to and support hiring and promotion of diverse candidates, and not those solely belonging to one privileged group. This includes rethinking the applicability of certain skills and qualifications in creative ways, and balancing the need for more traditional ‘hard’ skills with the equally (and in some case more) important ‘soft’ ones.

### *Standards Setting and Strategic Planning*

- Create policies that require contractors and businesses who do business *with* and *in* Longmeadow to address discrimination.<sup>23</sup>
- Incorporate DEI goals into the town’s strategic planning.<sup>24</sup>

## **RESEARCH ALLIANCES WITH ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE CONFRONTING RACISM AND HOW THOSE ALLIANCES CAN BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY**

There are many organizations that are confronting racism locally, regionally and nationally that the Select Board may consider interviewing to find an ideal fit for Longmeadow and the needs of the community. Here are the most promising:

- Healing Racism Institute of Pioneer Valley<sup>25</sup>
- The Undoing Racism/Community Organizing Collective of Western Mass<sup>26</sup>
- The Western Massachusetts Health Equity Network<sup>27</sup>
- Multicultural BRIDGE<sup>28</sup>
- Pioneer Valley Project<sup>29</sup>
- Longmeadow Historical Society<sup>30</sup>
- Thought Partner Solutions (TPS)<sup>31</sup>
- The Sojourner Truth School<sup>32</sup>
- Inclusive Strategies, LLC<sup>33</sup>
- Dialogues Across Difference<sup>34</sup>
- Integrated Comprehensive Systems (ICS)<sup>35</sup>
- Women of Color Health Equity Collective<sup>36</sup>
- National Conference on Community and Justice (NCCJ)<sup>37</sup>

## **EVALUATING SUCCESS**

As with any initiative or substantive effort—particularly those that require financial, and specifically, taxpayer support—it is vital to establish metrics that can help track the success or failure of implementation. But metrics are so often poorly constructed in ways that make them overly onerous to track or ill-suited to deriving the exact information that is actually most useful. Quantitative metrics are necessary and important, but strong, professionally vetted qualitative metrics are perhaps even better indicators of experience and perception—both of which lie at the heart of Longmeadow’s issues with race. We therefore encourage the town to partner with organizations that have specific experience in elevating the surveyed feedback of residents and stakeholders who are traditionally marginalized or often do not participate in official collection activities—either because they fear retribution for candor or because they do not believe their input will be used to implement real and difficult change. Likewise, any quantitative metrics designed to test implementation and success of initiatives must be thoughtfully—and professionally combined with input from the community so that they are not derived in a vacuum.

## **CONCLUSION**

Longmeadow has demonstrated leadership in creating this Task Force and there is a real opportunity to continue to lead by devoting the effort and resources necessary to enact the recommendations herein. Indeed, there are institutions, systems and beliefs present in our predominantly white community, that though we may not have enacted them, we are responsible for perpetuating if we do nothing. However, this work does not start and stop with the town’s elected body.

On the contrary, the Task Force’s work is our collective work as a community and as a nation. Fundamentally, it begins with each of us—in our homes, in the expectations we place around the behaviors we ourselves model each day and those of our children. It is therefore our hope that the recommendations made herein might be adopted, funded and embraced by the entire community in order to disrupt historical patterns of marginalization not only in Longmeadow, but within the communities around us in Western Massachusetts. We are, after all, neighbors—part of an ecosystem that, where racism is concerned, does not acknowledge borders. Thus, a problem here is a problem everywhere.

## ABOUT THE TASK FORCE

**Zach Verriden** (*Chair*) is a career educator and leader with experience in schools and districts across the country and is currently completing doctoral work focusing on race and equity. In addition to his service with the Task Force, Zach is also a member of the Longmeadow Anti-Racism Coalition, a parent in the Special Education Alliance of Longmeadow and serves on the School Council of Blueberry Hill Elementary School.

**The Rev. Charlotte LaForest** (*Vice-Chair*) is an Episcopal priest and the first female Rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Longmeadow. As both the pastor of an intergenerational community and the parent of three young children, Charlotte is passionate about empowering people of all ages to participate in the work of anti-racism and social justice.

**Michelle Tom** (*Clerk*) is an archivist and librarian. She has a lifelong interest in issues of race, equity, and inclusion, and has previously served on related committees and workplace initiatives.

**Bisrat Abebe** is originally from Ethiopia and is now a naturalized United States citizen. He is a licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker with extensive experience in working with incarcerated men and women, young adults, and individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders. Bisrat is currently an administrator at a large community health organization in Connecticut. Committed to respectful professional relationships, he approaches his work from an intersectional lens, striving to understand how individuals' identities are influenced by their experiences, relationships, social structures and relationships. As a Black man and father of two biracial children, Bisrat is committed to creating a more equitable and just community.

**Kathleen Allen** brings more than 25 years as a Human Resources professional in corporate, municipal and non-profit environments. During her tenure in Human Resources, Kathleen has immersed herself in Diversity, Belonging and Equity both on her own initiative and as a leader who has been tapped to deepen her awareness and advocacy in this space.

**Mara De Maio** is a licensed clinical psychologist who is currently the Director of Child and Adolescent Services at the Institute of Living (IOL) at Hartford Hospital. Her background consists of both direct care and leadership positions with children, adolescents and adults in various psychiatric settings. She is also dedicated to work related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and co-leads a DEI initiative across the Behavioral Health Network (BHN) of Hartford Healthcare.

**Neena Grover** immigrated to America in 1970 from India. Her academic background is in economics and she holds both a master's degree and an MBA. Before retiring, she served for 30 years as a bank manager. Neena is active in the suicide prevention community and started the first formal community walk for Suicide Prevention in the United States: The Out of the Darkness Walk. Very active in various causes like anti-hunger and education efforts in both India and the United States, she enjoys working to build bridges between cultures. She is currently involved in the Rotary club, World Affairs Council, the Jewish Community Center and the Senior Center.

**Ryan McCollum** is both a proud Black man and Irish American, who strives to use his honed craft of politics to make the world a better place for those most in need. As a biracial man, his unique perspective allows him to understand the impacts of racism both empathetically and sympathetically, as he has been both the victim of racism and the beneficiary of privilege. He's a new father who sits on more than a half-dozen boards—each of which tackles the issue of systemic racism in one way or another.

**Lauren L. Rollins** is a career educator and a public policy executive at a think tank in Washington, D.C. She specializes in at-risk, urban and non-traditional education and her work has therefore traditionally focused at the intersection of education and racial and gender equity. In addition to her service with the Task Force, Lauren is also the Vice-Chair of the Longmeadow Antiracism Coalition.

## **ADDENDUM 1: QUICK-REF RECOMMENDATIONS GUIDE**

### **Reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in efforts to address the scourge of systemic racism**

Nothing meaningful and sustainable can be achieved without deliberate action and monetary resources. In light of this, the Task Force recommends an audit of the Town's budget to locate potential areas of realignment to prioritize the following recommendations:

- The addition of a full-time 'diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) officer.'
- Ongoing DEI training for all town employees.
- The development of a dedicated liaison to coordinate efforts with the School Committee.
- Collection of data on home and business ownership by race in order to conduct an equity audit.
- Adoption of a regional or institutional collaborative approach to funding initiatives.
- Establishment of a longer-term task force to support implementation of anti-racist efforts.
- Provision of grants or funding for those looking to bring greater attention to issues of DEI and anti-racism in Longmeadow.
- Incorporation of DEI and anti-racist social justice elements into existing public events and spaces.

### **Promote racially equitable hiring and promotions of all town employees**

Addressing this issue requires the improvement of policies and procedures. We recommend that the Town should consider the following suggestions with respect to hiring, promotions/retention and planning:

- Use a racial equity toolkit to integrate consideration of racial equity in decisions.
- Include an explicit inclusion statement in every job posting and on the town website.
- Develop inclusive position descriptions/language, standardize interviews and conduct blind résumé reviews.
- Advertise positions to diverse groups and professional networks.
- Ensure POC and/or equity experts on the review panel for applicants.
- Interview only when the candidate pool is diverse.
- Create an equitable promotion process. Be transparent about qualifications needed and creative in shaping job descriptions and assessing candidate skills based on demonstrated competencies.
- Promote based upon skill and competency rather than on relationships or the inclination toward candidates who are similar to oneself.
- Create opportunities that will appeal to and support hiring and promotion of diverse candidates.
- Require companies who do business *with* and *in* Longmeadow to address discrimination.
- Incorporate DEI goals into the town's strategic planning.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> “Quick Facts: Longmeadow, MA,” U.S. Census Bureau, 2019. Note: This percentage is well above both the state and national averages at 76 percent and 80 percent, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> “U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission EEO4 Report,” Town of Longmeadow, MA, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> “Staffing Data by Race, Ethnicity, Gender by Full-time Equivalents (2019-20),” Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, March 28, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Email on record with Task Force.

<sup>5</sup> The BIPOC in Longmeadow page can be found [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> “Effects of Bullying,” U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> The incredibly dedicated group of Longmeadow residents who populate the Task Force committed time outside their work and families during the pandemic to meet, to listen and to share their expertise toward the creation of this report. It must be noted, however, that we were given no resources to do so and thus the kind of deeper research and analysis that is customary to support recommendations such as these was not possible. As is later suggested in this report, a vital next step for the town, then, is to consider investing resources in the research and development of anti-racist solutions to address this public health crisis in Longmeadow.

<sup>8</sup> The Massachusetts Municipal Association shared that towns such as Arlington, Beverly, Brockton, Framingham, Malden, Somerville and Worcester have added these positions. Boston and Springfield have, as well.

<sup>9</sup> Longmeadow Public Schools, for example, is nearing the end of a two-year engagement with a local firm that has provided employees with ongoing training. However, these trainings should not be ‘box-checking’ exercises, nor should they be optional. As such, a qualified individual or group (preferably Black- or POC-owned/operated), with demonstrated background or experience *specifically in anti-racist training* should be identified to lead this effort and to facilitate. Seeking out and expending town resources specifically with this type of organization helps financially support groups and people who have been previously marginalized rather than funneling resources into another white-led organization. It also places BIPOC in more prominent and visible positions of leadership, and allows training to be conducted by those with the most direct experience and expertise. As for broader, town-wide implementation, more specific recommendations include: training in phases, beginning with town employees and then expanding to citizens and external governmental service providers. These trainings can supplement regular meetings (e.g., embed a training in a board or all-staff meeting), so as not to overload employees with additional requirements. Such training should begin at orientation/hire and continue at regular intervals, covering increasingly specific and nuanced material related to DEI. *Any existing or potential employee who does not agree to such training or who does not view it as necessary should be disqualified from town employment.*

<sup>10</sup> As we have seen and heard countless times throughout the process of compiling this report, the schools—and particularly the high school—have a significant problem with privilege, unchecked entitlement and the various discriminatory behaviors—of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability status—that accompany such a subject position. If a town is to prepare responsibly for the future, it cannot ignore the experiences of its youth—nor can it consider itself a successful or holistic educator of future citizens merely based upon grade point averages and test score data. We also heard repeatedly from current students, alumni and parents that a major issue within the schools is that racist and other discriminatory behaviors exhibited specifically by LPS’ white male students and athletes are ‘swept under the rug,’ in an effort to ‘give the benefit of the doubt’ to the perpetrators rather than to the intended victims of their harassment and hate speech. Social behavior is conditioned, and negative behaviors will continue as long as the actors have no reason to change them. Positive behaviors can be trained, but negative ones must be un-trained. LPS should therefore adopt a zero-tolerance discipline and accountability structure for racist and otherwise discriminatory behavior—irrespective of who that student might be, who their family is or what role they play in the school. This is the only way to cease this rampant behavior in the short term, while more proactive efforts to re-train and re-educate are incorporated into the system and the curriculum.

<sup>11</sup> An equity audit is an analysis of publicly available data to identify gaps, trends, disparities and patterns of marginalization that informs the process of removing programmatic barriers that impede full participation, access, and opportunity for all people. Longmeadow Public Schools recently conducted an equity audit and it is a necessary process to highlight disparities in order to systematically address them and monitor progress moving forward.

<sup>12</sup> If, indeed, racism is truly a public health crisis, then budget cannot be a barrier to addressing it. If the Select Board determines it does not have the necessary resources, the town can look to partner with other local communities to pool resources that will benefit multiple communities suffering from racism in western Massachusetts.

<sup>13</sup> The best course of action would be to establish a full-time employee/office within the town that is charged with ensuring that meaningful change is implemented and aligned throughout the various areas of town management.

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However, a temporary stop-gap measure would be to establish (or extend) a standing Task Force to ensure that recommendations are given the appropriate resourcing and implementation.

<sup>14</sup> As mentioned throughout this report, addressing racism and dismantling already existing systems of oppression and providing multiple additional learning and growth opportunities for the town, will require the commitment of resources. The more entities, families and groups with access to resources who are willing to creatively address this public health crisis, the more opportunities Longmeadow will have to flourish.

<sup>15</sup> If any town body or organization is to align its stated priorities with its demonstrated efforts, it must actively work to incorporate and reinforce those priorities throughout its structure and activities. To this end, Longmeadow should consider creating anti-racist resources to be made available on the town website for educational purposes; creating and publicizing a reporting mechanism for those who experience discrimination in town; adopting sign campaigns such as “No Room for Racism” in order to make its values visible to all who live, work, visit or pass through; engaging directly with ongoing efforts and opportunities to partner with Bay Path University, its academics and its diverse student population; organizing block parties, book studies (or similar events) that focus on, normalize and celebrate diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism; organizing and offering educational programming and activities to town residents and; exploring opportunities for public education campaigns and/or incorporation with school events.

<sup>16</sup> For example, see Portland Oregon’s model [here](#).

<sup>17</sup> Diverse applicants want to see how a local community celebrates and is committed to diversity. Including this kind of statement on the town’s job announcements makes our values and priorities clear from the start—and helps to make diverse candidates feel they are specifically sought after and valued. Guidance on this initiative and a usable example can be found [here](#).

<sup>18</sup> Creating processes and tools that intentionally work to address conscious and unconscious bias in the hiring process can support greater diversity.

<sup>19</sup> In order to create a more diverse applicant pool, the town will need to identify diverse and inclusive approaches to marketing and sharing their job descriptions to ensure that they are reaching a more diverse talent pool.

<sup>20</sup> Often, job announcements do not attract a diverse pool merely because of the logistics of how they’re posted. For example, posting internally or having limited external distribution inherently favors traits like seniority or ‘inside knowledge’ over actual competency or skill. Meanwhile, application systems that occur exclusively online may be a barrier to candidates that are qualified and eager to work, but lack the resources to apply in the limited manner allowed.

<sup>21</sup> Because Longmeadow currently lacks diversity in its town bodies, it may take time to create representative committees and review boards. Until this can be achieved, the town should (at a minimum) take the following steps to ensure that those in positions of authority are properly equipped to avoid bias and discrimination, and to work toward DEI goals: 1) Managers with screening and hiring responsibilities and individuals evaluating applicants or applicant materials should receive training on cultural awareness and other available equity training and; 2) interview panelists should receive training on implicit bias and discriminatory practices before interviewing begins.

<sup>22</sup> While this recommendation may speak for itself, it is important to note that if the applicant pool is not diverse, the town may need to review and consider the efficacy with which they have adopted and implemented any of the preceding recommendations.

<sup>23</sup> As a government entity that relies on voter support and public funding, the town of Longmeadow has both the right and the responsibility to choose the kinds of business partnerships it wants to engage in, and to use its licensing and oversight ability to ensure that businesses operating within its borders are acting in accordance with its priorities. To this end it should: 1) Make racially supportive amendments and/or new actions with respect to personnel, law enforcement, leisure services, housing and community services, education and training, use of municipal facilities, and planning and zoning and; 2) implement a policy that requires organizations that do business with or in Longmeadow to pay a “fair wage” and adopt an anti-discrimination policy.

<sup>24</sup> Making inclusive practices part of deliberate strategic planning is the best ‘grassroots’ way to attract the participation of underrepresented groups. Wherever possible, these strategic planning processes should therefore include people from the very groups we’re seeking to represent and attract.

<sup>25</sup> A community-based effort that envisions a racism-free Pioneer Valley. [HRIPV](#) has convened business, non-profit and philanthropic leadership to help engage the community in a process to recognize the impact of racism in our region and empower individuals to act to eradicate it. Indeed, the Hamden District Attorney partnered with this group in 2019.

<sup>26</sup> The [Undoing Racism/Community Organizing Collective of Western Mass](#) offers workshops and trainings on dismantling racism locally.

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<sup>27</sup> One of the explicit goals of the [Western Massachusetts Health Equity Network \(WMHEN\)](#) is to “make racial justice a named priority” in the healthcare activities of its network of partners. To this end, it has recently announced a series of virtual conversations related to racism as a public health crisis.

<sup>28</sup> [Multicultural BRIDGE](#) is a minority and women-run, non-profit organization in the Berkshires that provides training, advocacy, language access and community building services. It sponsors a “Towards Racial Justice Campaign” that is comprised of a race task force and offers “Real Talk on Race” courses. The organization also holds community forums, dialogues and classes that are intended to dismantle systemic racism; formulates organized community responses; and offers resilience and diversity leadership programs for youth along with a corresponding mentorship program.

<sup>29</sup> The [Pioneer Valley Project](#) is a coalition of churches, synagogues, labor unions and other organizations that have a strong interest in community life in the Pioneer Valley. It currently boasts 26 member organizations from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, age, religion and socio-economic status. The basic goal of PVP is to respond to the social concerns of participants in the member organizations regarding persistent issues that plague their communities. Each of the member organizations surveys its congregation or membership each year to determine what particular social issues seem most pressing, PVP then holds an ‘issues assembly,’ at which the entire membership provides input into what projects and goals the PVP will focus on during the next year.

<sup>30</sup> Recently, the [Longmeadow Historical Society](#) has been attempting to engage in and publicize more research on Longmeadow’s underrepresented voices throughout the town’s history. They could, therefore, be a valuable partner in local data collection.

<sup>31</sup> [Thought Partner Solutions](#) is a minority-owned and led management consulting firm that provides advisory services in the areas of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access to public and private organizations.

<sup>32</sup> The [Sojourner Truth School](#) teaches “movement-building skills” for social change leaders in the form of free community classes, with a commitment to recruiting BIPOC course instructors. Examples of classes include Anti-Racism for Activists, Cultivating Cross-Cultural Understanding in Personal and Organizational Settings and Cross-Generational Dialogue: Talking and Listening So That Others Will Talk and Listen.

<sup>33</sup> [Inclusion Strategies](#) delivers diversity, inclusion, resilience and wellness programs that cultivate mutual respect and human dignity at the intersections between individuals, work and families.

<sup>34</sup> Drawing on teachings from popular education, dialogue education and theories of adult learning, [Dialogues Across Difference](#) hosts opportunities that help people practice shaping dialogue, embracing conflict of ideas and engaging in productive conversations across differences that strengthen us all.

<sup>35</sup> [Integrated Comprehensive Systems for Equity](#) is an educational equity training organization with nationally recognized equity leadership that has recently expanded into municipal and non-profit equity trainings. Their work presents an excellent opportunity to help educate and train town government.

<sup>36</sup> The [Women of Color Health Equity Collective](#) seeks to “promote the resilience and empowerment of Women of Color to advance health and wellness by building community-capacity and advocating for just policies through evidence-based research and grassroots organizing.”

<sup>37</sup> [The National Conference for Community and Justice \(NCCJ\)](#) is a “human relations organization that promotes inclusion and acceptance by providing education and advocacy while building communities that are respectful and just for all.”