



Policy
Research &
Innovation

Accountability. Transparency. Advocacy.

ABOUT US

PRI makes change happen!

We apply a race and class equity lens to promote change and unite diverse communities through policy, facilitation, and community engagement.

Our *FOCUS AREAS* are: (1) Diversity, Inclusion & Community Engagement, (2) Land Use Planning / Economic Development, (3) Justice, (4) Educational Achievement, and (5) Child Welfare.

Our *STRATEGIES* are:

- Research: Conduct evidence-based research to support policy development and analysis.
- Policy Development & Analysis: Develop and analyze policy from a progressive, grassroots perspective that challenges the status quo and exposes inequity.
- Communication: Share ideas, policies, and solutions through in-depth, balanced, independent reports, articles, and other communication.
- Convening: Expand civic engagement by convening public forums to increase debate and build action-oriented coalitions that put evidence-based policy into practice.
- Capacity Expansion: Expand capacity of marginalized communities and those who would support them through technical assistance and/or training.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Karen Abrams, MPH – At PRI, Karen fosters partnerships, crafts research-based policy analysis, and creates opportunities for civic and community engagement. She is also Interim ED at States United to Prevent Gun Violence, and a public health and strategic planning consultant focusing on systems change.

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CONSULTING / CONTRACTUAL SERVICES

PRI provides consulting and contractual services to support agencies, organizations, communities and coalitions whose work is aligned with our mission. We provide customized services to expand the capacity of diverse community groups, civic and nonprofit organizations in the following areas:

- *Diversity training and race equity planning*
- *Effectively engaging multi-sector, multi-cultural partners*
- *Leadership development & capacity building*
- *Organizational development & strategic planning*
- *Land use and taxation*

EXECUTIVE BOARD

- **A’Jamal Byndon – Chair:** A’Jamal is Douglas County Disproportionate Minority Contact and Compliance Coordinator. He has taught diversity and multicultural courses for 25 years and was one of the seven founding members of the original Omaha Table Talk.
- **Terrell McKinney – Vice Chair:** Terrell is a law student, Creighton Law School
- **Riley Wilson – Secretary:** Riley is a law student, Creighton Law School
- **Nick Beaulieu – Member at Large:** Nick is an independent filmmaker, focusing on race issues.
- **Ayanna Boykins, MS – Member at Large:** Ayanna is Education Project Director at Anti-Defamation League-Plains State Region. She is an experienced convener of resources, manager of programming, professional development and service.
- **Y’Shall Davis – Member at Large:** Y’Shall is a Community Organizer at Heartland Workers Center.
- **Jack Dunn, MSSW – Member at Large:** Jack is PRI’ Founding Director and Researcher Emeritus.
- **Nkechiyerum Jessica Ehule, MS, MSPH – Member at Large:** Jessica is a public health professional managing behavioral health projects for Co-Creative Labs and coordinating equity and health outcomes projects with UNMC, CityMatCH.
- **Judith Gutierrez – Member at Large:** Judith devotes her time to community engagement.
- **Lynne Le, MPH – Member at Large:** Lynne has a strong commitment to public health, and at CityMatCH, she focuses on research and data-analysis in maternal and child health. She also has a vibrant interest in social justice and race issues.

TESTIMONIALS *(from participants at PRI events)*

- *Inspirational!*
- *It’s about time we talk about these issues.*
- *Created a forum for honest conversations about what we all struggle with in this work.*
- *Most helpful to see people organize for change.*
- *Encouraging difficult conversations.*
- *Practical, real-life examples and exercises for what often seems to be so complex.*
- *Very concrete and helpful information about building relationships and coalitions.*
- *Great speaker! Wonderfully engaging.*
- *The open discussion was powerful and beneficial.*
- *I really enjoyed how ideas were easily shared and listened to—it felt like everyone was coming together for the common cause.*
- *The expertise and the knowledge presented was top-notch.*
- *It’s one of the few events I’ve been to that included state reps, services providers, and clients.*
- *Got us as an organization more comfortable talking about race and racial injustice.*

WORKSHOPS & FORUMS

- **Community Conversations on Race: (2018-Present):** PRI hosts regular events in partnership with First United Methodist Church (FUMC), all focusing on different subjects and how they intersect with race and racism.
- **Cultural Humility Workshops & Race Equity Planning (2015-Present):** PRI offers communities, agencies, companies, and organizations the opportunity to genuinely explore notions of race and inclusion. The goal is to think in new ways, build bridges and grow stronger in a diverse world. Clients include: NE Department of Education; Metropolitan Community College; Salvation Army; First United Methodist Church; Legal Aid of Nebraska; Douglas County Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee; Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands; NorthStar Foundation; Omaha Public Schools.

- **Nuts and Bolts of Omaha Gentrification: How It Works, How to Take It Apart (2017):** Workshop on gentrification, the role of tax increment financing, and conversation about land use policy change to create the city we want to live in. Sponsored by Rationalists, Empiricists, And Skeptics Of Nebraska (R.E.A.S.O.N.).
- **How to Build a Sustainable Grassroots Resistance Movement (2015):** Workshop and conversation to build capacity of progressive groups to align work and resources in order to achieve policy victories. Facilitated by Jill Reese, Associate Director of the Alliance for a Just Society.
- **Bridging Communities of Color to Bring About Change (2014):** Co-sponsor/panelist for workshop on the intersection of race with education, justice and child welfare in Omaha, NE.
- **Community Listening Forums (2014):** In June and August 2014, PRI co-hosted child welfare listening sessions for members of the community and professionals, sponsored by Nebraska Families Collaborative and Black Men United, aimed at strengthening and improving prevention and child welfare services.
- **Diversity Town Hall Meeting (2013):** Event debuting our Diversity Report Card for area social service providers, including a panel discussion and a community dialog to address barriers to diversity as well as discuss future steps.
- **Diversity Report Card Advance Peek (2013):** Presentation providing an advance look at the Diversity Report Card to attendees at the Black Men United Racial Profiling Conference.
- **How to Tell Your Story to Achieve Your Goals (2013):** Partnered with Nebraska Appleseed on workshop for participants learn tips and tools to influence local and state policy makers through effective messaging about child welfare issues.
- **How to Influence the Policies of Nebraska's Child Welfare, Juvenile Court and Family Court Systems (2013):** Partnered with Family Advocacy Movement on workshop for participants to (1) hear inspiring stories from a panel of families that have successfully fought for themselves; (2) Share supportive information and materials; and (3) Learn how to file grievances and complaints.
- **Community Forum on Child Welfare in Nebraska (2013):** Panelists at event co-sponsored by the UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work and the Nebraska Families Collaborative, to provide an opportunity for community members to learn about child welfare issues from panel presentations and questions and reactions from the audience.
- **Tax Increment Financing Panel (2013):** Panelists discussed some of the successes and failures of Nebraska's Tax Increment Finance enabling legislation. Panelists were Ken Kriz, UNO School of Public Administration, Heath Mello, Chair of the Nebraska Senate Appropriations Committee, and Bridget Hadley, Economic Development Planner for the City of Omaha.
- **The New Jim Crow (2012):** Conference featuring author Michelle Alexander, co-sponsored with Black Men United and ACLU of Nebraska.
- **Child Welfare Reform Public Forums (2012):** This three-part series of public forums was aimed at identifying issues and developing long-term solutions to the troubles facing the state's child welfare system. The series took place from June through November 2012.
 - ✓ **Child Welfare Listening Session:** A platform for those most affected by Nebraska's child welfare system to recommend needed changes to laws, policies and practices.
 - ✓ **Child Welfare Reform Planning Session #1:** Nebraska child welfare advocates, employees, officials, etc. summarized and added to issues identified in the first Listening Session.
 - ✓ **Child Welfare Reform Planning Session #2:** Strategies generated by PRI were reviewed to refine PRI's 2013 *Report and Recommendations to Overhaul Nebraska's Child Welfare System*.
- **Omaha Tax Burden Forum (2012):** An inside look at how Nebraskans' tax dollars are divided among the rich, middle class and poor.

PROJECTS, WRITING, RESEARCH

- **TIF Database (2017):** A land use planning project providing a searchable database showing taxes paid versus taxes refunded to developers for every Tax Increment Financing (TIF) project in the state of Nebraska from 2008 through 2015, with partial data extending as far back as 1992.
- **Racism (2017):** An opinion piece on the struggle with how to effectively deal with racism in our state, published in Nebraska Report, the monthly newspaper of Nebraskans for Peace.
- **Nebraska TIF Report (2016):** Update to PRI's 2012 report, to show the context of TIF developments and help determine the true economic and financial effects of TIF on Omaha area.
- **Service Learning Project (2014):** Service learning project with UNO's School of Public Administration, resulting in published literature reviews on: (1) *Community Violence as a Public Health Issue*; and (2) *Community Engagement in K-12 Education: What Works?*
- **Testimony to Douglas County Board of Commissioner (2014):** Testimony in critical support of a project to devote some \$700 K to engage in strategic planning to overhaul the County's juvenile justice system.
- **Critical Feedback to Heartland 2050 Regional Plan (2014):** Letter to Heartland 2050 Equity & Engagement Committee, on which PRI served as a member. The critique addressed the core value of inclusion as well as the importance of law in land use planning systems development.
- **Diversity Report Card (2013):** Report that grades and ranks local nonprofit and government-run service providers on racial/ethnic and gender diversity among staff and on governing boards.
- **Child Welfare Bulletins (2013):** A series of one- to two-page bulletins describing critical issues within Nebraska's child welfare system including race, poverty, family preservation, civil liberties, accountability and legal representation.
- **Mass Incarceration: A Review of the Literature on Structural Racism within the U.S. Criminal Justice System (2013):** Report examining mass incarceration in the United States.
- **Report and Recommendations to Overhaul Nebraska's Child Welfare System (2013):** Analysis of Nebraska's child welfare system, and proposed strategic solutions for a complete overhaul.
- **The Disproportionate Removal of Minority Children in Nebraska Fact Sheet (2012)**
- **The Variables Most Closely Associated with Academic Achievement: A Review of the Research Literature (2012):** Report to the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties (LC), about the association between out-of-school variables and academic achievement.
- **Update: What is Tax Increment Financing—and Why Should Anyone Care? (2012):** Report updating PRI's 2011 report, in order to help determine the true economic and financial effects of TIF.
- **Focus on Elections in Douglas County (2012):** Report on reduction in polling stations decreed by Election Commissioner, including brief analysis of the past ten years of voting patterns.
- **Update: Fiscal Comparisons for Nebraska, 2009-10 (2012):** Revision of our 2010 report supporting findings that Nebraska ranks on a par with surrounding states in terms of the tax burden on citizens.
- **Testimony at Public Hearing on LB 918 (2012):** Testimony before the Nebraska State Legislature Committee on Urban Affairs, concerning proposed bill related to tax increment financing.
- **What is Tax Increment Financing (and Why Should Anyone Care)? (2011):** Report supports using TIF for economic development rather than unwarranted profit.
- **The Need for Cultural Proficiency in OPS (2011):** Research-based position paper advocating for enhanced cultural proficiency among the staff and administration of the Omaha Public Schools.
- **Fiscal Comparisons for Nebraska, 2008-09 (2010):** Report concludes that Nebraska ranks on a par with surrounding states in terms of the tax burden on citizens.