

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY  
& SOCIAL JUSTICE**



**FY23 - 24  
ANNUAL REPORT**



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## *Letter from RESJ Director*

Dear County Executive Elrich and County Council President Friedson,

It is my pleasure to present to you the FY23-24 Annual Report for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ). The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice continues to implement the Racial Equity and Social Justice law, as we close out our fourth year as part of county government. In this annual report you will read the details of how our training program continues to educate and enlighten employees as we expand our offerings and methods of delivery. You will read about how our policy team works with departments to deepen their understanding of what it means to create programs, policies, and processes with a racial equity lens. You will be introduced to our new community engagement manager and our department's plans to create a community engagement framework that centers racial equity and creates a communication model that encourages two way communication on program and policy creation.

As you consider the details of how we have helped embed racial equity and social justice into decision-making processes here in the county, I want you to know that county departments are deepening their understanding and acceptance of racial equity as a tool for decision-making. We have been delighted to see the growth of departmental responses to both the Operating and Capital Budget Equity tools. Recent responses have indicated an understanding of how programs, policies, and processes can be used to close racial disparities across the county. In our training program, we have seen departments invest their own resources to augment the ORESJ training offered by our department. Our training department continues to benefit from the partnership of volunteer facilitators from various departments. Partnerships with key departments like the Office of Management and Budget and Human Resources have helped us integrate racial equity into the way the county does business, and for that, we are grateful. In closing, we hope that you are impressed by the details of our work as presented in this annual report, but we also want you to know that the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice is making an impact on the structure and systems that help the county succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tiffany Ward".

Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice



## Meet our Staff:

### ▪ [Tiffany Ward, Director, and Chief Equity Officer](#)

**Tiffany Ward** is the Chief Equity Officer (CEO) in Montgomery County, MD. As the CEO, she is charged with training county staff on the core tenets of racial equity and examining county policies and practices for their short and long-term effects on racial disparities. Tiffany has dedicated her 20-plus-year career to creating a fairer and more equitable world for people of color. During her 15-year career in local government, she has focused on education, health and human services, and housing policy. She spent the early years of her career working with youth-serving organizations to bring resources and opportunities to young people who were capable and talented but who lacked the financial resources needed to create good lives for themselves. Before her career in local government, she worked in the labor movement on voting rights issues, including felon re-enfranchisement and voter protection campaigns. Throughout her life, the values of justice, fairness, and community building have guided her. Tiffany is a graduate of Tufts University.

### ▪ [Sarah Alvarez, Program Manager, Policy Analyst](#)

**Sarah Alvarez** is a Program Manager of Policy Analysis in the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. In this role, Sarah works with ORESJ and county leaders to develop and assess departmental policies, procedures, and practices with a racial equity lens. Before joining the County, Sarah was a Senior Program Associate at the Aspen Institute, working for six years at the intersection of racial equity and economic opportunity. She is a skilled researcher, analyst, and facilitator with experience developing and managing applied research projects and facilitating peer-learning experiences focused on advancing equitable outcomes for workers, job seekers, and entrepreneurs facing structural barriers to opportunity. Sarah is a Certified Public Manager and holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from the University of Mary Washington. She is a recent graduate of the Associated Black Charities Board Pipeline Leadership Development Program. Outside of work, Sarah enjoys spending time with her family and taking long walks with her dog Henry.

### ▪ [Linda Price, Program Manager, Policy Analyst](#)

**Linda Price** contributes to the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice as a Program Manager and Policy Analyst. She brings over 17 years of experience in city and county government, specializing in budget, legislative, and policy analysis. Linda received a bachelor's degree in organizational communications and a master's degree in management with a focus on the Public Sector. Her commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice continues as she develops and implements evidence-based policies and programs to address disparities within communities of

color. Linda excels in team building and resource management, creating inclusive work environments, and driving positive change. Outside of her professional pursuits, she enjoys spending quality time with family and friends and has a deep appreciation for live music, whether attending concerts or enjoying performances online.

- **Rhiannon Reeves, Program Manager, Policy Analyst**

**Rhiannon Reeves** supports the Montgomery County Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice as a Program Manager for Policy Analysis. In her role, she works to advance Montgomery County’s policy of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities by working with ORESJ staff and departmental leaders to develop and assess policies, procedures, and practices through the lens of racial equity. Before joining ORESJ, Rhiannon served as a Program Manager for the New Jersey Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, a Policy Analyst at the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), a Research Assistant at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); and Membership Program Assistant and Membership and Advocacy Coordinator at SisterSong. As a result of these previously held positions, Rhiannon is equipped to advance equitable outcomes through public policy—particularly for those facing the most significant systemic barriers to success. Rhiannon is a graduate of Georgia State University (B.A. in African American Studies with a minor in Sociology) and the Columbia University School of Social Work (MSSW with a policy concentration and children and families focus). Outside of work, she enjoys cooking comforting meals for her family and taking long scenic walks.

- **Jeanette Rojas, Program Manager, Training**

**Jeanette Rojas** is a Program Manager for Training in the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. Jeanette has over 20 years of experience in education program management and social justice advocacy that began in her role as one of the founders of the first Latina Sorority at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). After receiving her bachelor’s degree in psychology from UMCP, she worked in advocacy organizations such as the National Council of La Raza (now known as Unidos Us) as a senior resource development specialist, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute as a programs manager, and the Parent Institute for Quality Education as the director. After receiving her master’s degree in education and human development from George Washington University, she became passionate about working with first-generation college graduates at Montgomery College. While at Montgomery College, she created the Social Justice Inclusive Leadership Institute (SJILI), which helped students understand the foundations of social justice work while also receiving a stipend and a micro-credential. Working in education and advocacy has helped her understand the importance of racial equity and inclusion in educational institutions and all facets of the community. During her free time, she enjoys biking, meditating, and spending time with her family.

- **Harriet Shangarai, Program Manager, Community Engagement**

**Harriet Shangarai** joined the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice in April 2024 as a Community Engagement Manager II, bringing a decade of hands-on experience in grassroots community organizing, engagement, and collaboration with community stakeholders and Government agencies. Prior to joining ORE, Ms. Shangarai held a Community Engagement &

Outreach Manager position with the county's Office of Community Partnerships' Community Engagement Cluster (CEC). In this role, she worked to promote community engagement, address communication barriers, and promote community involvement in shaping county policies. Her collaborative work with the Regional Services Center, County Departments, Advisory Boards, Nonprofits, Faith Communities, Businesses, Education Institutions, Sister Cities, African American, Latino, Asian, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and LGBTQ+ liaisons played a pivotal role in supporting the needs of the county's diverse populations. Additionally, her efforts contributed to a high self-response rate in the 2020 Census among historically undercounted Black and Brown populations and the mitigation of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in communities of color through COVID-19 vaccine distribution campaigns. Before joining CEC, she worked with the Department of Health & Human Services and the African American Health Program, promoting the County's Public School Health, and supporting the general public in combating the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing Maternal and Infant mortality for People of African descent in Montgomery County. Ms. Shangarai has lived in the county for more than 25 years. In her leisure time, she enjoys reading & writing, creating art, singing, listening to jazz, and exploring new ideas. These traits highlight her creativity, which she carries into her professional work.

- [Andrea Gardner, Administrative Specialist/Human Resources Liaison](#)

**Andrea Gardner** is the Administrative Specialist and HR Liaison for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. With over 20 years of extensive administrative experience, much of which she acquired while in the private sector and support of the County departments and agencies (supporting DTS (now TEBS), DOCR, DGS, CEX, and ORESJ) within Montgomery County government. She is a seasoned administrative professional who supports Director Tiffany

Ward in expert coordination and planning across the office's portfolio of projects, in addition to her work as a Human Resources Liaison. Her passion for her work and her dedication to service are integral to maintaining the office's operational effectiveness. Andrea is devoted to supporting her spiritual activities, reaping all the benefits that come from being a grandparent to her two granddaughters, singing, vacationing by the water, and tending to her many plants and orchids.

## FY23 - 24 TRAINING SECTION

### Overview:

As the County continues to embrace the diversity of its community members and ever-changing demographics it also acknowledges the responsibility of educating its staff on racial equity and social justice history, policy, and structural racism. Over the past year we have expanded our training offerings and increased the way members of our community can take trainings. Through self-guided trainings Montgomery County employees can now take part in our trainings anytime and anywhere. We continue to offer virtual live facilitated training monthly. We have also expanded our offerings to include training on inclusive language and empathy. We are excited to continue to bring new and informative learning opportunities to Montgomery County employees as we seek to deepen the community's understanding of racial equity, social justice, and belonging. Below, you will find a summary of our training by the numbers as well as highlights of our key partnerships.

### Accomplishments:



#### I. Partnerships:

Partnering with Montgomery County Public Libraries and the Office of Human Rights, among other organizations, the ORESJ helped host a highly successful program with award-winning author Dr. Tony Medina. Contemporary Conversations with Dr. Tony Medina included food and entertainment in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. We look forward to future programming with our partners.



### New Training:

'Biases, Empathy & Inclusion—Creating an Environment of Belonging'



➤ *152 Employees have completed this course since its launch in April of 2024!*

This two-hour training examines how biases impact our day-to-day actions and how we show up at work. The goal is to unpack the deeper meaning of empathy and how it relates to inclusive practices. In addition, we look at examples of how we can create an environment where staff can thrive through authentic relationships.

*'I thought a wonderful job was done; I especially liked the films.'*

*(Karen Simon, Montgomery County Public Libraries)*

### Self-Guided Training:

➤ *852 Employees have completed this training!*

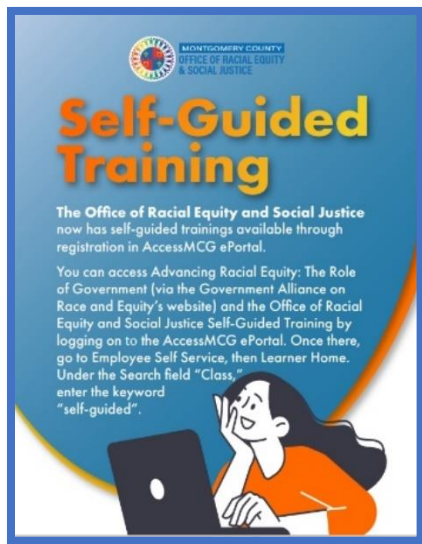
ORESJ self-guided modules on history, biases, inclusive language, and more!

*'I was able to complete it at my convenience. The training was interactive and informative.'*

*(Gregory Wallace, Department of Health, and Human Services)*

*I liked the diversity of the content provided and the inclusion of history from Rockville and Montgomery County as well.'*

(Christian Vargas, Department of Housing and Community Affairs).



- **‘Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government’** self-guided modules on GARE’s website.

## Mandatory Training:

- **‘Understanding Structural Racism in Montgomery County’**
  - *1,119 Employees have completed ‘Understanding Structural Racism in Montgomery County’ since October 2023.*



Our new four-hour training, launched in October 2023, helps us understand how racial inequities in our country and in our own County impact our daily lives.

We look closely at our history, County data, and examples of how structural inequities are evident in all aspects of modern-day life. Delving into the various layers of racism allows us to have uncomfortable conversations in a safe space. Through interactive activities,

small group discussions, videos, and learning exercises, employees can engage in meaningful conversations about race.

*‘This training was very helpful and informative on what needs to be done within the County.’*

(Steven Melendez, Department of Permitting Services)

- **‘Advancing Racial Equity – The Role of Government’**

➤ *1,970 Employees have completed this course!*

A four-hour introductory training on how we can begin to understand racial inequity in government and in our County through biases, systemic racism, psychology, and history.

*‘The training yesterday was the best since I’ve been with the County.... really made me think how I can assist and more broadly, how our office and DGS can assist.’*

(Christopher Weatherly, Department of General Services)

- **Groundwater Approach: A Practical Understanding of Structural Racism**

➤ *174 Employees have completed this course!*

A three-hour webinar that takes a deeper look at the systems that perpetuate racial inequity within our communities.



## Zoom Webinars:



- **852 Employees have completed our training via the Zoom Webinars!**

To accommodate the large number of registrants, we have made most of our mandatory training webinars. We strive to engage employees through chat and other online tools. Webinars can accommodate up to five hundred participants at a time.

## Lunch & Learns:

- **322 Employees attended and participated in our Lunch & Learns!**

This is a one-hour lunchtime program that delves into topics related to racial equity and social justice. Our lunch and learns are intended to gather the MCG community for informal learning opportunities where employees or outside speakers share their personal stories or expertise on a pertinent racial equity or social justice topic.

### *Previous lunch & learns held:*

- **Celebrating AAPI Community Leaders (May 2024)**
- **Finding Fellowship with Jason Green & Kisha Davis Course (February 2024)**
- **Beyond Land-Acknowledgements, Honoring People's Rights (November 2023)**

## *Feedback from Staff on the ORESJ Lunch & Learns:*

### ▪ **Finding Fellowship:**

*'If I could give this presentation 10 stars, I would. It was fascinating, informative, and very moving!'*

**(Shelley Greenberg, Dept. of Technology Enterprise Business Systems)**

*'The more we come together for the difficult conversations, the more comfortable with each other we will be. Thanks!'*

**(Lori Main, Dept. of Transportation)**

### ▪ **Celebrating AAPI Community Leaders:**

*'I thought the presentations and candid conversations were excellent. Well, done!'*

**(Suzanne Lofhjelm, Montgomery County Council)**

## Additional Training Offered:

### ▪ **Racial Healing Circles**

- **17 Employees have completed this course!**

An hour-and-a-half journey of healing through storytelling, intention, and mindful listening.

### ▪ **Inclusive Language 101**

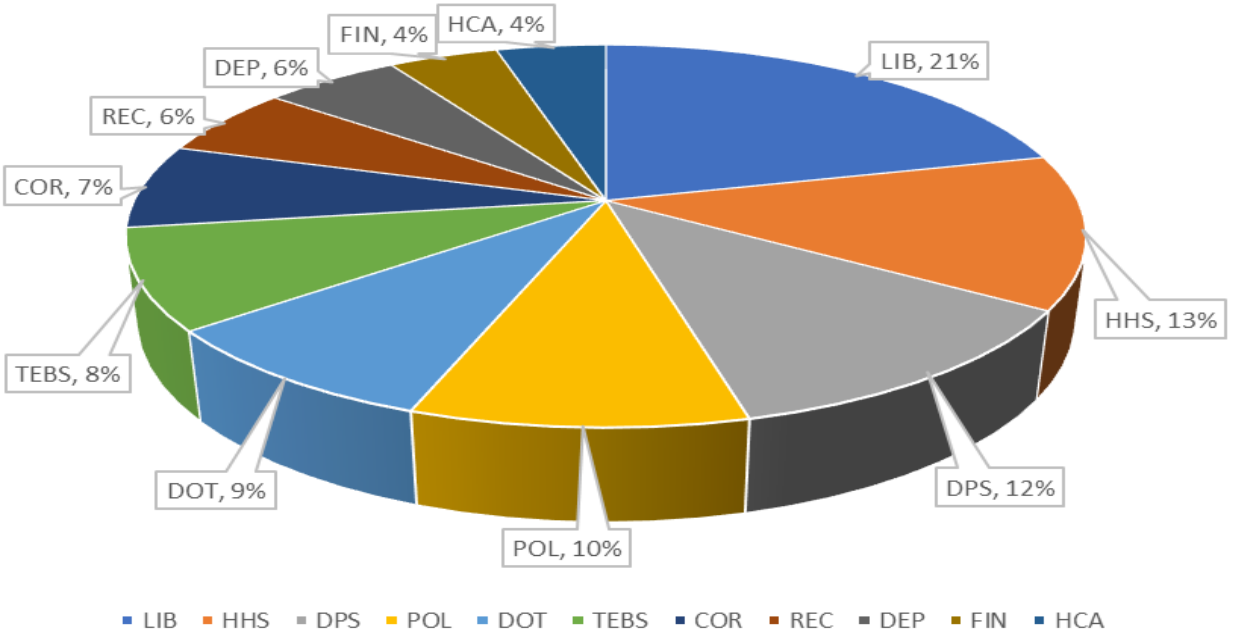
- **649 Employees have taken this webinar!**

A two-hour training that covers how we can use language to bring people together and have meaningful conversations with one another by helping to create a safe space.

*'Very informative presentation, presented in a comfortable environment with the right amount of lecture, slides, and interactive activities. Thank you!'*

**(Lily Lee, Montgomery County Public Libraries)**

Trainings by Department (with highest attendance)



## TRAINING SUMMARY

### Future Outlook:

As the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice, the embedding of the County's commitment to serve all of its employees regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or religious beliefs through accurate data presentations, historical knowledge, and information is critical to dismantling structural racism and injustice. We are well aware that

examine and continue to question the narrative of how our society has viewed racial equity.

### 'Train The Trainer':

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice is always looking for co-facilitators. We currently have six co-facilitators who assist us with facilitating our training. Train-the-Trainer provides a professional development opportunity that allows our Equity Leads and



there is far more work to be done when it comes to training all staff. Through webinars that accommodate more employees, self-guided training that offers more flexibility, and programming that accommodates different schedules. Our office has worked hard to accommodate employee training needs and preferences. The work is to continue to engage MCG employees and provide a platform for important yet often uncomfortable conversations around race and social justice. Our new class, 'Understanding Structural Racism in Montgomery County,' will continue to uncover the history of structural racism in Montgomery County and our nation. We will

other interested staff to facilitate an ORESJ training. Currently, we have ten staff/Equity Leads who have recently been trained and are prepared to practice in the near future.



In the fall of 2023, Equity Leads participated in their first in-person retreat. During this retreat, a healing circle was held, and discussions of the various roles of an Equity Lead were held. The County Executive, Marc Elrich, also came by to congratulate our Leads on a job well done. Each Equity Lead received a certificate of appreciation.

## Core Teams And Racial Equity Leads

Our Equity Leads continue to lead their core teams in a difficult yet rewarding task. We are often in awe of the training and programs they have been developing to provide additional options for RESJ hours. Some of these programs include tours of local museums, the African American walking tour in Rockville, bias training, and panel discussions, all of which focus on racial equity and social justice.



Two of our Equity Leads participated in Leadership Montgomery's 'Real Inclusion' program, which examines how race impacts personal leadership and racial equity concepts. Attendees participate in this training for several months through a cohort model.

*Being a Racial Equity Core Team Leader challenges me to delve deeper into racial equity and social justice topics. Each month, I am discovering new ways to connect with colleagues in my department.'*

***(Bethany Manimbo, Equity Lead, Office of Procurement)***



## **FY23 - 24 REL Representation:**

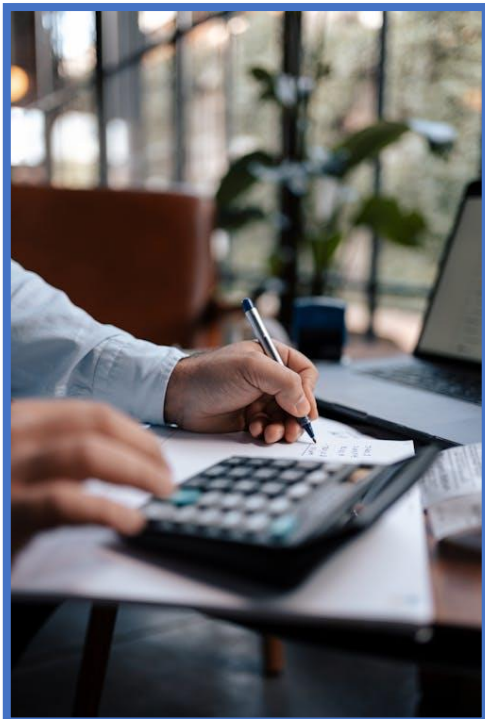
- Agricultural Services
- Alcohol Beverage Services
- Animal Services & Adoption Center
- Board of Elections
- Community Use of Public Facilities
- Consumer Protection
- Correction and Rehabilitation
- County Attorney's Office
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Department of Finance
- Department of General Services
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Department Permitting Services
- Department of Recreation
- Department of Transportation
- Ethics Commission
- Fire and Rescue Services
- Montgomery County Public Libraries
- Montgomery County Council
- Montgomery County Employee Retirement Plans
- Office of the County Executive
- Office of Food Systems Resilience
- Office of Human Resources
- Office Intergovernmental Relations
- Office of Labor Relations
- Office of Management and Budget
- Office of Public Information
- Office of the Inspector General
- Office of Legislative Oversight
- Procurement
- Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions

## FY23 - 24 POLICY SECTION

### Overview:

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) supports the County in applying a racial equity lens to its policies, practices, and procedures to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities. Using a racial equity lens brings conscious attention to potential racial equity impacts of government decisions by providing insights into historical and current structural inequities likely to produce disparate or disproportionate racialized outcomes. Often, we describe using a racial equity lens as the “how?” of intentionally doing two things:

- first, centering the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents and other groups facing systemic oppression in policy and decision-making spaces; and
- second, bringing the history of structural racism and its cumulative impacts into the present.



### ORESJ in the Field Sharing Best Practices

In November 2023, the ORESJ Policy Team presented the FY25 Operating Budget Equity Tool (OBET) to an audience of regional racial equity practitioners during a GARE and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) hosted budget equity workshop. During the session, the ORESJ Policy Team shared lessons learned and ideas for improving the utilization of BETs in decision-making.

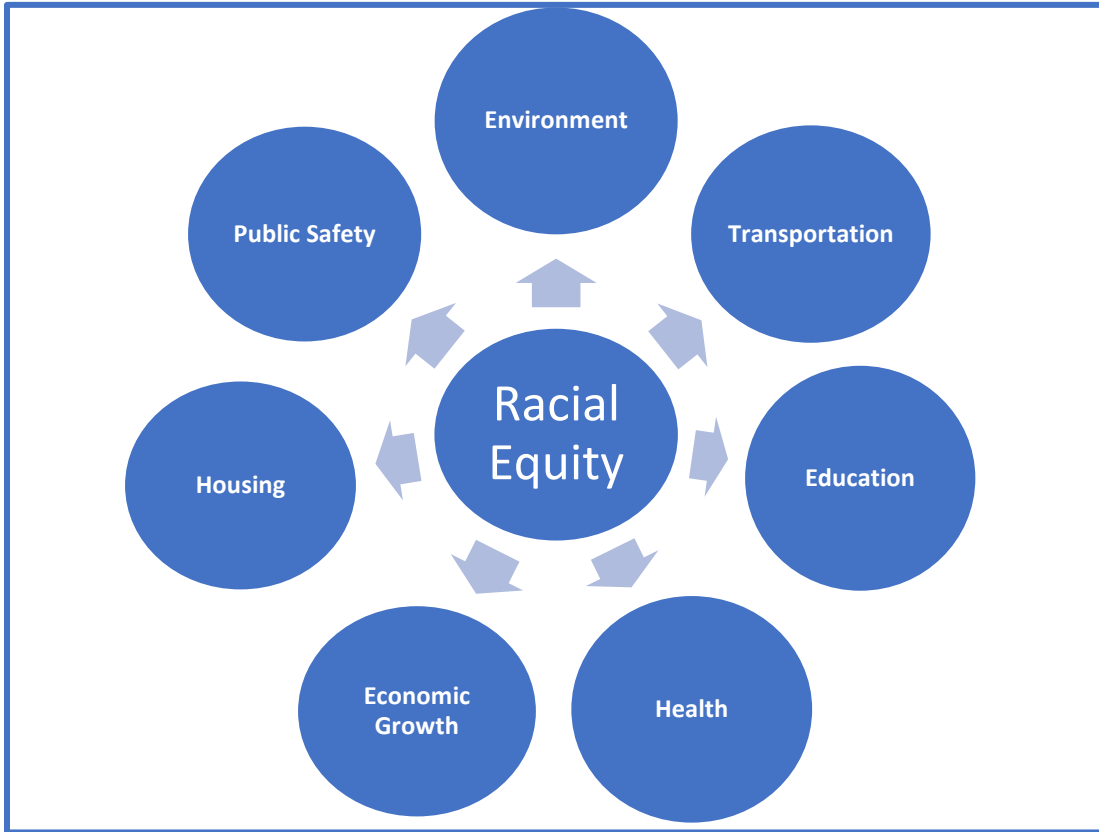
In May 2024, the ORESJ Policy Team (along with colleagues in the Office of Legislative Oversight) attended the Howard County, MD Humanity Matters Conference and presented panel discussions on conducting Racial Equity Impact Assessments and Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statements, Incorporating Budget Equity Tools into Resource Decisions, and Spurring Progress Toward Procurement Equity in Local Government.

ORESJ is pleased to learn with and from racial equity practitioners across the region and country and looks forward to future sharing and collaborating to advance racial equity and social justice in FY25.

ORESJ uses a racial equity lens to analyze Supplemental and Special Appropriations through Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) and the assessment of Capital and Operating Budgets. ORESJ uses REIAs and Budget Equity Tools (BETs) to conduct these analyses. The following sections describe ORESJ’s work developing and using these tools while supporting County departments and agencies in using a racial equity lens to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities.

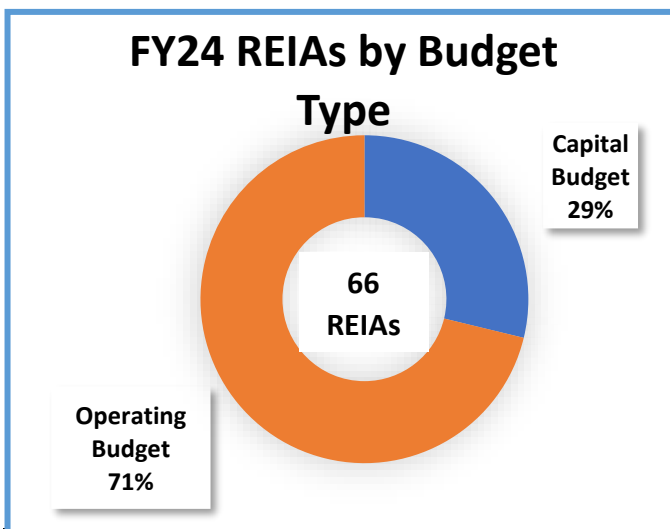
### Racial Equity Impact Assessments:

The passage of [Bill 44-20](#), requires the completion of a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for all supplemental appropriations. REIAs are intended to help Montgomery County gain valuable insights into the impact and outcomes of supplemental budget funding and the County’s ongoing journey toward reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities.

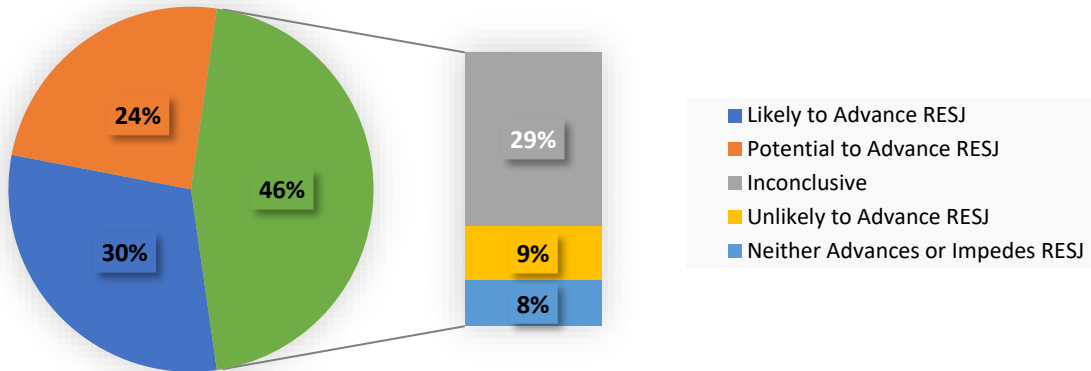


Now in its fourth year, the ORESJ REIA program continues to examine the Intersection of racial equity and the County’s key service area while improving the focus and depth of its analysis.

In FY24, 66 REIAs were completed, analyzing approximately \$240 million in investments in County-wide initiatives and projects. Slightly more than half of the supplemental appropriations reviewed by ORESJ were funded by non-county sources, such as Federal and State dollars—often continuing programs routinely funded. A smaller percentage of supplemental appropriations reviewed by ORESJ were funded using tax-supported resources. General Fund Reserves provided funding for 23 operating budget supplemental appropriations, while nine capital budget supplemental appropriations were supported by GO Bonds or Current Revenue. By the numbers, the largest share of REIAs completed in FY24 were related to operating budget expenditures (71% or 47 REIAs). Additionally, 29% of REIAs (19 assessments) focused on the impact of funding to support capital projects. The distribution of REIAs conducted across departments demonstrates



## FY24 REIA Findings

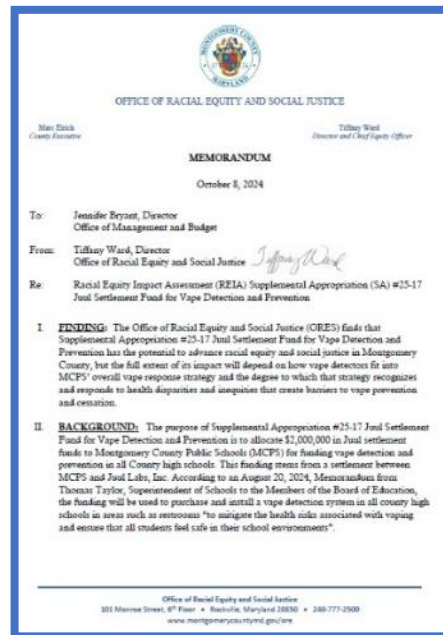


the county's diverse priorities. Over half of the REIAs completed were for Transportation, Health and Human Services, and Public Schools, due in large part to intergovernmental sources of funding.

The REIA findings reveal a varying degree to which funding could impact racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County. While many assessments indicate a potential or likelihood to advance racial equity and social justice, a significant number of REIAs had limited or uncertain potential to positively impact racial equity and social justice due to the findings being inconclusive, having a neutral outcome, or neither advancing nor impeding RESJ efforts.

A notable trend in REIAs this year was an emphasis on the role of structural inequities in perpetuating racially disparate outcomes in the County. We highlighted opportunities for structural change in county government, such as encouraging equitable procurement practices and incorporating deep and meaningful community engagement into the planning and implementation of new programs, initiatives, and projects. It is our hope that by highlighting opportunities for structural change within REIAs, we can

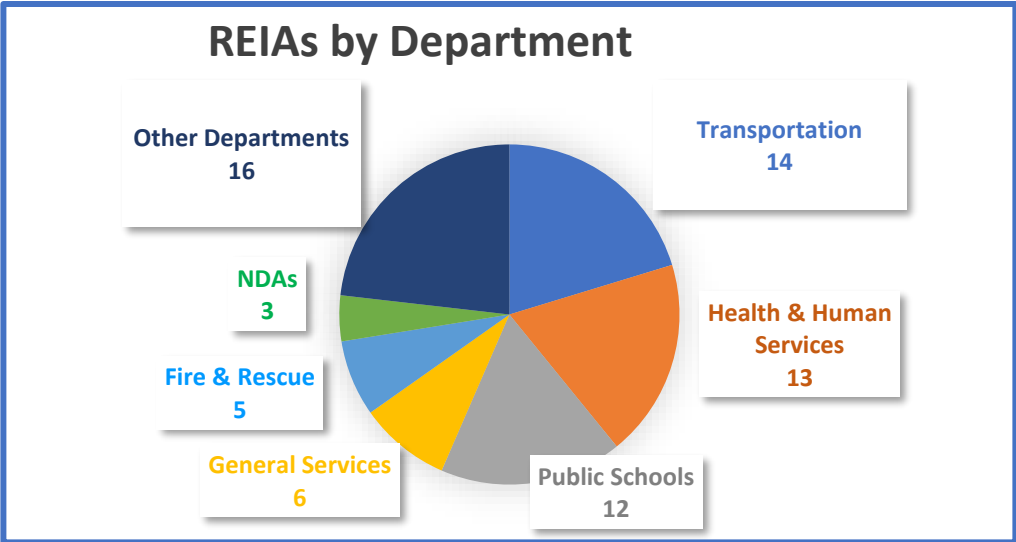
support departments in applying racial equity principles while ensuring that those most impacted by racial disparities and other inequities have a voice in shaping solutions. Overall, REIAs show improvements in how departments are using a racial equity lens in their development of supplemental



appropriation requests, but challenges remain. In particular, gathering comprehensive data and information from partners and developing clear, disaggregated metrics for determining the impact of their work. Moving forward, ORESJ hopes to refine the scope of our REIA process to focus more intently on impact.



As Montgomery County continues its journey toward racial equity and social justice, the REIA process serves as both a mirror and a roadmap. It reflects our current efforts while illuminating paths for improvement. As we move forward, the challenge—and opportunity—lies in translating these insights into actionable policies and practices. The REIA process has laid the groundwork for a systemic approach to advancing racial equity and social justice across various sectors in the County. The next step is to build upon this foundation, addressing data gaps, refining the opportunity for impact, and deepening community engagement to create a more equitable and inclusive Montgomery County for all residents.



## Budget Equity Tools:



Budget Equity Tools (BETs) make applying a racial equity lens to budget development and decision-making concrete by providing a structured approach for identifying,

analyzing, and interpreting data about historical and current racial disparities and inequities in the County. From departments' completion of BETs and ORESJ's analysis of them, departments gain insights about how they can adjust their budget proposals to better address racial inequities. At the same time, BETs support decision-makers in assessing budget proposals based on their ability to advance priority initiatives such as racial equity and social justice.

ORESJ strongly believes in continual learning and growth while seeking to foster an organizational culture that recognizes the time and commitment required to create change. Based on this belief, each fiscal year, ORESJ assesses the quality of BET responses, collects feedback from BET users in surveys and focus groups, and gleans from updated iterations of similar tools in other jurisdictions. This assessment allows ORESJ to identify racial equity knowledge and capacity gaps, as well as parts of the tool and budget development process that can be strengthened. Over time, ORESJ's growth mindset and assessments have steadily improved BET response quality and an updated version of both Operating and Capital Budget Equity Tools each year since FY21.

## Operating Budget Equity Tool:

### Departments that responded to FY25 program-level questions

- Alcohol Beverage Services
- Correction and Rehabilitation
- Environmental Protection
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Health and Human Services
- Housing and Community Affairs
- Police
- Recreation
- Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions
- Transportation

In FY24, ORESJ developed an Operating Budget Equity Tool (OBET) for FY25 budget development. In addition to the [tool](#), ORESJ created a [scoring rubric](#), and [guidance manual](#) (along with hosting a training) to assist departments in applying a racial equity lens to budget development at departmental and program levels. Working within the County's existing budget processes and timeframe, each department was required to answer department-level questions. The ten departments whose budgets make up the largest share of the County's overall budget were also required to answer program-level questions.

For department-level questions, respondents were prompted to utilize the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#) Normalize, Organize, Operationalize framework to describe how their overall budget would enable the department's FY25 commitments to advance racial equity and social justice. For program-level questions,

respondents were provided with a list of questions regarding program goals, racial disparities, and inequities the program responds to, and how unintended consequences or potential reductions to the program budget could be mitigated.

ORESJ received submissions from 44 departments and reviewed a total of 18 programs. Utilizing a clearly defined rubric, ORESJ provided a numerical rating along with a narrative justification that included a combination of recommendations, reference information, and/or examples of where responses could have been strengthened. This analysis was submitted through BASIS (the County's budgeting system) and transmitted to department directors, the County Executive, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Scores and analyses were also transmitted to County Council members, analysts, and staffers.

In addition to the numerical ratings and narratives provided to decision-makers, ORESJ also noted areas of opportunity where support and additional investment in future years could accelerate departments' RESJ efforts and strengthen their overall impact on the community. Using the GARE framework, ORESJ organized a series of recommendations:

- **Normalize:**
  - Foster a culture of curiosity so that assessment, evaluation, and analysis are embraced as tools for delivering on the promise of the RESJ Act.
  - Encourage Department heads to support and actively engage CORE teams in strategy development and resource planning.
  - Create incentives or awards for highly effective CORE team leads.

- **Organize:**
  - Encourage departments experiencing similar resource barriers (staff size, funding structure) to collaborate and identify county and external partners to assist in filling knowledge and/or capacity gaps.
- **Operationalize:**
  - Help departments recognize and address limitations of "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI, DEIA, DEIAB) frameworks" in implementing the requirements of the RESJ Act.
  - Encouraging departments to disaggregate data and target disparities in creating programs and initiatives.

### Capital Improvements Program Budget Equity Tool:

In FY24, ORESJ developed a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Budget Equity Tool (CBET), rubric, training, and guidance manual to support project managers and decision-makers in applying a racial equity lens to the FY25-30 CIP. In addition, ORESJ conducted technical assistance with six department users to help them identify data sources and think about their project in the context of racial disparities and inequities in the County. ORESJ analyzed CBET responses for 54 projects, categorizing them based on the strength of their alignment with the County's RESJ Act. ORESJ transmitted its analysis—ratings and justification—to OMB, the County Executive, and other relevant decision-makers via memo with project ratings, an explanation of overarching patterns, and recommended next steps.



Late in FY24, ORESJ began developing a new iteration of the [CBET and guidance manual](#) for use in the FY26 CIP budget. This version of the CBET included a revised set of questions for project amendments (changes to a project) and new projects. Responses to both sets of questions allow ORESJ to assess whether the project is likely to reduce or expand racial disparities and inequities in the County. Unlike in previous years, the outcome of ORESJ's CBET analysis will be a *findings statement* about the project instead of a numerical rating and narrative justification. At the time of this report, departments were completing CBET responses for 15 projects. ORESJ looks forward to analyzing and applying its new assessment framework, which it believes will encourage learning, improvement, and, ultimately, decision-making that centers on racial equity and social justice.

### Continual Learning:

As the field of racial equity in government evolves, the Policy Team remains committed to strengthening its skills and competencies to better serve departments in realizing their racial equity and social justice vision. The following are some of our learning highlights:

- ✓ Between February and May 2024, ORESJ staff joined a group of colleagues from across County government and the region to explore policies and practices for equitable development. Over the course of four sessions, we learned about the region's recently adopted equitable development principles, assessed current county processes affecting land use and housing development, and explored the applicability of equitable development best practices to community engagement and policy development.
- ✓ In April 2024, members of ORESJ represented the County as part of its

delegation at the National Forum for Black Public Administrators in Baltimore. Our office also attended a pre-conference workshop, "DEIB is Here to Stay: Institutionalizing the Principles". Throughout the conference, ORESJ engaged with public administrators and racial equity practitioners, sharing insights and best practices that will help strengthen our knowledge and relationships in the field.

- ✓ In June 2024, ORESJ attended the LEADing for Equity Conference hosted by the One Fairfax Team in Fairfax, Virginia. The conference included visionary remarks from John A. Powell, Director of the Other & Belonging Institute, and a lecture from Dr. Steven Woolf of Virginia Commonwealth University on the ways historical forms of structural racism manifest in current-day racial disparities. In addition, we had a chance to hear directly from staff and leaders across Fairfax County government about how they are creating racial equity data tools and what steps they're taking to implement equity impact plans within agency-level operations. Overall, the ORESJ team learned about concrete ways to expand and deepen racial equity work in County government while also being inspired and reinvigorated to continue the meaningful work of making Montgomery County a more racially equitable and socially justice community.

### Policy Team Portfolios:

To assist departments in realizing their commitment to reducing and eliminating racial disparities and other inequities for community members of Montgomery County, ORESJ Policy Analysts have been assigned the below departments to be their policy point of contact, providing them with targeted

support including, but not limited to include the following items.

- Using a racial equity lens in resource decisions via our budget equity tools,
- Sharing best practices from current research and data related to the intersection of racial equity and the department’s issue areas,
- Sharing insights from sister departments in neighboring jurisdictions, and
- Connecting departments to networks of racial equity experts in their specific issue area(s).

Sarah	Rhiannon	Linda	Tiffany
Office of Food Security Resources (OFSR)	Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF)	Office of Human Resources (OHR)
Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA)	Alcohol and Beverage Services (ABS)	Dept. of Finance (FIN)	Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Dept. of Transportation (DOT)	Office of Grants Management (OGM)	Dept. of General Services (DGS)	County Executive Office (CEX)
Office of Agriculture (OAG)	Department of Recreation (REC)	Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)	Office of the County Attorney (OCA)
Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS)	Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEHMS)	Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)	County Council (CC)
Office of Procurement (PRO)	Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL)	Office of Community Partnerships (OCP)	Board of Elections (BOE)
Dept. Permitting Services (DEP)	Office Human Rights (OHR)	Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR)	Public Information Office (PIO)
Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (FRS)	Animal Services and Adoption Center (ASAC)		

## FY23 - 24 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SECTION

### Overview:



The Community Engagement Manager supports the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice Director and Montgomery County in advancing racial equity and social justice practices within county departments. The primary responsibility includes the implementation of Montgomery County’s RESJ Act, which recognizes the need for equitable community engagement and requires the county agencies to incorporate and embed “racial equity and social justice principles and strategies into operations, programs, service policies, and community engagement practices that prioritize Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)”.

### Objective:

***For fiscal year 2025, ORESJ aims to accomplish several key initiatives. These include conducting surveys on racial equity and social justice across the county and convening an Equitable Community Engagement Task Force.*** The task force will be responsible for reviewing and addressing feedback from ORESJ surveys, discussing the OLO report, and developing a comprehensive Equitable Community Engagement Framework that prioritizes communication, consultation, and collaboration with BIPOC communities to

support the county in achieving its racial equity goals.

### Department's Community Engagement Survey:

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice has initiated a series of surveys to assess current department practices, identify gaps, and formulate equitable processes for the county’s community engagement planning and operations. The initial Community Engagement Survey was launched at the end of June and closed in mid-July. This survey aimed to establish a baseline by examining the knowledge, perspectives, and practices of various county departments in engaging with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). In total, 56 participants from 33 County departments completed the survey. These participants held diverse roles, including Executive/Leadership, Manager/Supervisor, Equity Lead, and CORE Team members, many of whom are front-facing staff responsible for planning and implementation of community engagement activities. The survey results not only established a baseline



but also provided valuable insights for the Office of Racial Equity (ORE) to comprehend current engagement practices related to the BIPOC community. ORESJ is still analyzing some of the data to derive sentiments necessary for coding and quantifying the qualitative data. The overarching objective is to use these findings together with the BIPOC

Providers & Individual survey to guide a collaborative effort among the county's stakeholders working to develop an equitable community engagement framework.

### BIPOC Individual Survey:

This survey is designed to gather important feedback from the BIPOC community. ORESJ will utilize collected data to provide comprehensive guidance to the county on effective communication and engagement methods with the BIPOC community. Additionally, this survey aims to identify the existing communication channels within BIPOC communities, explore opportunities to enhance the county's communication strategies, and establish a robust two-way communication channel for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) residing in the county. ORESJ's goal is to ensure easy access to information in a culturally sensitive manner through trusted and widely utilized communication channels within the BIPOC community. These channels will enable individuals to share information, receive feedback, and participate in shaping community engagement efforts. The survey launched in October 2024 and will be available in the seven most spoken languages in the county, including *French, English, Korean, Amharic, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Chinese*.



### BIPOC Providers Survey:

The BIPOC Providers Survey is designed to collect important information about the

experiences, needs, and access to information of BIPOC community providers. The survey launched in October 2024 aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges and critical issues faced by BIPOC community providers. The survey results will be pivotal in developing an equitable community engagement framework and support ORESJ in advancing racial equity and social justice goals.



### Equitable Community Engagement Taskforce:

After analyzing the survey results, ORESJ will form a task force consisting of public-facing offices and other internal stakeholders that regularly interact with BIPOC communities. This task force may include, but is not limited to the Public Information Office, Regional Services Centers, the Office of Community Partnerships, and the Office of Legislative Oversight. The task force will review and address the feedback collected from surveys and the findings in the OLO report and collaborate with the county's Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice to develop a comprehensive Equitable Community Engagement Tool (ECET) that can effectively address identified gaps, promote equitable and inclusive community participation.

## FY23 - 24 Co-Sponsored Events

### Overview:

Each year, Montgomery County departments work in conjunction with Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) and the Office of Human Rights (OHR) to plan county-recognized events. Below are some of the events that the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice co-sponsored by providing financial support.

- ❖ **Montgomery County Employees Celebrate Black History Month**  
Theme: Black Resistance Featuring a Virtual Panel Discussion with Tina Clarke, Local Historian, Civil Rights Activist, and Protester at the Glen Echo Park, Willie King, former Secretary to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Joan Mulholland, Civil Rights Icon, and Freedom Rider.  
February 9, 2023, 10:30 a.m.
- ❖ **MCPL Contemporary Conversations with Dr. Tony Medina – A Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration (Rockville Memorial Library)**  
October 11, 2023, 6:00 pm
- ❖ **MCPL Contemporary Conversations - On Race, Class, and Privilege – An Evening with Educator [Tim Wise](#) (Rockville Memorial Library)**  
July 11, 2024, 6:00 pm
- ❖ **Contemporary Conversations with Robert Farid Karimi – A Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration (Wheaton Library)**  
September 28, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
- ❖ **MCPL Contemporary Conversations to celebrate Native American History Month with Morgan James Peters (Rockville Library)**  
November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

**Contemporary Conversations @ MCPL** A HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

**Poetry & Play:**  
An Evening with Robert Farid Karimi

**September 28, 2024; 6:00 PM-8:00 PM**  
Wheaton Library Social Hall

Join Robert Farid Karimi, a critically acclaimed Iranian-Cuban American author and artist, for an engaging evening of storytelling and poetry. Robert will share excerpts from his new unpublished book, providing a unique glimpse into his creative process. In addition, he will present his owners perspective on a cherished traditional recipe passed down from his grandmother illustrating how this ordinary tradition bridges cultural divides in his Muslim Catholic upbringing.

Robert Farid Karimi is a distinguished performer, writer, and social engagement artist renowned for his innovative approach to interactive and immersive experiences. As a Grammy-nominated artist and multi-award prize-nominated writer, Karimi has had his work featured on prominent platforms including NPR, The Smithsonian, NPR's Soul Food Jam, and the Los Angeles Times. In addition to his artistic endeavors, Karimi is the co-director of the Public Practice + Generative Play studios and serves as an Assistant Professor in the Music, Dance, and Theater department at Arizona State University.

Live music performance by **Three Generations Afro-Cuban Jazz Ensemble**.

Registration required.  
[www.mcpl.org/events/11007503](http://www.mcpl.org/events/11007503)

The Contemporary Conversations program is co-sponsored by the Office of the County Manager, Office of Public Works, Montgomery County Office of Fiscal Policy and Social Justice, Office of Human Rights, Office of Planning and Development, Montgomery County Office of Community Partnership, OHR and Classroom 2 Community LLC.

Please contact Library Administration at 777-0000 at least 10 days prior to the event for ticket information and instructions.

**Wheaton Library**  
11701 Georgia Ave  
Silver Spring, MD 20902

**HR** OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**C2 Classroom 2 Community**

**Friends of the LIBRARY** MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

**MCPL** Montgomery County PUBLIC LIBRARIES





**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY  
& SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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