



Color of Equity is a community collective working for racial equity and justice for people of color and advocating for policy changes in Highland Park, IL and Lake County schools and police departments.

Accomplishments:

- o Major U.S. cities changed their policies on shooting at moving vehicles, starting in the 1970s, but none of the Lake County cities we collected policies from, currently use language consistent with the national best practice as established by New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, etc. In October 2020 an officer formerly employed by the Waukegan police department shot and killed [Marcellus Stinnette](#) and shot and hospitalized his girlfriend, Tafarra Williams. There was no warrant or alleged crime. Color of Equity wrote a [white paper](#) that convinced the Lake County Sheriff's Office and got their policy on this updated within days.
 - o Among others, these Lake County cities still need to hear from you that you want them to update their policies!: Waukegan, Highland Park, Deerfield, Highwood, Grayslake.
- o Wrote a public letter, in partnership with the [Antmound Foundation](#) and BLM Lake County, to our Illinois State Senators and Representatives to let them know that there was support, from majority-white communities for Illinois pioneering criminal justice omnibus bill. The SAFE-T Act was [signed into law](#) in February of this year. Among many other important changes, the bill made Illinois the first state in the nation to completely eliminate cash bail.
- o Joined with [Moms Demand Action](#), the [Antmound Foundation](#), and BLM of Lake County in an [open letter](#) to urge the Lake County Board to add an IL assault weapons ban to its legislative agenda in Springfield.
- o Helped [Sharmila Manak](#) become the first woman of color to serve on the 19th Judicial Circuit, which covers all of Lake County by collecting signatures from HP residents.
- o Worked with press outlets, including the [Washington Post](#), [Chicago Sun-Times](#), and [Canadian CTV](#) on coverage of the Highland Park Fourth of July parade shooter's racist and anti-semitic social media posts.
- o After more than 2,000 people turned out to march in Highland Park in protest of George Floyd's death and structural racism in June 2020, and at Color of Equity's urging, the City of Highland Park reviewed, updated, and publicly posted almost 800 pages of their police

department's [General Orders](#). This was a great first step and we would like to see other Lake County towns follow suit.

- o Endorsed, volunteered for, and fundraised for candidates for the IL Secretary of State, IL Second Appellate Court, Lake County Sheriff, Lake County Clerk, Lake County Board, 2nd Sub-Circuit of the 19th Judicial Circuit, and the Highland Park City Council.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- o Color of Equity is a founding member of the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Gun Violence, a new umbrella group.
- o "Nice White Suburbs:" You've probably heard of the podcast "Nice White Parents." Similar misconceptions about suburban police departments abound. [Campaign Zero found](#) that since 2013 the number of people killed by the police has been declining in major cities, where activists have successfully lobbied for reforms. However, these numbers have increased in suburban and rural areas, where this pressure has been limited.

So many of the problems plaguing big city police departments are also true of Lake County cities. For example, did you know that local police union contracts take away the power to discipline or fire officers and award it to an anonymous arbitrator? These provisions hugely restrict our elected officials' ability to manage their own police forces. [Some studies](#) have found that local officials' decisions on police discipline are overruled more than half the time.

- o MacArthur Safety & Justice Challenge (SJC): Color of Equity is a member of the [Criminal Justice Community Committee](#), an initiative under Lake County's membership in the SJC. Under this initiative, Lake County has received \$1.45 million to reduce over-incarceration and advance racial equity in local criminal justice.

Both Sheriff Idleburg and States Attorney Rinehart have been using this funding to implement evidence-based criminal justice reforms that have made the country a leader on these issues in Illinois. For example:

- o Under States Attorney Rinehart's leadership, the percentage of people participating in diversion or deflection programs who are black has increased from 5% to 30-something percent.
- o Money from this grant has been used to stand up the [Living Room Wellness Center](#), where community members can be connected with services 24/7, rather than just during business hours, as it was previously. Police officers can bring individuals experiencing mental health, substance abuse, or housing crises, instead of charging them with a crime and taking them to the jail.
- o Under the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) program, social workers partner with Sheriff's Deputies to respond to people experiencing substance abuse/mental health challenges.

How Can You Get Involved?

- o Join us by following us on [Facebook](#) and twitter: [@colorofequity](#) and signing up for our emails, so that you can stay abreast of future collective action campaigns and events.