



PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Sylvester "Sy" Murray
Former City Manager and
First Black ICMA President

BLACK LEADERSHIP in LOCAL GOVERNMENT



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FEBRUARY 2021
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ICMA AWARDS 2021

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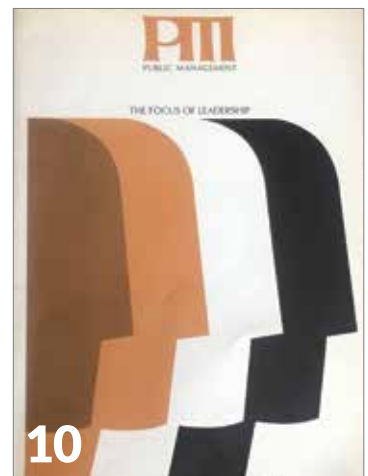
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ICMA

International City/County
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Negotiating Employment Agreements and Compensation

Achieving **success** with your reputation intact

BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM



MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM, is director of member services and ethics director, ICMA, Washington, D.C. (mperego@icma.org).

Since the local government manager

is the most highly compensated employee, the pay offered to attract, retain, or sever ties with them, when appropriate, is a highly visible, sensitive, and sometimes political issue. For that reason, managers want to ensure that their efforts to obtain the compensation they deserve are reasonable, transparent, and conducted in a fair manner.

Thanks to the hard work of a member task force, ICMA has an updated model employment agreement (icma.org/model-employee-agreement) for managers to use in negotiating their compensation and terms of employment with either a current employer or a new one. As noted in the preamble, ICMA believes that an employment agreement between the chief executive/administrative officer and a municipality is an effective tool in ensuring a stable relationship between the governing body and the manager.

In 1969, when the ICMA Executive Board approved the concept of employment agreements, they noted that “agreements of employment negotiated between managers and administrators and their employing municipalities are within the spirit of the Code of Ethics provided that such

agreements do not violate the principle that the managers or administrator serves at the pleasure of its mayor and/or council.” The first formal recommendations from ICMA were created in 1983, and focused on the importance of having a comprehensive agreement and the need for a minimum of six months of severance protection.

The board was prescient to view agreements through the lens of the Code of Ethics. Many aspects of the process are intertwined with ethical commitments. What financial analysis was done and how was it all disclosed? Was it reasonable? When all is said and done, whose interests are being served?

Fast forward to 2021, the new model employment agreement was substantially rewritten to streamline the agreement itself and to offer members the opportunity to customize provisions based on regional and organizational norms through a suite of options available in an appendix.

Negotiating an Agreement

Here are some important aspects of negotiating compensation and a few of the changes to the model agreement:

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ICMA

Creating and Supporting Thriving Communities

ICMA's vision is to be the leading association of local government professionals dedicated to creating and supporting thriving communities throughout the world. It does this by working with its more than 12,000 members to identify and speed the adoption of leading local government practices and improve the lives of residents. ICMA offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to thousands of city, town, and county chief administrative officers, their staffs, and other organizations throughout the world.

Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.



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Due Diligence: The manager bears responsibility to conduct appropriate due diligence when negotiating aspects of compensation. In any negotiation, one party may place a request on the table for consideration that may seem unusual to the other party. There is nothing inherently unethical about asking for a provision or benefit based on your needs. However, do your homework. Do not ask for compensation or a benefit that is far beyond the norm for the area, size of community, complexity of the work, and/or the organization's ability to pay. One organization was hugely disappointed that the finalist, to whom they offered the position following the usual exhaustive search

process, asked for a starting salary that was 75% higher than the budgeted salary. The city ended the negotiations and offered the position to the second finalist.

Keep it Evergreen: The recommended approach regarding the term of the agreement is to have it evergreen. The agreement stays in place until the employer terminates the employee under the appropriate provisions, or the employee voluntarily leaves. The opposite approach, a fixed-term agreement, which is the norm in some states, requires both parties to renegotiate under timeframes that are not always conducive to reaching a positive outcome. If you must use a fixed-term contract, make it long enough so

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that you have time as the new manager to demonstrate your worth to the organization. A new manager with a one-year agreement will find it challenging to begin negotiations nine months into the role.

Severance: Prior editions of the model employment agreement recommended one year of severance as the preferred option. The new version recommends a range between six and twelve months in recognition of the employer's unique circumstances. Average severance, based on a survey ICMA conducted in 2018, is six months. Consistent with the revised severance language, post-employment benefit continuation was changed from one year to six months. All that said, the severance you desire will be influenced by two factors: the law and the organization's track record. Some states, such as Florida, regulate how much severance can be paid. Some places are just more political and volatile than others. A history of high turnover may support negotiating a larger severance.

Ethical Commitments: The model agreement includes a provision that the manager will adhere to the ICMA Code of Ethics. New to the agreement is the commitment by the employer that refusal of the manager to comply with a directive that violates the Code of Ethics is not cause for termination.

Challenges with the Process, Roles, and Principles

The lack of established practices for negotiating public sector executive compensation, combined with the transparency threshold that must be met, makes an otherwise difficult task almost daunting. Roles and responsibilities may be clear on paper, but not in action.

The decision makers—that is, the governing body—are not always experienced with the process. The beneficiary—that is, the manager—sometimes is the one who is more knowledgeable, skilled, and, shall we say, savvy. That imbalance can create a conflict of interest. The result can be compensation packages or benefits negotiated in good faith that later appear to be inappropriate, unfair, and just too costly.

The principles of the profession have long been the driver for personnel and compensation matters. The standard for establishing executive compensation is that it be fair, reasonable, and transparent. But what's "fair" is subjective and debatable.

Based on the principles, ICMA established formal guidelines for negotiating executive compensation that set standards for benchmarking using comparable public sector salaries on regional and national bases. The guidelines more clearly define roles and responsibilities, and they address issues that relate to all employees as well.

To establish fair and reasonable compensation, the governing body should either operate as a committee of the whole or designate an evaluation and compensation



subcommittee. This group should design and implement the methodology for setting the compensation of the local government manager and any other appointees of the governing body.

Compensation benchmarks should be established based on compensation in comparable local government and public sector agencies. The governing body should engage experts, whether contracted or in-house, to provide the information required to establish fair and reasonable compensation levels.

All decisions on compensation and benefits, whether a first-time agreement or modification, must be made by the entire governing body in a public meeting.

Takeaways

- The governing body has a governance role to play. They should create a compensation committee of the governing body or committee of the whole to design and implement the framework for setting the manager's compensation.
- Compensation must be benchmarked to comparable local government or public sector agencies.
- Expert advice is important. While the manager may be that expert, it's a conflict of interest to serve in that role when you are the beneficiary of the outcome. Engage experts, whether contracted or in-house, as necessary to provide information.
- Decisions on compensation and benefits must be made by the entire governing body in a public meeting. In the interests of transparency, the salary plan and salary ranges for local government positions, including for the manager, should be publicly accessible on the agency's website.

In closing, do not put your personal compensation interests before the good of the overall organization and that of the citizens. Local government managers have an ethical responsibility to be clear about what is being requested and to avoid excessive compensation. Greed is not good. **PM**

Living *History*

Honoring Black local government leadership over the years at a turning point in American history | BY MARC OTT

The last time the ICMA Executive Board gathered in Washington, D.C., they toured the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, a 30-minute walk from the ICMA headquarters. The founding director described the museum as telling America's story through the lens of African American history and as a museum for all Americans. Though the museum has mostly remained closed to the public during the pandemic, more than 7,000 visitors a day have come to the museum from across the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and Asia to celebrate the achievements of African Americans, but also to recognize the brutal struggle that continues today. Like me, the board members described the visit as a profound experience.

We recently began looking at ICMA's story through the lens of our own African American history for a project brought to us by a group of Black leaders who were among the first to serve our cities and counties as chief administrators. The December issue of PM featured an article that chronicles the beginnings of the association's transition in the late 1960s and '70s to a more activist role to "correct injustices and eliminate inequalities," as the president at the time said. In this issue, we share a retrospective of articles about Black local government leadership over the years, including one from Sylvester Murray, "On Being a Black City Manager," written in 1972. It's stunning to think that the first Black city manager was appointed only five decades ago.

The first African American ICMA president wasn't elected until 1983 and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA) was founded that same year. That was right around the time I began my career in local government. When I first became a member of ICMA as a young administrative assistant, there were very few Black members and even fewer Black managers. I would attend state and national meetings and find the folks of color often clustered together in a small group and socializing separately.

The significance of being the "first" truly hit me when I became the city manager of Austin, one of the largest cities in the country and the capital of one of the largest states in the nation. I felt it again when I was appointed ICMA's first Black executive director in 2016, more than 100 years after the organization was founded. I felt almost overwhelmed by love for the profession and public service, but also by the great responsibility I have to all our members and especially to the young career professionals of color.

These relatively recent milestones bring into sharp focus how alive history is and how we are creating it at this very moment. I believe we all have been particularly conscious of that this past year. As we look at the toll the pandemic has taken, we have the chance to change the course of history. Black Americans are dying at nearly three times the rate of whites, and Black-owned businesses have closed at more than twice the rate of nonminority firms since the start of the pandemic. Armed with this data we can finally reverse the health and economic disparities that have existed since the founding of our country as we restore our communities.

Last June, when America reached an historic tipping point in confronting racism, millions of protesters of all ages and races marched for change. The ICMA Executive Board chose to be on the right side of history and condemned systemic racism. They issued a statement and outlined the moral and ethical obligation we have to stand up and make our voices heard, as well as use our voices to amplify others. In addition, the association has formed a Racial Equity and Social Justice Team to support members with resources and tools.

As I began writing this column, I watched in horror as a mob waving confederate flags and Trump banners stormed the Capitol. That dark day will live forever in infamy as many have noted. In watching these events unfold, I choose to believe that this atrocity will mark a new beginning for America; when people with the strength of character to lead ethically and courageously will work to finally put an end to the injustice and racism that has held this great country back for so many years. My sincere hope is that this turning point will be remembered as the day a new society built on equity emerged—a landmark day in Black history and in American history. **PM**

These relatively recent milestones bring into sharp focus how alive history is and how we are creating it at this very moment.



MARC OTT is executive director of ICMA, Washington, D.C.

Inequities in the Face of Emergencies

Reflections on the past year and **thoughts on the year ahead** | BY MANISHA PAUDEL

On the topic of threats and emergencies, we asked Manisha Paudel, equity coordinator of Des Moines, Iowa, for insight into the challenges of 2020, how to adapt in 2021, and how to find opportunity among uncertainty.

What were the biggest challenges for your community in 2020?

The cumulative impact of disparities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a severe storm named *Derecho*, protests against injustice, and existing barriers and challenges made it absolutely difficult for residents of Des Moines. The pandemic has revealed and simultaneously exacerbated inequities in our community. We noticed the overrepresentation of Black and Latino Iowans in the COVID-19 cases, which was a direct reflection of existing disparities across racial and economic lines. The overrepresentation in the essential workforce—paired with low wage, unfavorable workplace policies, and inadequate workplace safety measures—put Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as immigrants and refugees, at higher risks of contracting the virus. This also led to loss of jobs or payable hours, which compounded the negative impact on these residents. While facing the surging pandemic, our residents also dealt with a historic storm, as well as social distress due to national and local injustices.

How should local government leaders and their communities adapt in 2021?

This year has proven that disasters and difficult times don't spare anyone. They may not have the same impact on everyone, but they still have an impact. As a community and even around the world, we are far more connected than most of us realize. A few small businesses being forced to close due to financial crisis does have an impact on the larger community. Digital and technology inequity has further expanded the divide, and as the world becomes more technologically globalized, it becomes the responsibility of local government leaders and their communities to adapt. Whether it was navigating remote learning for children, working from home, or even conducting basic household business via online tools or phone applications, it was a brand-new challenge for many households. Technology is not only a means of communication and service delivery, but a primary tool



to amplify and strengthen quality of life for every individual.

Most importantly, all communities must create a recovery as well as impact-mitigation plan, and use linguistically and culturally effective means to communicate the plan with the community, especially the minoritized, marginalized, and vulnerable community groups. Resilience and equity must be the cornerstone of all actions, whether it's in the planning phase or the implementation phase of services and resources.

Are there any opportunities that you see rising out of the challenges your community faced in 2020?

All aspects of institutional and structural inequities have come to the surface, heightening the level of awareness not only among our residents, but also key community leaders. The increasing communitywide efforts and initiatives to advance and promote equity in Des Moines has helped normalize our own organizational efforts to create and sustain an equitable community.

Looking ahead, what do you think local government leaders should keep in mind in their emergency preparation?

Even the best intended solutions or actions to respond to crisis will need to be done using an equity lens. This is not only to ensure inequities are not further perpetuated or even worsened, but it could very well be an opportunity to eliminate existing barriers, inequities, and injustice that exist in our communities. The reality is that any single crisis or event will affect people differently given their unique circumstances, but as local government leaders, we are often quick to identify a single solution or approach. Moving forward, we must be mindful of who continues to be burdened by the action we take, even if the burden was not our intention. **PM**

Speak up, ICMA!

Email us your thoughts on the issues of equity, inclusion, race, and social justice to speakup@icma.org.



MANISHA PAUDEL

is equity coordinator of Des Moines, Iowa. A native of Nepal, she has over eight years of U.S. local government experience, and previously worked in North Africa and Southeast Asia. She is co-chair for the steering committee of Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) and a member of ICMA Equity Cohort.

Forging **Change** in Their Communities

Announcing the 2021–2022 Class of the Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion



**LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE ON
RACE, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
2021-2022**

“The fierce urgency of now,” as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “is long overdue. We are the ones who can forge real change in our own communities. As our cities, towns, and counties rebuild from the pandemic, we can create a new foundation that replaces white supremacy and racism with an aggressive respect for human rights.”

As a thought leader, ICMA is committed to creating and supporting thriving communities. As part of this commitment, ICMA has created—in partnership with the Kettering Foundation and the National Civic League—the Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion.

The institute supports the ICMA Executive Board’s statement regarding systemic racism, and more specifically the commitment to: “Engage our members and partners in a process of listening to understand what our profession needs in order to deliver on the work of our mission and vision through the lens of equity and inclusion.”

The institute will offer local government participants interactive learning, superlative instructors, networking with colleagues, and engaging discussions of the key leadership issues surrounding racial equity. Participants will embark on a 12- to 18-month journey to transform themselves, their community, and the local government profession into something greater than it was when they started.

Join us in welcoming the participants selected for the inaugural class of 2021–2022.

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PAMELA WIDEMAN

Director, Housing and Neighborhood Services
Charlotte, North Carolina



Overcoming Outreach Challenges During a Pandemic

BY EMILY LEWIS

Adapting and finding new ways to **communicate** are essential for success

The one-percent local option sales tax

is an important revenue stream in Charlotte County and has been consistently approved by our voters since 1994. Over the years, this has generated more than \$430 million and funded more than 120 projects.

Our program was due to expire on December 30, 2020, and would only continue for the next six years with approval of our voters in a referendum on the ballot in November.

Adapting to changing environments, finding new ways to reach constituents, and communicating a consistent, easy-to-grasp message are essential to the success of any outreach strategy.

I was tasked, for the first time, with leading this process from the initial development of the projects that would be funded to outreach and education about the projects and the process to hopefully gain approval from our citizens at the election.

The first part of this was a relatively smooth process and our list of projects was completed early this year. Moving into the outreach and education process, we had a great game plan. A speaker's bureau, visiting lots of associations and organizations, public meetings, and a strong emphasis on in-person communication. This had worked in the past and there was no reason to think that 2020 would be any different. Boy, was I wrong!

COVID hit in March, just as we were getting our list of projects finalized and preparing our ballot language. I'll be very honest, my heart sank. How was I supposed to gain approval for a one-percent sales tax in a time when so many of our residents and businesses were looking at closure or financial hardship for an indefinite amount of time? How could I communicate the good that this program does for our community without being able to get in front of people and talk to them? How was I going to be successful in getting this initiative through



EMILY LEWIS

is deputy county administrator, Board of County Commissioners, Charlotte County, Florida.



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with all the obstacles, and what were the ramifications if it didn't pass?

Despite the fear of the local option sales tax not passing for the first time since 1994, I had no option but to put all I had into switching to a new plan and doing everything I could to educate our residents about the program.

Our team quickly developed a new communications plan together, pulling in other partners and stakeholders from across the county. We needed to turn this into a grassroots, word-of-mouth effort and rely on alternative communications strategies to get our message across.

To overcome the potential loss of in-person speaking engagements (we ended up conducting only three such meetings), we decided to augment past outreach strategies and expand our use of social media. A series of videos describing each proposed sales tax project was produced and distributed through the county's television channel and social media. The county also used Facebook Live to explain the sales tax process and projects. We answered questions from viewers during the livestream and in the livestream's comments section. A total of seven videos received thousands of views and hundreds of comments, and were shared by many viewers with friends and family.

The county also added the social media platform NextDoor to its menu of outreach portals. NextDoor boasts nearly 50,000 members in the county and has a reach of more than 100,000 people in homes with accounts.

In addition to social media videos, county staff increased outreach via local traditional media, including articles submitted to the local newspaper. Those articles supplemented stories planted with local television stations and advertising purchased on local radio and newspapers that have long been part of the sales tax outreach strategy.

Other new methods of informing the public about the sales tax' impact included affixing decals to doors of facilities funded by the sales tax and putting informational posters inside those facilities. Our libraries had quickly adapted to COVID restrictions, implementing a very

successful curbside pick-up option that was widely used by our residents. We decided to capitalize on that audience by printing bookmarks that highlighted how the one-percent local option sales tax has improved our library system throughout the years.

Given the trend toward mail-in voting in Charlotte County in recent elections, county staff decided to mail postcards with sales tax information to 15,000 voters who requested mail-in ballots as of the day that ballots were mailed. (More than 45,000 voters ultimately cast mail-in ballots in the election.) This had only been done once before, prior to the 2008 election. The postcard mailing accounted for nearly half the county's \$36,000 outreach budget.

On the evening of the election, the refresh button on my computer was overused as I waited, with bated breath, to get the results. I knew that because of the dramatic increase in mail-in voting, I would know almost immediately if our

efforts had been successful. At a little after 7:00 p.m., the results came in and it was time for celebration.

The 2020 one-percent local option sales tax referendum passed by a 68-32 margin, by far the largest ever. As my administrator, Hector Flores, wrote in a thank-you note to voters, "The margin of the referendum's passage was nearly 25 percent higher than in 2014, which sends a strong message that voters trust their local government to deliver on its promise to invest the funds in a timely, efficient, and effective way."

Communication is key in any organization, especially during crises. Adapting to changing environments, finding new ways to reach constituents, and communicating a consistent, easy-to-grasp message are essential to the success of any outreach strategy—however the message is delivered. In this case, our strategy was a great success and has laid the path for our outreach programs for years to come. **PM**



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Black Leadership in Local Government: A PM Retrospective

Impactful articles by and for Black local government professionals that have appeared in *PM* magazine over the years



Jack Bond
"A concern of mine is that there will be a high perceived 'failure' rate among black public administrators in the next two years."



John Touchstone
"Environmental awareness plays a role for any manager. You have to look at who, where, and how much political support you need."



Regina Glenn
"Those moving into local government management should have a strong sense of their financial limitations. They should try to live as frugally as possible, ideally 10 percent below their earnings."

In our October 2020 issue, focused on equity and inclusion, ICMA Executive Director Marc Ott wrote, "I think about the distance we've come...and about the expanse we have yet to travel on this journey that must end systemic racism and create inclusive communities."

As you read the following articles—from 1972, 1975, and 1982—you may be struck by how some points made by the authors seem suspended in their moment of time, relics of a different era, but sadly, you will also see many similarities to the struggle our society is still experiencing today.

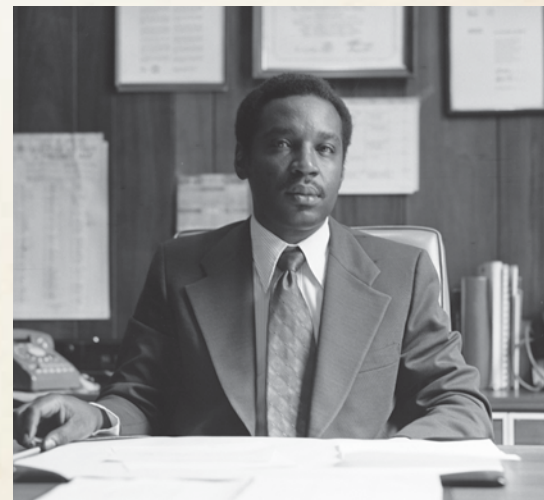
ICMA's and the profession's diversity journey continues to evolve. But it's important to reflect on the past to then envision the way forward toward greater racial equity in local government leadership.



Paul White
"As local government managers, we are not only perceived as cutting funds for health, safety, and welfare, we are also criticized because we are black managers making these kinds of cuts."



Sherry Suttles (right) and her mother after Sherry was named city manager in Oberlin, Ohio



Sy Murray at his desk as the city manager of Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1973

APRIL 1972

On Being a Black City Manager

By Sylvester "Sy" Murray, City Manager, Inkster, Michigan

I chose municipal government because that is the level of government that most directly affects the daily living of most Americans. What happens in the statehouse is important. And, what policies and actions take place at the federal level also are important in providing a general framework that ensures a quality life for Americans.

But, many city dwellers have very little contact with the higher levels of governments. Income tax is paid by mail; a governor is elected every three or four years; a court and corrections system is provided—but it is something with which citizens prefer not to have contact.

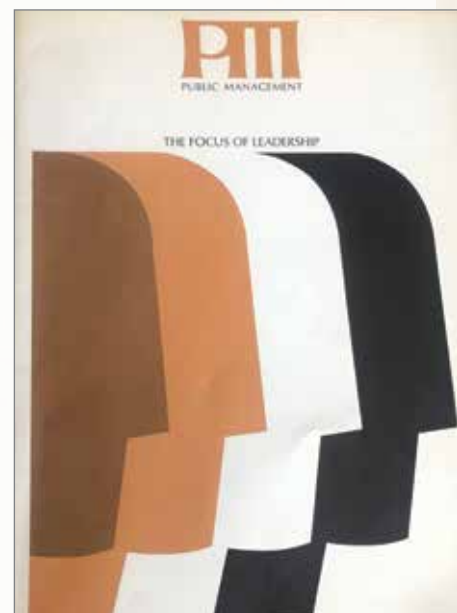
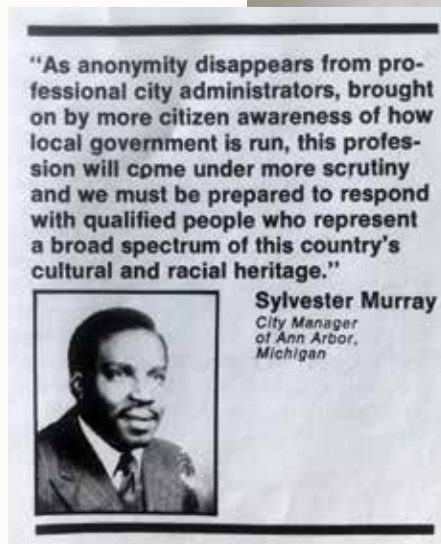
City Hall is the place. The services to be rendered are direct and individual—an ambulance for an ill grandmother, an inspection of a rundown furnace in an apartment building, removal of a tree whose roots are entering the sewer and stopping up the house toilet, police response to a call from a child whose parents are nearly killing each other, an accidental fire in the cellar, a sidewalk for the kids in the new subdivision to walk to school on, rats in the alley, a street light at the curve of the cul-de-sac for the babysitter to go safely to her car.

Property taxes, water bills, license fees are paid right around the corner, and quite often in cash. There is interface reaction every two weeks at the council meeting, and daily at the police department. To many professionals, these are small matters, but they are matters that have significant meaning to individual citizens. City Hall is the place.

Regrettably, in too many instances, Blacks in our city have not enjoyed the quantity or quality of services that municipal government offers. Very often we have been designated as the causes of city problems and this requires cities to "provide more services" because of us. Invariably, this relates to crisis action in police, fire, and health services. It does not relate to quality, equitable, consistent, initiatory, and preventive services.

I selected a career goal as a city manager rather than political office to become involved in municipal government on an authoritative level. Not too surprisingly, I did not know of the existence of city managers until my junior year in high school. And, I did not recognize the extent of their authority until my junior year in undergraduate college. My ignorance should be incredible considering I was born and raised in Miami, Dade County, Florida, a city, county, and state known for commission-manager governments. It's a condemnation of the profession that considerable ignorance still abounds.

Dr. Stephen Sweeney of the University of Pennsylvania was a trustee board member at my undergraduate college. He introduced



me to city management and asked me to consider Fels Institute for graduate study. I

declined law school acceptance for Fels because I was convinced a city manager could do more, consistently and directly, to influence the well-being of Black city dwellers. I still believe this.

The decision to enter city management was made in 1963, before the March on Washington and before the Civil Rights Bill. At the time, I thought it was wishful thinking. I was able to attain the goal because of the courage of a few men: Stephen Sweeney and Thomas Davy, also of the University of Pennsylvania; Norman Hickey and Charles Jackson of Daytona Beach, Florida; Fred Clagett and Murray Fuller of Richland, Washington; James Johnson of Kansas City, Missouri; and Edward Bivins of Inkster, Michigan.

These men provided the information and/or made the personal contact that enabled others to see me and thus review my

qualifications. I want to hope that actual appointments came as a direct result of the qualifications. One never knows.

Because of the direct and aggressive political actions of Blacks, it is no longer wishful thinking to believe that minorities will assume upper level administrative positions and municipal government. It is a fact that our urban centers are becoming increasingly Black. As a result, Blacks will attain political office and thus be able to influence the employment of minorities in administrative and supervisory positions.

The invalid excuses of civil service, unions, and "not lowering the standards" will be exposed. The quality of service does not have to be diminished. Civil service and unions will be positive agencies to provide equitable means of employment to all, rather than negative mechanisms to prevent entrance into the better paying jobs. As suburban towns develop, minorities will be among the population, and their involvement will follow the trend set in the central cities.

It was difficult for me, in 1963, to foresee the day that I would become a city manager. That I have attained that goal in a city that has a substantial Black population, but with a majority white population, is not too surprising now. Our country has recognized that the talents needed in our cities are to be obtained from whatever sources are available. This recognition enables minority group persons to be a part of the municipal management scene.

How should other minority group members approach the field, and what are the particular problems or aids? I think it is still very difficult for many of our citizens to give freely to a minority group member the authority and power that can come with a strong city manager. Because the city manager, if he is aggressive enough, can initiate certain programs which of necessity may be unequal but equitable, there is always the fear that someone will lose out.

Therefore, I believe that Blacks will have a better chance to enter local government by running for elective office. Elective office carries an aura of something that is temporary. It means that we will put that person in for two or four years to let him prove himself. On the other hand, to appoint a city manager, one must assume beforehand that he does possess those capabilities that the elective official is going to be given a chance to prove that he has.

The principal problem that minority group members would have in trying to attain a city manager goal is that one city has only one manager—which means that all of the chips are laid on the table at one time. I do not believe as a result that a minority group member has an equal chance with whites who may be applying for the same post period to begin with, many



Sy Murray
"One of the biggest myths going around is that you do not recognize a person's color. Everyone who is black is recognized as black by everyone else."

managers are selected as a result of personal comments or recommendations that usually come with visibility.

The first requirement, therefore, is for the minority group aspirant to become visible. That can be achieved by attendance at the "right schools," attendance at the "right conferences," and personal contact with the "right people"—these being people highly respected in urban affairs.

I think it is incumbent upon ICMA, as one of the prominent organizations existing solely for professionals in municipal government, to place emphasis on active programs which effectively will encourage minority group members to train for and become professional managers and municipal government. ICMA does not have the privilege of deciding who comes into its ranks as a city manager.

Individual city councils select their city managers, usually without knowledge of, or regard for, ICMA.

As long as this right remains with city councils, they will select those persons whom they want. This persons may not possess the traditional qualifications that ICMA assumes its members have but after these persons are appointed they are, indeed, city managers. I am glad this is the case, because I feel certain that the field would not be open to many capable people if prerequisites were set by a professional association imbued with a desire to perpetuate its own select group. Some of our most die-hard racists are city managers.

There are some things, however, that ICMA can do to influence the entrance of minority group members into its ranks. My assumption is that this is really what ICMA wants. One program can be a visitation program strictly to Black, undergraduate colleges. ICMA teams can visit these colleges and introduce prospective students to city management. ICMA then can provide financial assistance through scholarships or loans for these students to enter graduate public administration schools. To reach those people who are now out of school and already are involved in some level of municipal government, ICMA can sponsor institutes specifically geared to minority group members to acquaint them with the profession.

Perhaps, the most important thing that can be done is for individual city managers to assume individual roles and provide opportunities to minority group members, to work with them as interns and assistants. ICMA as an organization need only play a strong motivating role in getting city managers to do so. However, ICMA may go further and provide financial assistance to those cities in the form of 50 percent of pay to those minority assistants working for city managers, and providing awards to managers who excel in this area. **PM**

NOVEMBER 1975

The Minority Executive—Which Way, ICMA?

By Elijah B. Rogers, Assistant City Manager, Berkeley, California

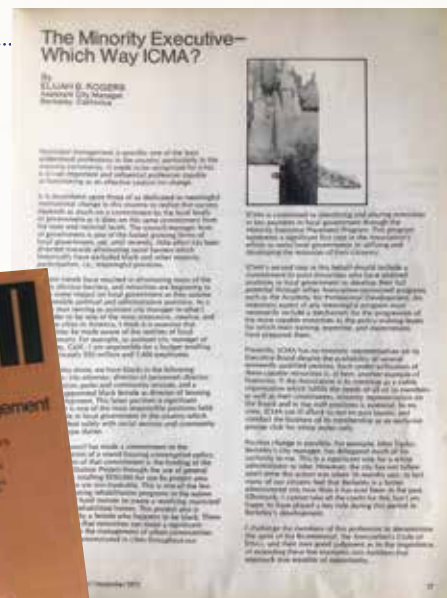
Municipal management is possibly one of the least understood professions in the country, particularly in the minority community. It needs to be recognized for what it is—an important and influential profession capable of functioning as an effective catalyst for change.

It is incumbent upon those of us dedicated to meaningful institutional change in this country to realize that success depends as much on a commitment by the local levels of government as it does on the same commitment from the state and national levels. The council-manager form of government is one of the fastest growing forms of local government. Yet, until recently, little effort has been directed towards eliminating racial barriers which historically have excluded Black and other minority participation, i.e., meaningful positions.

Recent trends have resulted in eliminating many of the more obvious barriers, and minorities are beginning to have some impact on local government as they assume responsible political and administrative positions. As a Black man serving as assistant city manager and what I consider to be one of the most innovative, creative, and diverse cities in America, I think it is essential that minorities be made aware of the realities of local government. For example, as assistant city manager of Berkeley, California, I am responsible for a budget totaling approximately \$50 million and 1,400 employees.

In Berkeley alone, we have Blacks in the following positions: city attorney; director of personnel; director of recreation, parks, and community services; and a recently appointed Black female as director of housing and development. This latter position is significant because it is one of the most responsible positions held by a female in local government in the country which does not deal solely with social services and community relations-type duties.

The city council has made a commitment to the implementation of a sound housing conservation policy. An indication of that commitment is the funding of the Pilot Rehabilitation Project through the use of general fund monies totaling \$550,000 for use by project area residents who are non-bankable. This is one of the few voluntary housing rehabilitation programs in the nation using general fund monies to create a revolving municipal loan fund to rehabilitate homes. This project also is administered by a female who happens to be Black. There is no question that minorities can make a significant contribution to the management of urban communities. This is being demonstrated in cities throughout our country.



ICMA is committed to identifying and placing minorities in key positions in local government through the Minority Executive Placement Program. This program represents a significant first step in the association's efforts to assist local governments in utilizing and developing the resources of their citizenry.

ICMA's second step in this behalf should include commitment to assist minorities who have attained positions in local government to develop their full potential through other association-sponsored programs such as the Academy for Professional Development. An important aspect of any meaningful program must necessarily include a mechanism for the progression of the more capable minorities to the policy-making levels for which their training, expertise, and expectations have prepared them.

Presently, ICMA has no minority representatives on its executive board despite the availability of several eminently qualified persons. Such under-utilization of these capable minorities is, at best, another example of hypocrisy. If the association is to continue as a viable organization which fulfills the needs of all of its members as well as their constituents, minority representation on the board and

in top staff positions is essential. And my view, ICMA can ill afford to rest on past laurels, and conduct the business of its membership as an exclusive private club for white males only.

Positive change is possible. For example, John Taylor, Berkeley's city manager, has delegated much of his authority to me. This is a significant step for a white administrator to take. However, the city has not fallen apart since this action was taken 16 months ago; in fact, many of our citizens feel that Berkeley is a better administered

city now than it has ever been in the past. Obviously, I cannot take all the credit for this, but I am happy to have played a key role during this period in Berkeley's development.

I challenge the members of this profession to demonstrate the spirit of the Bicentennial, the association's Code of Ethics, and their own good judgment as to the importance of extending these few examples into numbers that approach true equality of opportunity. **PM**

JUNE 1982

A Message to Young Black Administrators

By John P. Bond, City Manager, Petersburg, Virginia

Life in this country, until recent demonstrations by the current presidential administration, has ever so slowly moved upward in terms of man's position relative to Abraham Maslow's needs hierarchy. The lack of sensitive professional management, the presence of racism, and economic recession have long preoccupied our nation's development. It is significant that we current and future Black urban administrators not forget from whence we came—over 350 years ago, dragged to this country in chains to be sold into slavery. It was unlawful to teach us to read. We were separated from our families in a system that brutalized and dehumanized both the master and the slave.

We now find that some of us have walked at the hallowed halls of institutions of higher education and have been exposed to more learning experiences than we even recognize. If, for a moment, we think that by virtue of these educational exposures alone we are prepared for the fast-paced, economically oriented, insensitive environment, racially charged as it is ... we're going to suffer a long time before we succeed. If, on the other hand, we realized that our exposures have, at best, been peripheral, we just might be a few years ahead of our contemporaries.

The elderly have been their way and are concerned now with being left in relative comfort. The middle aged are caught up in a seemingly selfish struggle that has caused many an honest and principled person to abandon both those virtues. You, the younger generation, should be seeking yourselves. Your next professional goal should focus on who you are, where you have been, and what you think you are prepared to accomplish. It is hoped that most of you have taken your learning experiences as seriously as they were intended, and as a result you know what you know. Equally important, you know what you don't know. I trust that you are familiar with the difference between principle and principal and between capital and capitol. Let me emphasize that the learning process is never ending... that is, of course, if you let it be.



Prepare yourself—

- Academically.
- Emotionally.
- Spiritually.
- Psychologically.
- Technically.
- Politically.

Surround yourself with theory as well as practical experience. Strive for unparalleled

excellence, for we continue to have to demonstrate that we are better just to be equal. Drink from the fountain of knowledge until your intellect is satiated.

The management role is one of the most responsible of human tasks, for without leadership there are no organizations and without organizations society is in chaos. A measure of the effectiveness of every public administrator is that administrator's understanding of human motivation. Organizations are made up of people and,

therefore, people problems. You simply have to be psychologist, sociologist, technician, an economist while maintaining a credible objectivity.

There is no “special” training of which young Black administrators should avail themselves. Quite the contrary, you already have an edge and if you marshal your resources, can corner the market. You already know what it is like to be oppressed...you have lived through the extremely tough times of having to do without. So much of your practical background has been personal; you have merely reinforced it with theory and empiricism. Now, do not for a moment assume that the road is not rocky nor the hill extremely steep.

What many white people do not understand or accept is the fact that skin color has such a pervasive impact on every Black that its subordinates every other consideration. Skin color makes us Black folk the most conspicuous minority in this country. Blacks and whites not only look different, but come from different environments which condition us differently and make communication and understanding difficult to achieve.

Many whites, who find it easy to philosophically accept the fact that Black professionals are beginning to rub shoulders with them competitively, experience a measure of difficulty and even antagonism when they realize the differences are more deep-rooted than just skin color. They need to understand this point, for it indicates the need for total organizational and even increased guidance to help Blacks adjust to what are often alien sets of norms and behavioral requirements. One of the phenomena that develops in the informal structure of every organization is a set of behavioral and personal norms that facilitates communication and aids cohesiveness. Moreover, because this “informal organization” is built on white norms, it tends to reinforce the black-white differences just mentioned, and thus rejects or virtually destroys all but the most persistent Blacks.

I do not say that you as a Black administrator are to be pampered and sheltered rather than challenged. All managers must accept the risk of failure in order to receive the rewards of achievement. I do not say that once the Black community has achieved its rightful place in the American economy and judicial system, its members will no longer need “special consideration” because the problems

of the Black community will no longer be a “special problem.”

Your open eyes, your open ears, your open minds, and your closed mouths are going to afford you the opportunity to learn from your ongoing everyday operational environmental base.

You are going to get involved in every aspect of the municipal operation to the extent that through your aggressive pursuit of a broad and experiential base, you will command a premium. You will not search for the easy solution to difficult problems, nor will you reinvent the wheel resolving challenges. You will perfect your written, verbal, and interpersonal skills to that level of comfort that is wholly representative of nothing less than your very best effort. You will prove that perseverance is not merely a noun, but a way of life. You will not make the mistake that so many before you have with respect to trying to manage from behind a desk in an office that represents a series of filters between you and your community and its problems. No, no...you will avail yourself of a clipboard, refined mobile electronic communications, and transportation so that you can and will stay in touch with the pulse of your entire community. Your adherence to the highest code of ethics will present you as head and shoulders above those who would sacrifice principle, honor, and candor for personal aggrandizement.

I say to you now that the citizens in the majority of your communities want efficient, effective, affordable government and they really don't much care who delivers it. Further, they have seen governmental units, which were managed by whites, involved in questionable legal activities and may even be saying, for whatever reason, “Give me a change, even a change in color; it certainly can't be any worse than what we have been exposed to and, who knows, it may even be honest.”

If I can lend any more direction, I would say that it is every Black administrator's obligation to self and to society to take a brother or sister with you through your own learning and developmental process. You cannot afford to think that whereas you are an administrator who happens to be Black, you are also a Black administrator. **PM**



Members of the Minority Executive Placement Program advisory committee in 1979



ICMA members featured in the April 1972 issue of *PM*



(Left to right):
Michael Rogers,
Elijah Rogers, and
Richard Monteilh



Photos courtesy of Doug Linkhart

Enhancing **EQUITY** to **IMPROVE** **COMMUNITY** **RESILIENCE**

True equity requires inclusive civic engagement to identify community values and pragmatic local action.

BY DOUG LINKHART AND TYLER NORRIS

The year 2020 was a year that built the case for resilience. With any luck, and more importantly, insight, one lesson from the layered crises of 2020 will be that communities need to enhance their resilience to epidemics, other natural disasters, and their associated economic and social fallout.

Resilience is greater in communities that are thriving, and not just for the few, but for the many. This means improving equity, a quality that is perniciously elusive and is not created without clear intent and action. Too many cities have focused on improving economic, health, and social outcomes, only to see some populations fall further behind. Yet this reality is not happenstance, as in the words of W. Edwards Deming: “Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.”

By deliberately improving equity and rebalancing our public investments alongside other sectors, communities can create the conditions for broad-based community well-being that helps all people thrive now, while providing resilience against future challenges, be they natural, man-made, or combinations of both.

2020 Unmasked Pervasive Inequity and System Failure

COVID-19 has made clear our nation's disparities in health, economics, and social well-being. The populations that have suffered most are those

that started with poorer health, economic status, and social status. As of mid-December, Black Americans had a COVID-19 death rate nearly twice that of white Americans and the death rate for Latinx Americans was nearly 40% higher, according to the COVID Tracking Project at *The Atlantic*.¹ The number of infections per capita was roughly 50% higher for both of these communities, compared to whites.

Several factors account for these differences, including disparities in education, health, economic opportunity, and social status. Black and Latinx populations, with less access to the vital conditions for intergenerational well-being,² tend to have more health problems³ that make them particularly vulnerable

to diseases like COVID-19. A Harvard University study also showed that other factors include less access to good health care and the fact that people of color are overly represented in front-line and essential jobs that make them even more vulnerable and susceptible to infection.⁴

Improving Equity and Resilience for All

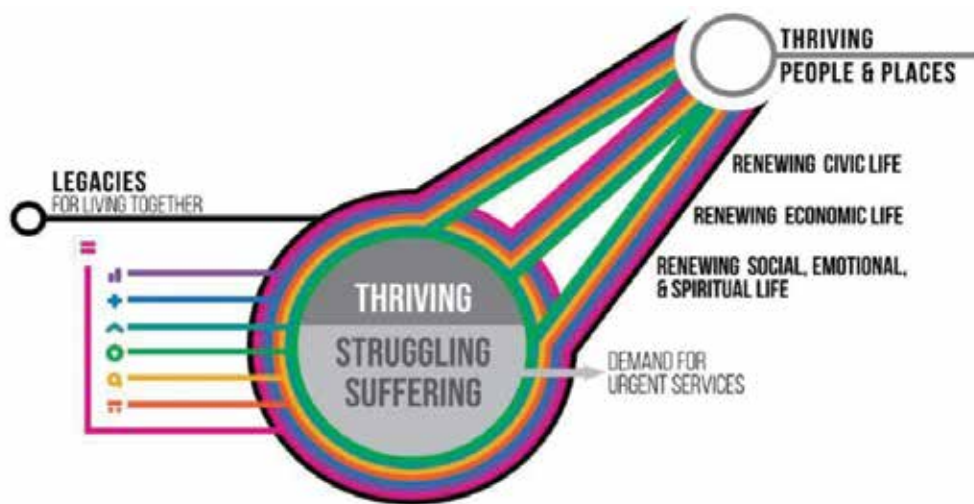
Creating equity means improving conditions for more vulnerable populations to the standards enjoyed by others, so that we can all enjoy healthy, prosperous, fulfilling lives. To do so, “across-the-board” strategies need to be mixed with targeted measures to address disparities, enhance living conditions, and improve opportunities.

Creating equity means improving conditions for more vulnerable populations to the standards enjoyed by others, so that we can all enjoy healthy, prosperous, fulfilling lives.

Community-wide well-being and resilience will only be created when equity is evident in all areas of life, including health, economics, and social factors. Not only does this work toward equity result in direct improvements for

communities suffering from disparities, but, as COVID-19 has highlighted, it also creates indirect improvements for other populations as well—and thus for the whole community. A study by Citi, for example, shows that the nation’s GDP would grow by \$5 trillion by eliminating racial disparities.⁵

Beyond the broad categories of health, economic, and social equity are the many conditions that comprise well-being. As illustrated in a recent guide for local action, *Thriving Together, A Springboard for Equitable Recovery and Resilience in Communities Across America*, these elements include qualities like humane housing, lifelong learning, and meaningful work and wealth, most of which are not currently available equitably.⁶ Many of the social



Belonging and Civic Muscle wraps around the others because it is both a vital condition and a practical capacity that is necessary for success in every other kind of work.

Source: <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/Publications/thriving-together-a-springboard-for-equitable-recovery-and-resilience-in-communities-across-America.aspx>



social determinants of health, and set four priority areas: economic vitality, education, health and health care, and neighborhood and physical environment. From that list they developed a set of metrics to track progress on 14 indicators of well-being, including items like high school graduation rates, food access, and housing cost burden.

WSU has targets and strategies for each of its 14 indicators. For example, the group has set a goal of increasing median household income in the area to \$57,652

determinants of health⁷ are also determinants of well-being generally, and are often the subject of pragmatic local efforts to improve equity.

Equity is best defined by those experiencing inequity. Too many good intentions are aimed at improving equity using definitions and strategies driven by outsiders or those with relative privilege. Not everyone wants the same number of police officers or basketball courts in their community. True equity requires inclusive civic engagement to identify community values and pragmatic local action.

Where Are Equity and Resilience Efforts Working?

West Side Chicago

In 2017, several health providers and the Cook County Health Department convened a gathering to discuss disparities in chronic diseases like diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and infant mortality rates in 10 West Side Chicago neighborhoods.



Health assessments had shown that these and other health issues were limiting the life expectancy of residents to 69 years, which was 16 years shorter than life expectancy in wealthier neighborhoods a short distance away.

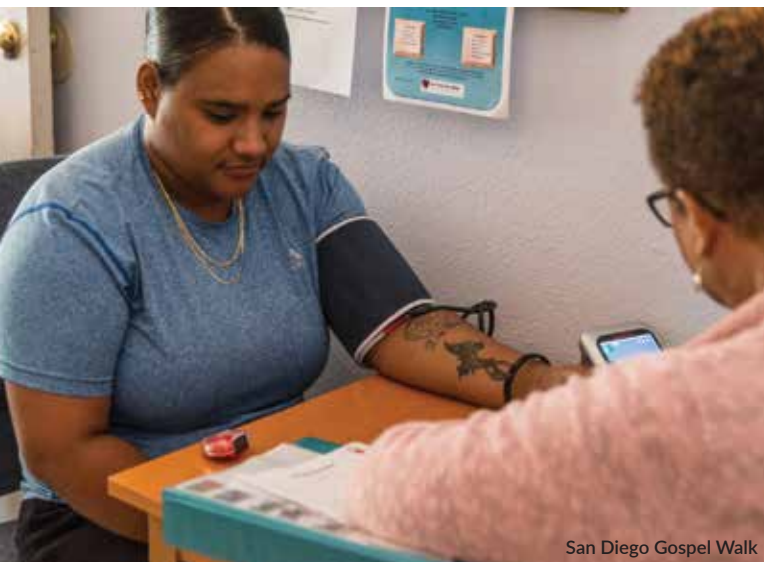
From this first convening, which included 120 individuals and representatives from 50 organizations, was formed

West Side United (WSU), a collaboration of six hospital systems, dozens of community partners, and many individuals, with a commitment that half of the members of its Executive Leadership Council be residents.⁸

In its early meetings, WSU discussed root causes of inequities, including structural racism, violence, and other

in 2030; in many West Side neighborhoods, it is only \$30,000–40,000 today. The overall goal for accomplishing this is “enriching the vibrancy of West Side communities by investing in people and local businesses.”⁹

Though it’s been only a couple of years, WSU is already showing progress. Its tracking site shows the community has



generated 1,700 new hospital hires, \$6.5 million in local impact investing, and \$125,000 in grants to support co-location of mental health services in the community.

Dubuque, Iowa

After a long period of industrial decline, the people of Dubuque have built a thriving economy and a safe and welcoming city for all residents. The city used a community visioning process to earn designation as an All-America City in 2007, and has addressed changing racial demographics by creating several programs to educate the public about the value of diversity and equity.

In 2012, Dubuque's business community, the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, local nonprofits, and local government worked together to create Inclusive Dubuque.¹⁰ The initiative gathers demographic data, conducts surveys, and convenes community dialogues, focusing on equity in housing, economic well-being, education, health, safe neighborhoods, transportation, and arts and culture.

Following the update of a Community Health Needs Assessment in 2018,

Equity is best defined by those experiencing inequity.

special efforts were made by a nonprofit center called the Crescent Community Health Center and others to improve access to care and health services to lower-income populations. One population with particular needs is the city's Marshallese community, which has suffered from high rates of heart disease and diabetes. Crescent worked with others to expand preventative care to this community, resulting in a 38% decrease in hospital visits.¹¹

After being ranked last in the nation in terms of fruit and vegetable consumption, and with obesity being named as a top community health concern, a network of area organizations and community members worked to advance local food system development in the Greater Dubuque area. Results include a 24% increase in people registering for the SNAP

food voucher program, over 17,000 meals being delivered through the city's playground program, and healthier food options for schools and homeless shelters.

Southeast San Diego

The Southeastern San Diego Cardiac Disparities Project is a program of Be There San Diego, a coalition of patients, communities, healthcare systems, and others working together to prevent heart attacks and strokes in Greater San Diego.¹² The Disparities Project focuses its efforts on a largely African American area of San Diego, where 55% of the families earn less than the self-sufficiency standard and the rate of heart disease is much higher than average.

Led by Elizabeth Bustos and Reverend Gerald Brown, the Disparities Project seeks to "transform the individuals and organizations it's touching, leading to improved health outcomes, helping to achieve health equity and ultimately delivering social justice to a community historically lacking it."¹³

Bustos and Rev. Brown built relationships with over 20 congregations to develop individualized "heart-healthy plans" to reduce heart attacks and strokes based on their unique demographics, resources, and needs. Each plan was required to have three components: nutrition education, exercise and health monitoring, and tracking of participants' blood pressure and weight.

In addition to the Disparities Project, Be There San Diego has worked with nine health care teams across San Diego County to deploy a health coach program to support

enrolled patients in treatment for cardiovascular risk factors. Between 2010 and 2016, the coalition reduced heart disease by 22%, preventing a total of 3,826 heart attacks.

The Opportunity Before Us

"Never let a good crisis go to waste." —Winston Churchill

The COVID-19 pandemic, while disastrous, also offers an opportunity for reform and renewal. As Joel Mills, senior director of the Center for Communities by Design, writes,

Everyone across the globe—all of us—have suddenly been thrust into a shared experience that both unites humankind and forces consideration of where we are as a society. If ever there were a time for reflection and an assessment of our collective well-being, it is now. We have reached a moment of reckoning.¹⁴

This is a time when we can recognize that each of our well-being is bound up in each other's well-being, that diversity is our greatest asset, and that collective liberation and resilience are shared assets that are built via trust and reliability over time. Further, we have an opportunity to address equity starting with the premise of respect and human dignity for all, rooted in the needs of marginalized communities and the timeliness of the political will and power expressed during the past year.

Now is the time for local and regional communities to

do what only they can do—to engage their residents to take actions rooted in local context, culture, and assets to make pragmatic, trans-partisan efforts that build equitable well-being and resilience, including comprehensive strategies to enhance mental health,¹⁵ civic muscle,¹⁶ and the many social determinants that channel the course of our lives.

Hundreds of communities have already embarked on this path, stretching local resources to connect people of color with disease prevention services, modifying policing policies and practices, and removing public symbols of racism and division. Join us as we recognize these communities at this summer's All-America Cities event, with a focus of *Building Equitable and Resilient Communities*.¹⁷

An Invitation

We invite local government leaders to think beyond your span of control to a broader sphere of influence. The pandemic has left most cities, counties, and towns struggling to fund core services. Why not use this crisis as an opportunity to change practices, policies, and investments to better reflect local priorities? With equity joining the traditional goals of efficiency and effectiveness, we could create a balanced portfolio of public services that addresses community needs like humane housing and lifelong learning, which, in turn, reduce the need for spending on policing and other back-end services.

Better yet, by serving as a convener, local governments can bring other players and resources to the table—



Pacific Islander Seasoning Class

nonprofits, businesses, faith-based organizations, and residents—to collectively define and help achieve goals that create vital conditions for all. In doing so, local governments can build civic muscle, the sense of belonging and power to shape and deliver on a common vision.

All across our country, people are asking for racial fairness, smarter policing, and economic opportunity. The costs of our failure to invest in health, education, and affordable housing are creating a deepening deficit in government's ability to provide even the most basic services and causing a cascading decline in the quality of life for all Americans.

Let's make 2021 the beginning of a renewed covenant in America's cities, a promise kept to build equitable, resilient communities by engaging our residents and rebalancing our investments so that all may thrive. **PM**

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

- ¹ <https://covidtracking.com/race>
- ² <https://winnetwork.org/vital-conditions>
- ³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2837459/>
- ⁴ <http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/racial-disparities-in-covid-19/>

⁵ https://ir.citi.com/NvIUklHPilz14Hwd3oxqZBLMn1_XPqoSFrxsZD0x6hhl84ZxaxEuJlUWmak51UHvYk75VKeHCM1%3D

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THE PATH TO EQUITY FOR BLACK WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Ensuring that
diversity, equity,
and inclusion
remain leading
workforce values

A century ago, on August 18, 1920, the women's suffrage movement, including many women of color, won the right to not be denied one's vote on account of sex through the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. This momentous occasion occurred 50 years after the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments were passed that abolished slavery, guaranteed the "equal protection of the laws," and explicitly defended the right to vote regardless of race. The amendments were the result of the Civil War and the abolitionist movement to free slaves. Yet, women of color still faced significant barriers both legally and in practice. Even today, a century after women's suffrage, and 150 years after the Fifteenth Amendment, real equity has not been achieved.

BY CHERYL D. ORR AND
MARCIA L. CONNER

The National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA) is the principal and most progressive organization dedicated to the advancement of African American public leadership in local and state governments. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for linking public and private organizations, as well as academic institutions, to support the professional development of African Americans choosing public service careers. Many African American women have benefited from the advocacy of NFBPA.

In 2020, as protests erupted across the country demanding racial equity, we spoke with hundreds of NFBPA members and partners discussing ways in which local and state governments can work to improve representation and support for their African American employees. What we found was that employees of color, but especially women of color, continue to report obstacles to opportunities for advancement in the public sector. However, the victories achieved by powerful women in the struggle for equal rights proves that this is not how it has to be. By looking at the successes of the women's rights movement, our public sector managers and executives can implement solutions to guarantee equity for women in public sector jobs and administration.

Early Struggles and Successes

Despite the half-century between the passage of the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments, the movements fighting for equality regardless of race or sex were inherently linked together. The Seneca Falls Convention, held in 1848, was the first women's rights convention in the United States. During this meeting, powerful coalitions between women's rights advocates and abolitionists were formed.¹ Many of these organizations, including the American Anti-Slavery Society, provided important mentorships for women, giving female organizers experience in speaking, writing, and even editing newspapers.

This disenfranchisement of women led to the establishment of two prominent women's organizations, the American Women Suffrage Association (a purely suffrage-focused organization for women only) and the National Women Suffrage Association (which included men and advocated for social mobility beyond the right to vote). Among the issues they disagreed on was whether to support the Fifteenth Amendment, because it did not specifically enfranchise women. Further ostracized were women of color who faced increased racism from both major suffrage associations. They would ultimately go on to form the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs in 1896. Although both white and African American women were fighting for similar rights, this divide showed that the discriminatory effects of race and gender would lead the fight for equal rights to drag on well through the twentieth century.

Over the next 40 years, women continued to fight for rights. In 1923, the National Women's Party drafted the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) for Congress. Today, over 95 years later, the measure has not been ratified, although the ERA is still being pushed by women in Congress as well as throughout the states.

Representation in the Workplace

Although women's rights at first focused on equality under the law, the movement still greatly impacted the legal and social



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barriers of the workplace. After World War II, when men returned home, women who had entered the workforce and had become “Rosie the Riveter” were relegated back to their household roles. However, some women chose to remain employed in the public and private sectors, and over time began to alter the U.S. workforce, at a time when the civil rights movement was pushing for equality in this country.

In 1963, Congress passed an Equal Pay Act, prohibiting discrimination on account of sex in the payment of wages by employers; although today, women continue to be paid less than men in many occupations. This was followed by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which became a pivotal moment for women of all races, even though women were not initially included in the act. Although the act’s purpose was to protect and guarantee the rights of African Americans across the south, women and other minorities across the country nonetheless benefited from its passage.

In local and state governments, women and minorities took

For African American women, this disconnect between their ambitions and their representation has remained persistent, and many have attributed this to the perceived negative perception of their own power. Indeed this negative perception of African American women and power has remained an obstacle for women, as qualities such as ambition, tenacity, and forceful leadership remain valued in their male counterparts. However, when women in public service exhibit these same traits, they are penalized, or viewed as unsuitable for positions such as department head, city manager, or even president of the United States. As Stacey Abrams notes, “Ambitious women have always been a problem for those who have wanted to maintain the status quo.”⁵

The current social justice movement emerging across the country is leading protesters, activists, and workers to demand racial equity across all fields of government and society. This can and should be addressed in public sector workplaces by changes that focus on the needs of African American employees, as well as all other

“To have strong women of color invest in and guide young female emerging leaders is essential to ensuring the success of the next generation of leaders.” —Stacy Rodgers

advantage of greater opportunities to climb the ladder of success in public administration. Some capable women were able to reach the executive level of public administration, yet many have also been met with discrimination based on their gender. Women of color have a twofold barrier in that they were at times met with not only gender discrimination, but also racism, as evidenced by the still present wide-ranging disparities between women of color and other groups.

In fact, as of 2019, women overall were paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to men, with a median annual difference of \$10,194.² This difference increases dramatically for women of color, with African American women being paid 62 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men; and Latinas being paid 54 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.³ These dramatic figures reflect a reality that despite successes in the women’s rights movement, and overall higher educational attainment, women in both the private and public workforces face obstacles to advancement that their male colleagues do not.

The Push for Equity Today

The limitations women of color face in the public workforce are not for a lack of trying. African American women are more likely to desire executive-level positions than their white counterparts, and their numbers in mid-level managerial positions have increased, yet despite this, their presence in executive-level positions has remained stagnant.⁴ Tanisha Briley, city manager of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, believes that “local government organizations should reflect the communities they serve from the line worker to executive leadership, but in many cities, minorities such as Black public administrators are overrepresented in lower-level public positions and underrepresented in executive roles.”

groups that suffer from inequity and a lack of representation in the executive levels of government offices. This includes those who continue to suffer from discrimination based on race, but also sex, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

As protests in the streets lead to conversations in the office, issues such as pay inequity and comparatively low representation of women of color at senior and executive levels of government will become an area where women will demand more attention. In public administration, women and minorities have historically been overrepresented overall, yet not at the executive level. Their relatively low status in government has left them vulnerable to job loss and pay cuts when local government budgets are cut.⁶

Yet, increased diversity in upper levels of public administration can have tangible benefits for state and local governments. In the private sector, “companies in the top-quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 21% more likely to outperform on profitability and 27% more likely to have superior value creation.”⁷ Jelynn LeBlanc Burley, president and CEO of the Center for Healthcare Services, states: “Organizations that lack diverse senior leadership continue to fail at assessing talent primarily because they are trying to fit a homogenous mold.” In public administration, female participation in decision-making roles is also positively correlated with economic development. Furthermore, increased representation will not be a detriment to male colleagues, as greater equity will lead to women working collaboratively with their male counterparts to ensure that men and women ascend through the ranks on equal footing.

The Value of Mentorship

When considering concrete steps that public sector managers can take to ensure that women of color are provided the ability to take

part in executive-level leadership, one of the most important is to support the role of mentorship in the career development of their employees. Influential leaders and managers offer tangible experience, coupled with social knowledge on navigating leadership roles. They possess essential skills for any executive in the public or private sector: resilience, coping with stress and difficult situations, and knowing how to manage hypervisibility.⁸ Stacy Rodgers, Baltimore County executive, notes that “to have strong women of color invest in and guide young female emerging leaders is essential to ensuring the success of the next generation of leaders.”

NFBPA has promoted the value of mentorship for decades through its Mentor and Executive Leadership Institute programs. These programs have allowed hundreds of public administrators to grow their skillsets and enhance their professional networks, with many graduates ascending to executive management positions in state and local governments. Ms. Briley notes that these programs “show the next generation of leaders the path forward, prepare them for the journey, and provide the support needed along the way as well as when they arrive, support that is too often lacking in traditional systems.”

Membership organizations themselves, including NFBPA, can also be sources of support and skill sharing. Justina Mann, director of capital development at the Houston Airport System, states that “by not only being a member that can network with higher levels within public administration, but taking it a step further and being engaged in committees and ultimately the NFBPA Board, doors will be open based on your colleagues and peers seeing you in a different light.”

Unfortunately, as government budgets tighten, professional development opportunities in the public sector are being cut by more and more managers. Therefore, at a time when public leaders are asking what can be done to support African American employees, their decisions to cut professional development opportunities are directly limiting the career mobility of their workers.

Public administrators can demonstrate their willingness to support their employees by ensuring that pathways to advancement remain open. By allowing for professional development programs and promoting flexible work schedules to support mentor relationships, executives can ensure that the many talented and capable women of color working in the public sector can develop the opportunities needed to become successful executive leaders themselves. **PM**



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Transitions, Transformation, and Equitable Advancement

Tacoma Police Chief Don Ramsdell
retired in December 2020 after 17 years
at the helm of the department.

Tacoma, Washington's
chief equity officer
reflects on her
city's progress

BY DIANE POWERS

When we look back on 2020—and all the challenges from the COVID-19 public health crisis, the horrific murder of George Floyd (just one of many African Americans to lose their lives at the hands of law enforcement), and the awakening of white Americans to the systemic racism operating in all of our institutions—there is no question that these events are difficult and dismaying. We cannot allow ourselves to be deterred by them. Instead we must recognize them as unique opportunities to make long-lasting, systemic changes, prioritizing the lives of those most impacted, which can ultimately result in a community where everyone thrives.

Photos courtesy of the City of Tacoma



Local Tacoma students participate in Student Government Day at City Hall.

As I reflect on my more than 30-year career focused on social services and racial justice, I am emboldened with the progress we have made and struck with the realization that there is still much work to be done.

Talking about anti-racist transformation is met with obstacles, impediments, and challenges. Anti-racist transformation is also presented with opportunities to explode onto center stage in the national spotlight. The main challenge we face as leaders is being prepared to take full advantage of

the city to achieving equity in its service delivery, decision-making, community engagement, and hiring practices. To implement the strategies to achieve the goals of the framework, he appointed me as the director to lead a newly formed Office of Equity and Human Rights.

After decades of institutionally racist policies and procedures—many of which are documented in our video, “How We Got Here”—and disproportionate outcomes for Black and Brown people in our housing, education, health, economic, and criminal justice systems—we now have adequate quantitative and qualitative data to justify this effort to eliminate these socio-economic disparities and, perhaps for the first time, the political will.

On July 1, 2020, the Tacoma City Council adopted Resolution Number 40622. This

budget development process and to prioritize anti-racism in the planning of an economic recovery strategy following COVID-19.

The mayor and city council have been explicit in stating that anti-racism is now our ultimate goal. This change in perspective is transforming how we conduct business across our organization and driving our biennial budget planning to center on anti-racist principles and outcomes.

One of our biggest challenges is the disproportionate outcomes in the criminal justice system for people of color. In a past community survey, a large majority of white community members expressed positive feelings of safety, while at the same time, a significant number of People of Color said that they did not feel safe. These numbers have improved in the most recent survey, but we still have much work to do.

The mistrust for police and the demands for greater safety for our Black community was affirmed in March 2020 when Manuel Ellis, a Black man, lost his life in a law enforcement altercation that was the result of asphyxiation. This incident, which was not publicly revealed until July, enraged community members of every demographic in Tacoma. The tragic and horrific murder of George Floyd exacerbated the hurt, anger, and overwhelming response from the community. They marched and demonstrated in large numbers in a peaceful manner.

As we await the outcome of the second investigation, there is ever-growing tension about whether the city will take significant action to address the systemic issues in law enforcement that have impacted People of Color for decades. Our city council recognizes the urgency to begin the transformation process with policing. We are implementing multiple strategies to achieve this goal, and a complete assessment of the Tacoma Police Department is currently being conducted.

While our internal processes are essential to transformation, the community is most important in leading the external effort. Mayor Victoria Woodards has centered the community voice in this transformation by implementing her

We must first address the harms the community has endured in an authentic and transparent manner before we can holistically build sustainable relationships with Communities of Color and law enforcement.

each and every single opportunity to create sustained and impactful change for our Communities of Color.

A significant opportunity for the city of Tacoma emerged in 2014, when the Tacoma city manager at the time, T.C. Broadnax, launched an effort to create the city’s Equity and Empowerment Framework. The framework commits

resolution commits the mayor and city council to a comprehensive transformation process establishing new practices based on community and expert opinion, as well as past reform efforts, centering the voices of those most impacted by systemic racism. It also directs the city manager to keep anti-racism as a top priority in the

“Heal the Heart of Tacoma” initiative, whose goal is to shape a community-led and community-wide multi-sector effort to transform Tacoma into an anti-racist community.

In affiliation with these efforts, the National Network for Safe Communities has selected the city of Tacoma as the next jurisdiction to engage in a reconciliation effort to build trust between Communities of Color and law enforcement. Our previous effort, Project PEACE, attempted to lay a foundation for this work, but we know we must first address the harms the community has endured in an authentic and transparent manner before we can holistically build sustainable relationships with Communities of Color and law enforcement. Ultimately, we want the community to define what safety means to them and how the city can help to implement their vision.

I am retiring in February 2021, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to shepherd this city that I love and admire through many roadblocks over the past six years as the chief equity officer. I am proud to have normalized conversations on race, partnered on developing more inclusive hiring practices and reducing transactional operational strategies, and worked to replace them with transformational efforts

As I reflect on my more than 30-year career focused on social services and racial justice, I am emboldened with the progress we have made and struck with the realization that there is still much work to be done.

that actually help us to achieve a workforce that reflects the community.

We as leaders for anti-racist transformation must seek every opportunity to push forward efforts to apply a racial equity lens to the policies that impact and support our community members at all levels of our organizations. Our networks are our most valuable tool.

I would not have had success with these efforts without a dedicated and committed staff and the excellent leadership provided by City Manager T.C. Broadnax, City Manager Elizabeth Pauli, Tacoma Public Utility Director



Safety and Communities of Color: Tacoma police leaders discuss current issues and how the city addresses race and ethnicity in local law enforcement.



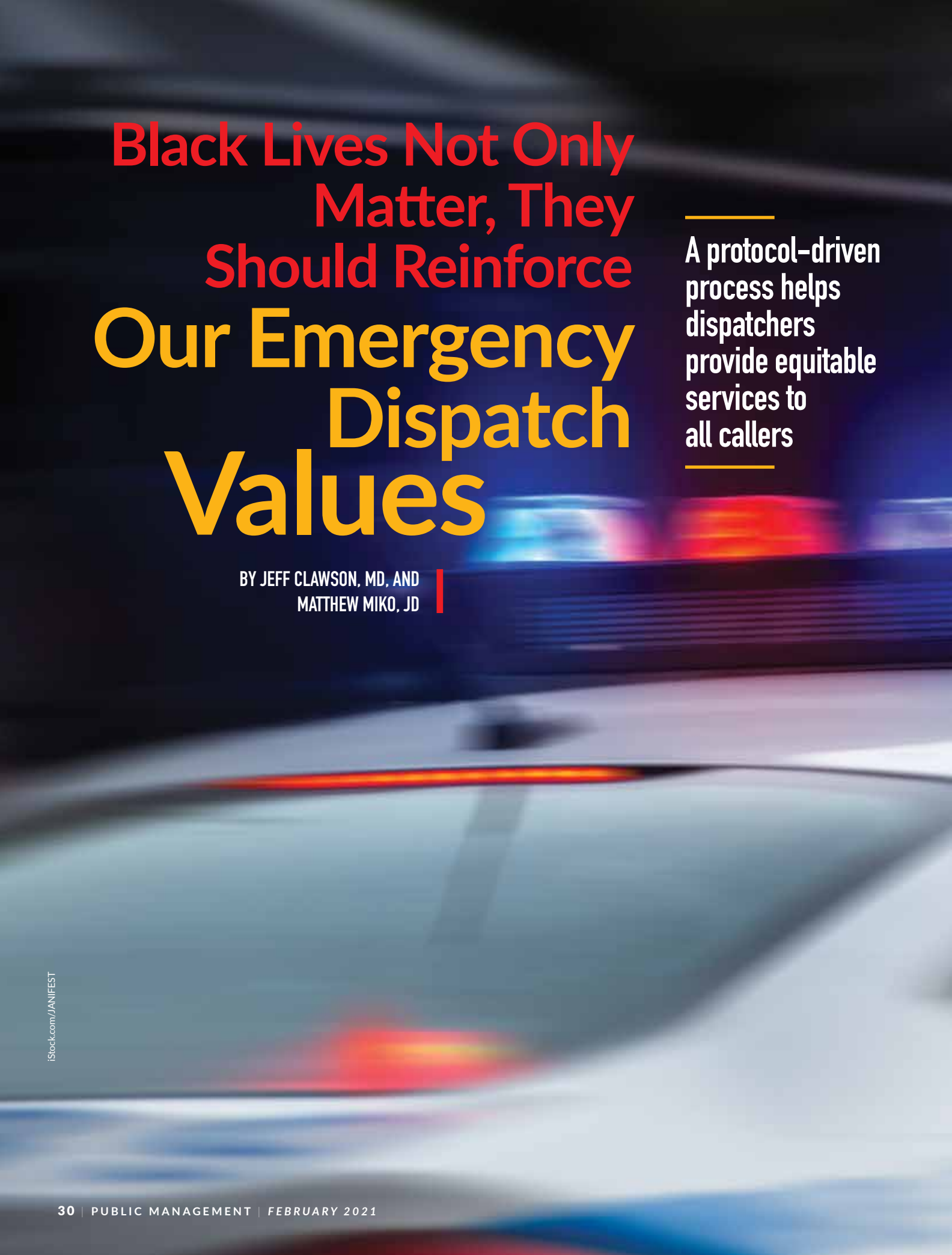
Students tour the Tacoma Police Department Headquarters during Student Government Day.

Jackie Flowers, and Mayor Victoria Woodards. I have also benefited from the support of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), PolicyLink, and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators. Each of these organizations is working to support this work in jurisdictions throughout the country.

Achieving anti-racist transformation will face adversity, something we know all too well, and we will often feel inadequate and imperfect. But we must remain committed. The very lives of our community depend on it. **PM**

DIANE POWERS is chief equity officer, Tacoma, Washington. She is currently a member of the ICMA's Equity Officer Cohort.

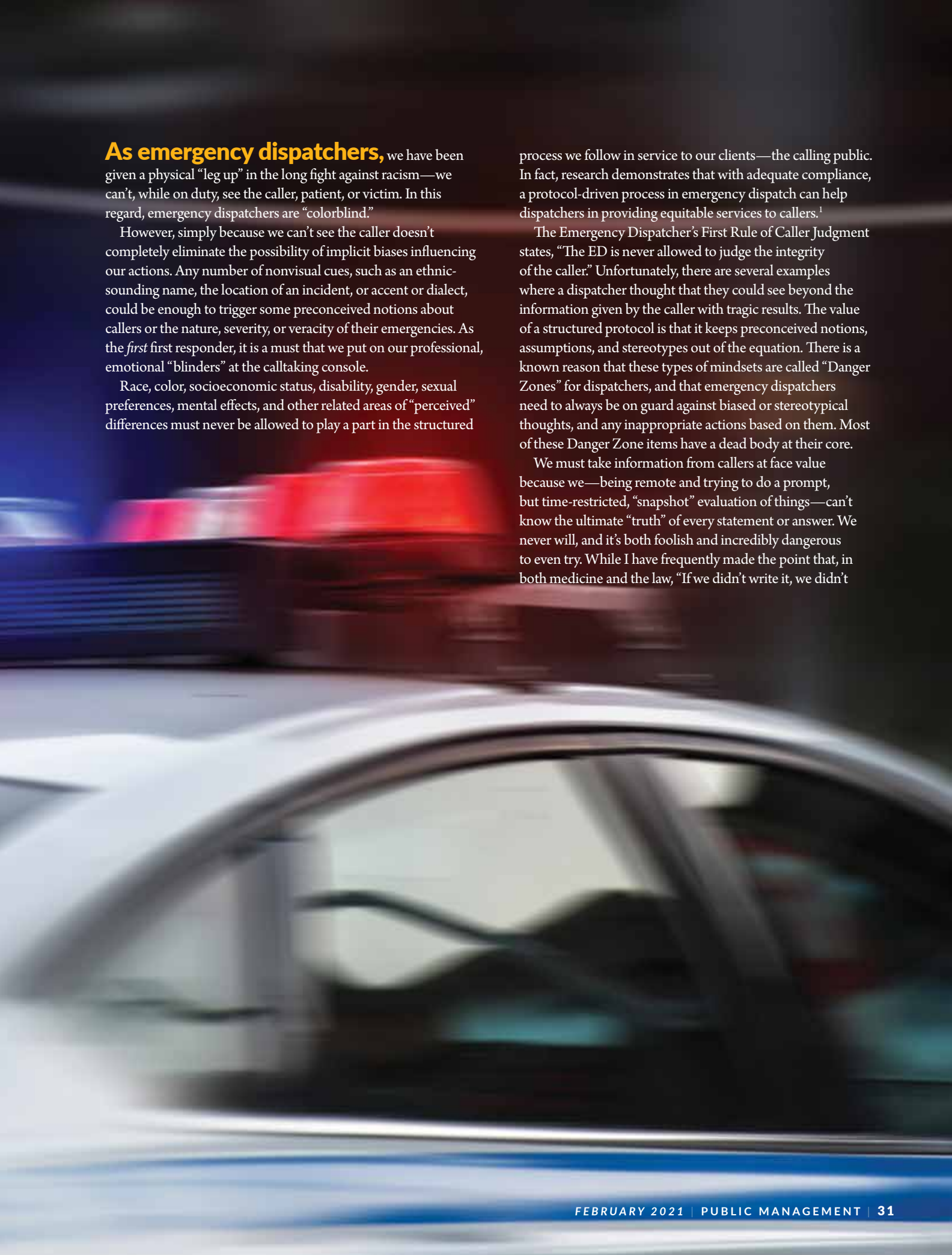


The background of the entire page is a blurred image of emergency vehicle lights, likely from a police car or ambulance, with streaks of red, blue, and white light. The text is overlaid on this background.

Black Lives Not Only Matter, They Should Reinforce Our Emergency Dispatch Values

A protocol-driven
process helps
dispatchers
provide equitable
services to
all callers

BY JEFF CLAWSON, MD, AND
MATTHEW MIKO, JD



As emergency dispatchers, we have been given a physical “leg up” in the long fight against racism—we can’t, while on duty, see the caller, patient, or victim. In this regard, emergency dispatchers are “colorblind.”

However, simply because we can’t see the caller doesn’t completely eliminate the possibility of implicit biases influencing our actions. Any number of nonvisual cues, such as an ethnic-sounding name, the location of an incident, or accent or dialect, could be enough to trigger some preconceived notions about callers or the nature, severity, or veracity of their emergencies. As the *first* first responder, it is a must that we put on our professional, emotional “blinders” at the calltaking console.

Race, color, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, sexual preferences, mental effects, and other related areas of “perceived” differences must never be allowed to play a part in the structured

process we follow in service to our clients—the calling public. In fact, research demonstrates that with adequate compliance, a protocol-driven process in emergency dispatch can help dispatchers in providing equitable services to callers.¹

The Emergency Dispatcher’s First Rule of Caller Judgment states, “The ED is never allowed to judge the integrity of the caller.” Unfortunately, there are several examples where a dispatcher thought that they could see beyond the information given by the caller with tragic results. The value of a structured protocol is that it keeps preconceived notions, assumptions, and stereotypes out of the equation. There is a known reason that these types of mindsets are called “Danger Zones” for dispatchers, and that emergency dispatchers need to always be on guard against biased or stereotypical thoughts, and any inappropriate actions based on them. Most of these Danger Zone items have a dead body at their core.

We must take information from callers at face value because we—being remote and trying to do a prompt, but time-restricted, “snapshot” evaluation of things—can’t know the ultimate “truth” of every statement or answer. We never will, and it’s both foolish and incredibly dangerous to even try. While I have frequently made the point that, in both medicine and the law, “If we didn’t write it, we didn’t

do it,” the reverse is also true in the courts regarding the record, which is, “If they said it, it happened.” With no way to know otherwise, we must assume that what is said on a call is factual—and rarely is it not. The simple fact is that during an active, quickly unfolding call, how could we possibly know which? The standard of care and practice is based on these rules and requirements.

The following is a case from the “Legal Aspects” chapter in

Principles of Emergency Medical Dispatch (Sixth Edition):

An example of inappropriately judging the caller involves a call from a payphone in a run-down section of a large southern California city, where the caller stated, “There’s a guy laying here. He can’t see or can’t breathe or something!” The new EMD (an experienced firefighter/EMT) classified this as a 32-B-3 (unknown

situation, third-party). The case was reviewed. When the calltaker taking this case was confronted with the possibility that the call should have been coded as a 6-C-1 (difficulty breathing), he bridled at the suggestion, stating, “Listen to this guy, he’s an idiot. He doesn’t have a clue. Look where he’s calling from.”

In this situation, the calltaker ignored information that was

sufficient to properly prioritize the call. Instead, he judged the information based on a partially nonsensical statement from the caller and the location the call came in from.²

I (Jeff Clawson) simply mentioned to the QA review group what later became the EMD’s Second Rule of Caller Judgment: “Let’s replay that tape for the ladies and gentlemen of the jury.” The



plaintiff's attorney will not play the audio, but simply show these damning words on a very big chart in the courtroom (no accent, no stuttering, no slurring). Case over.

The preconceived notion that people (callers or patients) with alcohol-related or other problems are somehow less deserving of help or quality care is rampant in emergency work. Personal prejudices or impressions cannot be allowed to influence the performance

of the emergency dispatcher's critical duties. It does not matter whether these negative thoughts and actions result from the stress of the situation or from the EMD's personal belief system.

While we know we can't "save everyone," we have, over all these years at the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch, clearly learned that if we do our jobs correctly, we can literally "help everyone" we come in contact with. Since this is our job, we must use our unique ability to deal with all callers professionally—which we can only do in the listening and verbal sense—which must always be done in an effort to expand our influence to the oppressed, disadvantaged, socially ostracized, and minority populations. In our opinion, this effort continues to be a significant failure within our society, as we now unfortunately witness all too often, and in all too grisly detail, through television and social media.

By following a well-scripted, carefully thought-out, and evolving protocol, including its embedded learning rules—written by Academy experts with the intent to remove any hint of racism or any other form of discrimination or assumption, we can better succeed regardless of the human station of the caller, patient, victim, or suspect.

Assisted by these protocols and training, we best perform our role as the dedicated, thoughtful, and unbiased interpreters of the answers provided by a caller—and, as implied in the 911 environment, do it promptly and effectively. When this doesn't happen, it only serves



to increase the concerns that many in our society have about calling 911. An ongoing study on attitudes toward 911 conducted by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch found that diverse communities have a number of concerns and expectations when it comes to calling 911, including fear, anxiety, and mistrust.³

Moreover, concerns about calling 911 can create, or exacerbate, barriers to the provision of lifesaving aid. It's well established that racial disparities exist relating to the performance of bystander CPR. A study published in 2020 determined that in Memphis, Tennessee, white patients were much more likely to receive bystander

CPR compared to Black patients (44.0% vs. 29.8%), while a 2009 study identified a similar disparity in Los Angeles, California, USA (24% vs. 13%).^{4,5}

In an effort to examine reasons for disparities in bystander CPR rates in minority and lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods, researchers in a 2015 study interviewed residents of high-risk neighborhoods in Denver, Colorado, to understand their concerns about calling 911.⁶ "High-risk" neighborhoods were defined as those with higher than average rates of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and below average rates of bystander CPR. The researchers found





“fear of becoming involved because of the distrust of law enforcement, a result of possible undocumented status or outstanding warrants, was a common barrier that precluded [the] high-risk neighborhood residents from calling 911.”⁷

Reflecting upon the role that emergency dispatchers play in their neighborhoods and communities, providing help to those when life is often at its most dire point of survival, some words spoken by Senator Robert F. Kennedy in Cape Town, South Africa—challenging that country’s system of apartheid though many advised against doing so—seem particularly appropriate, even though more than half a century has passed since:

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against

injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”⁸

In a recent op-ed article in our local paper, Ethan Walker, a Black college student, stated, “I ask you, look at our distress with new eyes, see at least a fraction of our experience, and join together in commitment to make Black lives matter.” As an emergency dispatcher, each time you answer a call, and you give your very best effort to help someone in need—and you do so impartially, unbiasedly, and without assumption—you send forth just such a ripple, one which most certainly gives hope. **PM**

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- ⁸ <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-06-06/rfks-ripple-hope-speech-still-touches-world-50-years-later>

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JUST RELEASED!

GOVERNING FOR EQUITY: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Governments

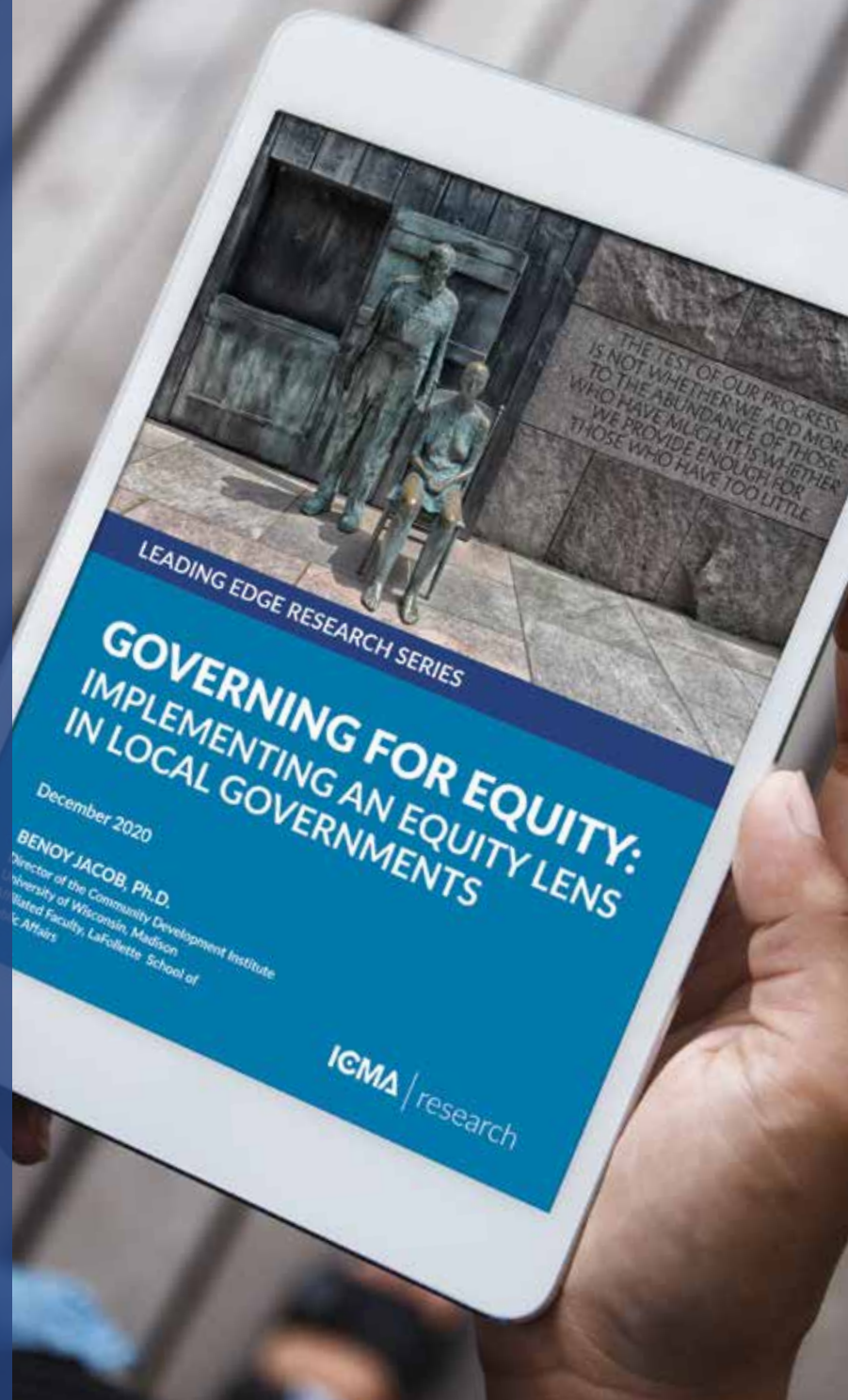
BENOY JACOB, PhD
ICMA Research Fellow

Director of the Community Development Institute, Division of Extension, and Affiliated Faculty at the LaFollette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison

What's Inside

- A framework for local governments to address social and racial inequity in their communities through policies, practices, and learning.
- Perspectives from cities and counties that excel in increasing diversity and fostering inclusiveness.
- Insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by public administrators when adopting an equity lens in their day-to-day operations.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT AT
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ICMA Local Government Research Fellowship

This report was supported through ICMA's Local Government Research Fellowship program. ICMA Research Fellows are practitioners and academics that conduct action-oriented research addressing important trends, drivers, and issues facing local governments. Their work advances ICMA's strategic priority to provide thought leadership and resources that support members and other local government stakeholders in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world. Learn more about ICMA's Local Government Research Fellowship program at [**icma.org/icma-local-government-research-fellows**](https://icma.org/icma-local-government-research-fellows).

BY KEL WANG

Building the Best Relationship with Your Council

Take an active role in shaping your council's role and effectiveness

Many municipalities embrace the council-manager model, where the council is the governing body setting overarching directions and policies, and the manager (and the rest of the administration) is responsible for execution, operations, and the details.

In a perfect world, there is a fine line between the council and the manager, and they collaborate, complementing and supporting each other. However, sometimes there are examples where the council focuses on operational issues, or on their own electoral districts, showing little interest in other areas of the community, or they are divided or even polarized on issues. In cases like these, the lines of responsibility blur: little or no direction is given to the manager; conflicting instructions are given to the manager and administration, resulting in confusion; and there is no way to address and resolve community concerns or issues.

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How can you build a collaborative and complementary relationship between the council and yourself, so that the council operates at the strategy and policy level, where they can provide the most value to the administration and the community? Here are three questions to ask yourself, along with a few tips, to help you create a more effective and positive dynamic.

1. Do Members of the Council Understand the Context?

Your community just had an election. What was the turnover on your council? How many of them are new to municipal politics and to the role of being a “director” on the “board” of a public sector organization? In the last municipal election in Edmonton, of the 13 seats available, five were new members of the city



council. Each had varying degrees of governing experience. The administration hosted a series of orientation sessions for all members, not just the new ones, featuring strategic issues facing the city. We began with the overarching strategy. Through conversation exploration, all councilors increased their understanding of the municipal context and their roles in those issues.

2. What Is the Council's Role in Developing the Strategy?

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs¹ as an analogy, members of any council also have different needs. The "basic needs" include ensuring compliance, reviewing financial reports, and managing performance of the manager. Developing and approving the strategic plan (the strategy) represents the higher-order, "fulfilling needs."

Research by McKinsey involving 772 directors in private sector organizations found that directors who undertake "the basic" functions versus undertaking the higher-impact functions (i.e., fulfilling functions) report their activities have a low to moderate impact on their companies.² While similar research hasn't been done in the public sector, we did have an opportunity to test this in Edmonton when the council developed its strategic plan. To help meet their "fulfilling needs," it was important to engage council throughout the strategy development process. Here are a few

examples of the touch points where we leveraged opportunities for councilors to be involved and add value:

- **Setting the direction.** In an earlier article, a funnel approach was described that allows the council to create and approve the future state of the city.³
- **Making the decision.** The strategic plan outlines the collective vision of the community, not just the administration's. Therefore, approving the strategy is one of the most important decisions any council makes.
- **Prioritization.** If everything is important, then nothing really matters. Setting and approving the administration's corporate business plan helps outline priorities for the next four years to achieve the community's (and council's) 10-year strategic plan.
- **Oversight.** Annual progress reports were reviewed with the council. Measures with high-risk results were shared in detail to explain the performance and to discuss improvement actions.

The council played an integral role in the strategy development and reporting processes. While it is still too early to conclude the ultimate impact of their involvement, the administration's approach was often publicly praised by councilors.

3. Do Members of Your Council Think and Act Like Owners?

Members of the council are elected officials representing the will of the community. By default, the strategic plan, a plan for your community, is also their plan. So it is important for them to think and act like owners to ensure the long-term viability and prosperity of the community.

IF EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT, THEN NOTHING REALLY MATTERS. SETTING AND APPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION'S BUSINESS PLAN HELPS DEFINE PRIORITIES.

What constitutes the mindset of being an owner? In addition to having the passion to serve the community and take responsibility for community issues and solutions, it also includes the following three components that are usually overlooked:

- **Promote and partner.** The local government plays an integral role in building the community, but the role sometimes varies depending on the issue. Having the owner mindset while promoting means communicating the strategic plan actively with other public or private organizations and promoting shared outcomes, while partnership explicitly means the local government does not have to take the driver's seat in all community issues. It is okay to collaborate, to support, and to enable by focusing on shared outcomes and on where the local government can add the most value.
- **Take a community perspective.** Elected officials are elected by electoral districts. By nature they represent those districts. But often they also make decisions that affect the entire community, as in the case of the strategic plan for the entire municipality. Having the owner mindset means wearing two hats, and knowing which one is the right one at the right moment. They can only own the community plan by taking on the community perspective.
- **Be disciplined.** Being disciplined is about having the courage to say "yes" to projects, services, or programs that are unpopular in your community; and/or say "no" to projects, services, or programs that are inconsistent with the intentions of the strategy. Here in Edmonton we saw councilors leverage various means to communicate on a controversial decision. By using evidence, councilors were able to demonstrate the long-term value and importance of building and extending the light rail transit system, recognizing the short-term challenges identified by the community. This project was a key strategic action within the strategic plan, providing a sound platform for moving forward, despite objections in some quarters.

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Managers, It's Really Up to You

You are the manager of your organization, a career public servant. Over the course of your career, you have worked your way up, likely in a few different organizations. The bottom line is that you are informed and educated on issues and you take a holistic (community) perspective. It is really up to you to take an active role in shaping your council's role and effectiveness.

Developing the strategy has always been complex and it becomes more so with your council's increased involvement. Yet this form of strategy development, when done well, is invaluable. It leads to clearer strategies with greater buy-in and ownership from your elected officials and offers an opportunity to strengthen the council-manager relationship. **PM**

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs

² April 2013 McKinsey Global Survey

³ "Strategic Planning Revisited," by K. Wang and M. Sambir, *PM Magazine*, February 2020. <https://icma.org/articles/article/strategic-planning-revisited>

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I want to thank Michael Sambir and Vida Ramos for making this article as simple and clear as possible.

Leadership in Local Government, **Part 2:**

LEADERS KNOW THEMSELVES

Get to know your strength and assets, as well as your weaknesses and faults

Part 2 of our new series on leadership

BY ED EVERETT

In my last article on leadership in the January issue, I defined leadership as “the art of influencing and encouraging others to help move a team, organization, community, or nation to a better place.”

Leadership is all about building relationships. It requires a deep understanding of one’s self in order to develop successful and effective relationships. Hence, you can’t lead others without fully understanding yourself.

Great leaders have a keen understanding of their strengths and assets. Successful leaders have as many weaknesses and faults as anyone else. However, effective leaders are aware of their weaknesses, trigger points, and blind spots and, as a result, are not unconsciously manipulated by them.

Most individuals will tell you they know themselves.

Unfortunately, most of us don’t truly know ourselves. Many of us aren’t aware of our fears, what negatively triggers us, or the dark side of our personality. Unfortunately, without knowing our strengths and weaknesses, we can never be effective leaders.

Developing a Greater Insight into One’s Self

There are several ways to learn more about oneself as described here.

1. Direct Feedback. Direct feedback can be face-to-face, but requires someone willing to take the risk of being honest with you. People have to believe you won’t get defensive or strike back. Direct feedback can also be provided more anonymously by using online 360-degree instruments. The collated information from such questionnaires can provide useful feedback; however, the group must be large enough to ensure anonymity.

There is another major drawback of getting direct feedback. It does not provide you with the rationale for *why* you behave in a certain way. Without that knowledge, there

is little you can do to change or modify your behavior.

2. Observation. If you are curious and open minded, you can learn a lot about yourself by observing your interactions with others and the reactions of others to you. You can also learn a lot by watching truly effective leaders; however, that tells you a lot about effective leadership, but nothing about yourself.

Without some counseling/therapy and feedback from effective assessment instruments, it is very difficult to fully understand other’s reactions to you and what you do to elicit those reactions.

3. Counseling/Therapy. Unfortunately, counseling or therapy has a negative stigma. It is erroneously assumed that only “mentally ill” or “disturbed” people need counseling. Many individuals, especially men, think it is a sign of weakness to go into therapy, but done correctly, therapy is a great way to learn about yourself in a deep and impactful way. It can help you understand why you do certain things in a certain way and what drives your behavior.

Without this knowledge, it is extremely difficult to modify your behavior.

I recently listened to a Ted Talk interview with the CEO of Netflix. He mentioned that it was not until he was in therapy with his wife that he learned that he was not only avoiding conflict with his wife, but also within his company. He was able to change his behavior, which positively impacted the bottom line at Netflix.

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I have personally learned an incredible amount about myself through therapy. I was able to understand what was unconsciously manipulating me: my fears, trigger points, and insecurities. Therapy also helped me become more comfortable with my strengths and assets. It has helped me understand the behavior of others and how to more effectively relate to them.

If you want to be an effective leader, I strongly recommend quality therapy. Choose carefully, as in any profession, some therapists are better than others.

4. Assessment Instruments.

There are numerous assessment instruments in the marketplace and many of you have taken one or more of them, including Myers-Briggs, DISC, Minnesota-

Multiphasic Personality Inventory, True Colors, and the Sixteen Personality Factors Questionnaire, just to name a few. Most of these instruments have not been especially helpful for me in understanding myself or learning how to modify my behavior.

I have found the following two assessment instruments useful both for me personally and when I am coaching others.

What's My Communication Style?

All leaders agree that effective communication is essential to their success. You can have a great idea, a compelling vision, or powerful guiding principles, but fail miserably if you are not able to communicate them effectively.

This assessment is an elegantly simple and useful assessment that helps you understand the way you

“

Effective leaders are aware of their weaknesses, trigger points, and blind spots and, as a result, are not unconsciously manipulated by them.”

communicate with others. This assessment instrument will help you:

- Understand your dominant communication style and its impact on others.
- Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your communication style.
- Understand the needs and styles of others and how to avoid their hot buttons.
- Learn how to develop and use effective communications strategies.

A link to this assessment is listed at the end of the article.

The Enneagram

This is an in-depth, powerful assessment tool

that has been tested and scientifically validated. The Enneagram describes nine different personalities. No one personality is any better than any other. We all have a dominant personality that plays a major role in how we behave, see issues, solve problems, react to stress, and interact with others.

The Enneagram allows you to understand your dominant personality and how it drives you in both positive and negative ways. It allows you to keenly understand your strengths and assets and how to make greater use of them. The Enneagram also describes the “dark side” of your personality and how that gets you into trouble. A link to this assessment is listed at the end of the article.

Using Assessment Instruments to Become a More Effective Leader

My first suggestion is for you to read and reread several times what you have learned from the assessment instruments. Until your learnings become firsthand knowledge to you, you will not be able to make significant modifications.

Next, select only one or two areas from your Communication Style and Enneagram that you want to work on. Changing or modifying one’s behavior is difficult to do and almost impossible to do by yourself. Therefore, ask one or more person(s) you trust to help you to modify your behavior. You will need to be very specific about what you are trying to change and how they might help you. They can give you feedback about your progress in modifying your behavior or practicing a new skill, including when you are falling back into old patterns. Don’t be discouraged. Change is difficult and often slow. Remember that you are not trying to remake yourself. Rather, you are modifying some specific behaviors or adding some specific skills.

Summary

Successful leaders know themselves well. They are comfortable with their strengths and assets and

are fully aware of their fears and dark side. By knowing their dark side, leaders are better able to prevent it from manipulating their behavior. Great leaders have fears and weaknesses just like the rest of us, but they have learned how to manage around these weaknesses and their dark side impulses. I will address this last concept further in a future article.

Have the courage to get to know yourself more intimately and become the effective leader that our profession needs today more than ever. **PM**

RESOURCES

¹ What’s My Communication Style? <https://hrdqstore.com/products/whats-my-comm-style>

² Enneagram: <https://tests.enneagraminstitute.com/orders/create>. Choose the RHEIT test, which has 144 questions. It is also helpful to purchase the book, *Discovering Your Personality Type*, by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson.

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I stand committed to help anyone who is trying to learn more about themselves so they can become a more effective leader. Just ask me.



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Disability Awareness and Local Government:

An Interview with **Michael Boynton**



Issues,
observations,
and ideas for
greater inclusion
and equity



As part of ICMA's ongoing commitment to fostering a greater awareness of equity and inclusion in local government, we spoke with **Michael Boynton**, town manager of Medway, Massachusetts, to discuss the topic of disability awareness. Michael has been a member of ICMA for 30 years, and is one of the few members who faces this topic both from a professional and personal perspective each and every day.

Photos courtesy of Michael Boynton

Your career in local government spans 30 years. Can you tell us about your background?

My first municipal appointment was in 1989. It was on the street lighting committee in Franklin, Massachusetts, the town I grew up in. I had just gotten my bachelor's degree in political science from Fairfield University, and I knew I wanted to do something, but I wasn't sure where to start. The next thing I know I'm running for town council at 22 years old. I lost on my first run, but I got appointed to the finance committee shortly thereafter. In 1992, I gave it a shot again and was elected. At that time, I was the youngest person in Franklin to be elected to the council. Simultaneous to all of that, in

1990, I began my public service career with Norfolk County, Massachusetts, working for the sheriff's department. For five years, I worked in a few different capacities from inventory control to purchasing coordinator. In 1995, a year after I finished my MPA, I was appointed as the first administrative assistant in the town of Mendon, and held that job for almost two years before becoming the town administrator in Sutton, Massachusetts. After five years in Sutton, I moved on to the role of town administrator in Walpole, a community of around 24,000, and stayed there for almost 13 years. I'm currently town manager in Medway, Massachusetts. I've been in this role since 2014, and I absolutely love it.

One of the reasons we're speaking today is to learn more about your experience and perspective as a local government leader living with a disability. Can you tell us about that?

My family and I phrase it as "I got sick" in 1979. I was 12 years old and I was diagnosed with acute transverse myelitis. My body went from a fairly physically normal 12 year old to a quadriplegic and on a ventilator within 24 hours after onset. They didn't think I was going to make it, but Children's Hospital in Boston did an amazing job and I pulled through. I spent six months in three different Boston hospitals recovering from the transverse myelitis and left the

hospital wheelchair bound in June of 1980. Fortunately within probably a month to two months of being home, I started walking again, but my recovery plateaued after about 12 months. I have had a fair number of physical challenges through the last 41 years, including two incidents of spinal fractures, but overall nothing that has kept me down. Today, I continue to walk with a cane or at times use a mobility scooter when traveling. But nevertheless, I don't look at myself as being disabled. I look at it as being physically challenged.

I've found a way to work around all of those limitations. There are frustrations; there are some days that are worse than others. But instead of getting to that point where I have self-pity, I think back to some of the kids that were in the hospital with me, recognizing that some of those kids were never leaving the hospital. Some of those kids were never going to have a career and were never going to do what I do. It would be really inappropriate for me to complain about where I am in life in comparison because those kids never got the chances that have been afforded to me. I can't say at all that I'm unhappy with where I am today. I'm thrilled with the things that have I have been able to accomplish personally and the things I've been able to do and accomplish for my communities.

What aspects of accessibility do you wish local government leaders were more aware of?

Looking back, the Americans with Disabilities Act was adopted in 1990, and now



it's 30 years later. We still talk about only portions of buildings or sections of parking lots that need to be accessible. We still put financial limitations on how much needs to be accessible. Why are we still having these same conversations? As an example, why isn't every bathroom completely accessible? Why isn't every bathroom stall able to accommodate a wheelchair? Why isn't every single door opening at least 36 inches wide? Why do we still allow exemptions? It's 30 years later—all new construction should be fully accessible.

In Massachusetts, we have the Architectural Access Board and the Board of Building Regulations and Standards, which essentially sets the building code for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. At what point in time do we have that conversation about mandating that every single door that you put in a building be accessible, every single entrance, every light switch, simply everything. The technology is possible and



the capability is there, but we haven't truly worked past the allowable exemptions that were included in the ADA 30 years ago. I even regret that I have not acted as more of an advocate for change in this area.

That's on the physical side. In the context of disability, one positive thing that I would

say has happened since 1990 is that we have modified and broadened the scope of disability. Some would argue that that might not be beneficial, but I think it certainly has been. The ADA had a narrow view of those with disabilities being people in wheelchairs and people that need to walk with a cane. But we certainly know now from experience that there are a number of folks that deal with disability in a very different way, and that may be something that's not visible. The world is now more aware of social, emotional, mental, or behavioral types of disabilities that exist.

So from an employment perspective, I think that we have at least created a better environment for people that have disabilities to be able to thrive as public employees. But even in the municipal sector, we have a long way to go. As municipal managers, we're not strictly charged with instilling a

better sense of inclusion just for our workforce. We also have the same mission ahead of us to be able to make our communities more inclusive and accessible as well.

In your experience, how has disability awareness within local government changed over the years?

I think we've opened the door for folks who have had doors that have been closed in terms of what is considered a disability. There is a difference between an illness and a disability, and I think what we've been able to do from a public policy perspective is to be able to differentiate between the two and advocate for folks that truly have permanent life challenges. Some disabling conditions can be short term, but for the most part, for those that have lifetime conditions to deal with, we've given them greater opportunities to thrive.

And I think, as leaders, we have hopefully become



a lot more sensitive to the topic. I had an individual who was a worker in one of my communities, and he was required to have a certain license as a condition of employment. He was doing a series of verbal practice tests for the license, and he would answer almost every question correctly. Then he had to take the actual written exam, and he failed three times in a row. As his supervisors explained the scenario to me, I knew that there was something missing here. So I had the individual come in and sit with me, and I said, "This is a very difficult question for me to ask. And I apologize for asking it, but I think this may be in your best interest." I asked him if he could

read. He admitted that he had never really been able to read. So what had happened was that from a verbal perspective, they were teaching him the components of what the license required. But when he went to take the test, he didn't understand the questions as they were written. I said, "Well, in that case, this is a true appropriate implementation of a reasonable accommodation." We allowed him to stay in his position and modified his job requirements. He was a very valued worker, somebody who gave 150 percent every day. When it comes to disabilities, this is the type of thing that we all need to be cognizant of. There are going to be cognitive disabilities, for example,

or other limitations that employees are too embarrassed to admit. We might not see it, and it doesn't necessarily sit right in front of you, but there are circumstances that we will all encounter as managers in which we have to be observant, flexible, and open-minded.

What non-physical or social barriers do you feel local government leaders most need to educate themselves on?

One of the biggest challenges is that municipal government has a very traditional history to it. Tradition is a very tough thing to break. As an example, as leaders we need to think about allowing people with disabilities to pursue their

interest in a certain career field despite having a physical barrier to that job. We need to think about how we can modify our workforce or modify job requirements.

With law enforcement or fire service as an example, there is a natural progression as to how you ultimately become a leader in one of those organizations. If you want to become a chief of a police department, first, you have to have been a deputy chief or a captain. To be a captain, you had to have been a lieutenant. To be a lieutenant, you have to have been a sergeant. To be a sergeant, you had to be a patrol officer, and to be a patrol officer, you had to pass through the police academy,



which has a very physical instruction regimen to it, as well as the intellectual piece. But at the end of the day, there are folks who may have a very strong interest in those professions—and possibly would be fantastic leaders in those professions—but never pursued a career in that field because the entry point 30 years prior had a physical component to it, and the stigma of “not coming up through the ranks” is difficult to overcome.

We somehow have shut the door permanently in those occupations for people with disabilities. I think if you told me early on that I had the opportunity to become a chief officer in the fire service, I probably would have done that before doing what I’m doing now, but that door was never open. We don’t necessarily send fire chiefs and police chiefs from large organizations out into the field to perform those same types of physically reliant functions found in the entry levels of those departments. So, therefore, why couldn’t we have a training program where we allow individuals that have physical disabilities an opportunity to thrive, or to function in a setting that has traditionally not had those doors open to them.

I’d say that we do still have a long way to go in thinking outside of the box, as it relates to what people with disabilities can do both functionally and intellectually in our organizations. We need to take the Americans with Disabilities Act, pull it off the shelf, dust it off, and say, “What do we need to do in 2021? And in 2030? And 2050? We really need to take



some of these exemptions off the table and re-evaluate many barriers that still exist, even if they are not readily apparent.

How can we help combat the attitudinal barriers, discrimination, and any exclusion experienced by those who are disabled? How can city and county leaders incorporate that education into their community engagement?

I don’t believe anyone is intentionally trying to exclude or dismiss folks that are different than themselves. Instead I think exclusion is more of an unawareness of those challenges that aren’t a part of your day-to-day life. If a particular struggle is not a part of your daily life, then it’s not something that is front and center as a focus. A broken sidewalk, or an out of service elevator, or lack of available parking might not be as critical for someone who’s able-bodied who can walk or navigate around the barrier, but for those like me, it can change the course of our day and as such demands attention.

As managers, the better job that we can do of thinking outside the box—when it comes to how we develop our programming, how we approach our staff development, how we structure our recruitment efforts, and how we operate our communities for all segments of the population—the better environment we create.

To put it into a different context, if a person with a disability, or any person who is in an underrepresented group, has to constantly ask for special treatment, a couple of things happen. First, you feel embarrassed that the treatment has to be considered “special” because we’re at the point where it should just be common sense. Accessibility and other forms of equity should be something that’s just automatic. It should not have an “affordability” threshold attached in any way. From the design of buildings and public spaces, right down to something simple like planning for meetings, events, and conferences, the needs of those with disabilities across all spectrums should be a key component of equity and inclusion.

Secondly, I don’t like the term “special circumstances.” As a person with a physical challenge, I don’t ever want to look like I’ve “taken advantage” of a situation because that’s never the case. If we were able to continue working as a society toward 100-percent accessibility and 100-percent inclusion, then this topic goes away. We no longer have to talk about it once we reach that status.

There aren’t a lot of people with disabilities that are working as municipal managers for whatever reason. Perhaps that will change over time. Collectively though, we need to be open-minded and allow the “change” conversation to happen and recognize that we do need to train staff on all of those components of inclusion, diversity, and equity. It’s not just placed upon one nationality or skin color or sexual orientation or disability; it’s all of the above. We’re part of a much larger group, a global environment. My hope is that we can make 2021 the year that we find a way to make a lasting change and create as level a playing field as possible. **RM**

MoVa Learns—Mayor's Challenge

A win-win for college students and the community

Moreno Valley, California—2020 Recipient, Program Excellence Award, Community Diversity and Inclusion (50,000 and Greater Population)

In Moreno Valley, just one in four adults are college educated. As the city embarked on economic development initiatives, its leaders recognized the need to improve the educational level and diversity of the local workforce—in short, the need for Inclusive Economic Development. In California, and the nation, workforce is among the top three criteria site selectors consider when evaluating prospective business locations.

In response, Mayor Yxstian Gutierrez launched a serious dialogue with local educational and county leaders to explore ways to provide a larger and more diverse group of residents with opportunities for the economic prosperity that comes with new growth.

They started by focusing on the city's most important asset—the students at Moreno Valley College, many of whom were at risk of dropping out, often for economic reasons. Faced with the “earn versus learn” choice between attending school and working low-wage shift jobs, many were forced to choose work.

Starting with a baseline survey, the city and the college partnered with students to design MoVaLearns—Mayor's Challenge, a program that provides a \$250 monthly stipend to give students a chance to pursue their education, supplemented by support and “wrap-around”

services from the college, the city, the business community, and nonprofits.

The planning team included members from the city's economic development department and media staff and the college's Career and Technical Education (CTE) administration. But the most important designers were the students themselves, who used prototyping, story mapping, surveying, and interviewing to shape the program.

MoVaLearns targets CTE students who are in the second year, when they are at greatest risk of dropping out. Goals were to enroll more students in programs that lead to a living wage, ensure that students are aware of college and community support services, and increase the number of students who graduate with associate degrees and certificates.

Initial funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies allowed the city to fund 50 students in the design phase. Students reported that the stipend and support services reduced their stress and enabled them to focus better on school. Approximately 93% of participants said the program helped them finish school more quickly. And 58% saw an increase in their grade point average.

Based on these results, the city council approved additional funding. In addition,



the college formed an advisory committee with representatives from local industries to advise on the curriculum and facilitate job placement for CTE graduates. Finally, the city formed a community foundation to help secure private and philanthropic funding and buy-in.

Moreno Valley learned that it takes a village to envision a future that accelerates opportunities for everyone. The success of the MoVaLearns first-in-the-nation Universal Basic Student Income program resulted from partnerships

involving the city, the college, the business community, other local organizations, and students.

Inclusive Economic Development, in programs like MoVaLearns, has direct benefits not only for students, who enjoy job-related education, but also for cities, which enjoy a competitive edge that allows them to attain such traditional economic development goals as attracting new businesses, jobs, and revenues while at the same time creating economic benefits for residents. **PM**



Welcome Ambassadors: A Friendly Face for New Members

Greeting new members of the ICMA family—virtually and in person—for ten years | **BY MOLLY MEHNER, MOSES AMIDEI, AND KAREN PINKOS**

The ICMA Welcome Ambassadors celebrate their tenth anniversary this year! In recognition of this milestone, PM magazine is sharing the stories of current and former Welcome Ambassadors.

Molly Mehner, ICMA-CM

Assistant City Manager, Cape Girardeau, Missouri
ICMA member since 2012



The Welcome Ambassadors are a group of member volunteers tasked with welcoming new members to ICMA, making peer-to-peer connections, and sharing the value of belonging to ICMA and the local government profession.

ICMA has more than 12,000 members, and often, outreach from a Welcome Ambassador is a new member's first contact with another ICMA member. This initial communication is intended to provide a personalized warm welcome, information on the many benefits and resources ICMA has to offer, and a friendly contact that a new member can reach out to for more information. Welcome Ambassadors frequent ICMA annual and regional conferences and are identified by special green lanyards. They staff welcome tables and receptions, attend meetings and sessions, and are always on the lookout for a member who may need directions or just a friendly face.

I have been fortunate to serve as a Welcome Ambassador since 2018, and currently serve as the ICMA Executive Board liaison to the committee. It is an honor to work with such dedicated colleagues. Over the last ten years, the Welcome Ambassadors contacted more than 7,000 new ICMA members and I expect this number to continue to increase. The Ambassadors' role is more critical than ever as we search for new ways to engage with our peers given the virtual world the COVID-19 pandemic has put upon us.

As one might expect, the Ambassadors are an outgoing, fun bunch of individuals who truly enjoy

sharing everything ICMA has to offer with new members and making everyone feel welcome and included. Beginning with this issue and over the course of 2021, you will be introduced to current and former Ambassadors in PM magazine and hear about their motivation to serve their peers.

Moses Amidei, ICMA-CM

Member in Transition
ICMA member since 2002



I have been an ICMA Welcome Ambassador for the past three years. We are tasked to reach out to new members to welcome them to our great organization, offer links to resources, and be available to answer any questions that they have about their ICMA membership. ICMA's greatest strength and assets are its staff and members; new members are reminded that colleagues are their best resource for solutions, best practices, and help along the way throughout their career. New members—especially those that are new to the profession—need to know that they should never feel alone if they are faced with new challenges, as we all have “been there and done that,” collectively.

Membership engagement is also important at ICMA Annual Conferences. First-time attendees and those new to the profession are supported by Welcome Ambassadors upon conference check-in and during designated events. I truly appreciated the help of my fellow ICMA colleagues during my first conference in Kansas City. I soon learned how much of a tight-knit family we are. The Ambassadors helped me navigate my first conference experience and encouraged me to take advantage of as many networking opportunities as possible. As our profession continues to evolve and change, I look forward to connecting with our expanding membership as I continue on my career path in local government.

Karen Pinkos, ICMA-CM

City Manager, El Cerrito,
California
ICMA member since 1999



In all my years as an ICMA member, I have had the honor and pleasure of serving the profession in a variety of ways—on committees, task forces, and the Executive Board. However, one of my favorite experiences was serving as a Welcome Ambassador. Being part of a team that has the purpose of greeting people new to ICMA and making them feel welcome, sharing insider information on our amazing profession, and making new friends? Count me in!

Some of my best memories of being a Welcome Ambassador were the in-person receptions for first-time attendees at ICMA Annual Conferences. It was fun to peek at people's name tags and recognize the names I might have emailed, called, or messaged on Twitter, and meet them in person. I loved sharing tips on how to navigate the conference (it can be a bit intimidating your first time, as we all know!) and introducing people to other people to help them make even more connections.

Frankly, I've never been fond of the concept of "networking." The word itself to me implies, well, work—

it can feel obligatory and sometimes inauthentic. Instead, my view is to simply make new friends, not because we have to, but because we are all better for having met a variety of people that care about each other and our communities. Being a part of the Welcome Ambassador team, and the friends I've made through the ICMA experience, is a huge part of who I am within the local government management world. These friends have sustained me in good times and bad, and I am a better manager and person because of them.

If you are looking for a way to get involved and, most importantly, to get to know a lot of really awesome people, I invite you to join the Welcome Ambassador team. And I extend a heartfelt "thank you" to all my wonderful, fun, and talented Welcome Ambassador friends that I'm honored to have worked with. You have helped make ICMA a great experience for so many people, and we are truly better together! **PM**

Call for Volunteers 2021: ICMA believes that it is important to provide members with the opportunity to contribute to the profession by volunteering to serve on ICMA member committees, task forces, and advisory boards. This year's Call for Volunteers opens mid-March.

PROFILES OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN ACTION



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Strengthening Your Resiliency Muscle

Suggestions for persevering through tough times | BY ADRIANA TRUJILLO-VILLA

In uncertain times

like these, navigating a complicated environment at work and at home is not an easy task.

The year 2020 surprised all of us as the last few months were charged with fear and uncertainty. Many people around the world continue to struggle with COVID-19 and with the results of an extended lockdown. In addition, there is continued civil unrest in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd and by the use of deadly force on people of color by some law enforcement agents, along with unrest in the wake of the presidential election. Unquestionably, these times are testing many of us and are pushing us out of our comfort zones.

Feeling Overwhelmed

If you are feeling anxious, stressed, and overwhelmed, you are not alone. However, resilience is becoming an important leadership skill as managers need to adapt to new and unfamiliar circumstances. Still, the role of the manager doesn't end with managing the daily operations of the organizations they serve. It may also include being the source of comfort and courage for weary employees.

Psychologists and social researchers claim that resilience is not a personality trait and that building resilience takes time and deliberate practice. To me, resilience is how well a person bounces back and recovers after suffering a loss and how a person deals with adverse circumstances.

Now more than ever, organizations around the world need resilient leaders. I personally learned more about resilience after suffering the loss of my parents, first my mom to diabetes and later my dad to cancer. No child is ever prepared to handle such a loss. During those times, I experienced the betrayal of a loved one. I also had a professional opportunity presented to me, and based



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on a decision made higher up in the organization, I wasn't allowed to take advantage of the opportunity. (My understanding was that such opportunities are reserved for senior managers only.)

The difficulties I faced remind me of a metaphor that my good friend and mentor once told me: we all need to be like a palm tree, which bends during the storm but does not break. It's strong, yet flexible. These remarkable trees have roots that spread across the upper levels of soil to serve as an anchor during inclement weather. The leaves of the palm tree resemble feathers that during good weather make a fine canopy, but in stormy weather they fold up and withstand intense and sometimes furious conditions.

As I recall, it was not easy to navigate through such difficult circumstances. Sometimes, I wanted to throw



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Change your perspective. A setback could become an opportunity to demonstrate the kind of professional and the kind of person you are.

in the towel as those situations seemed to be unbearable. I could have dwelled on those dark times and felt sorry for myself. However, I took the time to grieve, time to forgive, and time to evaluate my career aspirations, and

I can say now that these circumstances helped me to change the way I see the world and also helped me to value and understand what is important in my life.

As a local government professional that cares about the well-being of my staff, my community members, and my family, I will say that it's crucial to take time to refocus and work on what you need as an individual.

The recipe for staying strong and resilient when we are going through difficult stages of life will be different for everyone. In trying times, I have taken the following steps to flex my resiliency muscle.

Focus on Gratitude

Being grateful is a skill that when practiced gives you happiness and joy. Some people may tell you to be thankful and that good will come out of all of these chaotic circumstances. Others may say, how can I be grateful if I have no steady source of income due to COVID-19, or if I have been stuck at home for so long? Well, the answer is to look around you and reflect on what you have. You and your family are still healthy, you can still enjoy small things like playing with your children or your pets. Meditate on what is positive and good, read motivational books, seek out encouraging quotes. Likewise, a good technique to focus on being grateful

could be journaling and writing every day about one positive thing that has happened to you or listing three things that you are grateful for.

Stay Healthy

Make time to exercise and eat healthy. You don't need a rigorous exercise plan; a 10- or 15-minute walk could help set your mind in a positive state and you may also relieve some stress. Your overall well-being is important; nurture your body, your mind, and your spirit. As you grow stronger and healthier, you will also have developed a healthy habit.

Lean on Your Support Group

Remember to rely on your family, friends, and trusted colleagues as they are your support group. They will be by your side and encourage you as you move forward with your life. Stay in touch with them as much as possible and also reciprocate if at some point in time a member of your support group needs encouragement and a helping hand. Life is a journey and what you freely give you will also receive.

Work on Your Skills

If you are fortunate enough to have a job, try taking on something additional, such as volunteering for a task force. If you are in a transition period and looking for a job, don't fall into despair. Work on the skills you need for the job you want—or extra skills that could set you apart from other job applicants. Also, take time to reconnect with colleagues from past jobs and with college friends, as they may point you in the direction of your new opportunity.

Look at a Setback as a Set Up

Change your perspective. A setback could become an opportunity to demonstrate the kind of professional and the kind of person you are. If you are in the middle of turmoil, don't give up, things will change, and these tough times could serve as a stepping stone for something better.

However, if you still need help, don't hesitate to seek professional assistance. A coach, mentor, or counselor could guide you and help you steer clear of challenging situations. Take heart, better times are ahead. And remember, this too shall pass. **PM**



Roger L. Kemp MPA, MBA, PhD
Credentialed City Manager • Career Adjunct Professor

~ Police Services ~

Dr. Kemp provides national professional police consulting and speaking services on evolving police-community programs. Some of these topics include state-of-the-art practices in these dynamic and evolving fields:

- Citizen Advisory Police Commissions
- Citizen Police Commissions
- Citizen Police Academies
- Citizen Police Committees
- City Council Police Committees
- Coffee With A Cop Programs
- Neighborhood Police Offices
- Neighborhood Police Officers
- Pizza With the Police Programs
- Police Bicycle Patrols
- Police Community Forums
- Police Financial Controls
- Police Recruitment Practices
- Police Walking Patrols
- School Resource Offices
- Youth Police Services

Roger Kemp's background and professional skills are highlighted on his website. Dr. Kemp was a city manager in politically, economically, socially, and ethnically diverse communities, on both coasts of the United States.

He has written and edited nearly 50 books on city subjects, and can speak and consult on them with knowledge of the national best practices in the police-community relations field. Call or e-mail Dr. Kemp for more information.

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