

## **STOP KILLING BLACK PEOPLE: From Talk to Action**



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**Introduction, written by *Monique Brown***

The United States of America has continuously created and operated racist systems that disproportionately work against people of color and many are fed up with the status quo. The murder of George Floyd called on many citizens to act against police violence and racial injustice.

Our country is currently at a crossroads. As citizens we have the option to protest for a few weeks, then go back to the way it was or we can act against racist systems of oppression now. No longer are Communities of Color alone in this fight. There are many White allies who have also decided enough is enough.

FOB Hope’s executive director is a Black woman and believed it was her duty to begin the conversation about race with community members and service providers in King County. On 9 June 2020, 65 community members of all races joined in on a Zoom conversation about race. We spoke about our thoughts on police brutality and racial injustice. However, there were no action steps created to move the group forward.

Kelsey McGarry of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs approached FOB Hope about co-leading another conversation with the people who are working in oppressive systems that say they are trying to help all Veterans. Ms. McGarry shared the concept of Racial Caucusing and decided to hold two events.

Monique Brown and Kelsey McGarry held racial caucus forums on June 16, 18, and July 28, & 30, 2020. Veteran and/or homeless service providers located in King County were invited to discuss racial disparities, racial bias, the killing of Black people by police, White supremacy, and the actions steps we can take to make changes in King County.

Monique Brown & Kelsey McGarry took notes from the four sessions held via Zoom. We are providing those notes here because we want everyone to look over the outcomes of the meetings and work on next steps for action. Please read the information below and feel free to provide feedback and suggestions on how community providers working with Veterans and/or with folks experiencing homelessness can begin to make changes in the way we administer our services in King County.

**Moderators**

Monique Brown, MA  
US Army, (Ret.)  
Executive Director, FOB Hope  
Pathfinder Coordinator

Kelsey McGarry  
Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs  
Program Specialist, Unsheltered Pathfinder & Navigator

*Combined Notes: June 16 & 18, July 28 & 30, 2020*

**Group Guidelines, created and updated during each session**

- 1. Actively listening**
  - i. Listening to each caucus member, asking clarifying questions if necessary, listen before speaking
- 2. Taking ownership of our own feelings**
  - i. Share our own stories & speak from our own experiences
- 3. Don't leave the meeting (if at all possible)**
- 4. Commitment to cultural competence and humility**
- 5. Mutual respect**
- 6. Lean into the discomfort**
- 7. Be mindful of the space we are taking up**
- 8. Accepting non-closure**
- 9. It's okay to be wrong**
- 10. Calling people in vs. calling people out**
- 11. Vulnerability**
  - i. Challenge by choice
- 12. Embrace cognitive dissonance**
- 13. Respect caucus confidentiality - what's said stays, what's learned leaves**

*Combined Notes for June 16 & 18 Sessions*

**Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Caucus**

*Moderated by Monique Brown*

*Notes compiled by Monique Brown*

Each session, the BIPOC group met in a separate room to discuss our feelings about the caucusing taking place today (shared any concerns, anxieties, initial thoughts). We planned the meetings this way so that people of Color could speak freely and not have to worry about hurting someone’s feelings or having to water down their answers because non-BIPOC people are present. There was a list of possible questions to ask. However, the conversations were so thoughtful and lively we only had time to cover two of the questions.

**Q.** What thoughts and feelings came up for you after seeing the murder of George Floyd on television?

Disbelief	Overwhelmed
Perfect Storm	Not far fetched
Daily occurrence	Feels different this time
Shocked over continuous racism	Devastated
Tired	#Insertname
Potential (to do better)	Helpless
Confused	People hate me because of what I look like, not because of who I am
Latinos expressing negative feelings	Murders of Black trans people
Heartbroken	Mad / Angry
Happy White people are taking an active role	Feeling positive (about the protests)
What is so different this time? Is it the stillness provided by COVID?	Why are there assumptions that we are all the same?
Sadness	Telling our kids how to act “Black man’s checklist”
Memories of past killings	Fear for Black children, cousins, nephews
This is our everyday life	Rush for changes, but “no receipt”
Want to be the change I want to see	Here we go again
No justice	Push down feelings and move forward
Some people are disingenuous	Want change
Start at the top by tearing down systems	Shock over continuous racism

**Q.** What action steps do you think would be most appropriate at this time?

1. Replace the VI-SPDAT with an effective tool for all.
2. Cannot straddle the fence. Everyone here must be anti-racist and work for equality.
3. Need engagement from King County and other funders.
4. Listen to us.
5. These conversations are important (we need more like this)
6. Unity amongst Veteran service providers.
7. Lead the way – we as people of color need to break down barriers to housing
8. Undoing Racism workshops for all providers on a quarterly basis.
9. Economics: Feed the poorest
10. Find the gaps
11. Do not ask for a seat at the table (take one)
12. Hold King County accountable for racism in the office – Address the behavior
13. Partnership meetings
  - a. Discuss progress on changes, get updates, quarterly meeting
14. Allocate money and resources to this movement
15. Create an equity impact review tool
16. Get rid of barriers that disproportionately push out people of color
17. Include Veterans of Color we serve
18. Do not call your Black friends for answers
19. Create a racial equity contract for community organizations and King County to sign

*Combined Notes for June 16 & 18 Sessions*

**White Caucus**

*Moderated by Kelsey McGarry*

*Notes compiled by Kelsey McGarry*

**Q.** How are you feeling about being in the caucus and/or is there anything you want to share that came up during the introductions, or even in our discussions around the fact that we were creating this space?

1. How have we shown up so far and how do we want to continue to show up?
2. Silence is comfortable; keeps to status quo
3. A cornerstone of our conversation:
  - a. Narrative of “good” vs “bad” white people
    - i. “Bad” = police, politicians, Trump & supporters, right-wing politics & followers;  
“good” = everyone else (i.e. left-leaning, Democrats, “not racist” White people)  
= this narrative absolves personal accountability and discussing how we contribute and benefit from white supremacy

**Q.** As a group, we defined white supremacy:

1. People in power in agencies and organizations are predominately White
2. White being default, experience being white is central
3. History of creating the government and system
4. Comfort level of white people with power structures; every experience reinforces that
5. White being default, experience being white is central
6. Everything in society is geared around whiteness, default
7. Comfort level of white people with power structures; every experience reinforces that – cops treat differently
8. Perfectionism, fragility, Entitlement
9. All studies (research, scientific, etc.) center white people, white men
10. Having an advantage, parents do not have to worry as much about safety of children
11. Lack of action is white supremacy
12. Patriarchy, privilege, safety
13. Have the privilege/option of not thinking about racism until next person is killed; Can choose to go days without thinking about racism
14. White people seeing people of other races as something other than human – using power and privilege to build policies and systems to keep that supremacy

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15. Privilege to steal things – from land, culture, etc.
16. Language – white privilege vs white supremacy
17. When we were younger, defined as overt violence (i.e. hate groups); have gradually unlearned that (not just overt violence or hate groups)
18. Education & standardized tests = benefit white people, geared towards white “success”

**Q.** How have you benefited from whiteness, white privilege and white supremacy? How does it harm you?

1. Harm = shame, fear, guilt –often also leads to inaction
2. Benefits =
  - a. Majority white policy & decision makers
    - i. Education – access to grade school, higher education, college, grad school
      1. Education saw me as successful student while in grade school, graded me a successful student, etc.
    - ii. Government/Politics - Who is making policy?
    - iii. Housing – rent, home ownership
    - iv. Healthcare, mental health care
      1. Access, white providers
      2. Cost, access, societal acceptance of counseling
      3. Diagnostic tools-- white

**Q.** What action steps do we think would be most appropriate at this time?

1. Do not rely on you BIPOC colleagues, friends, etc. to do the work for us —do the work & de-center ourselves/whiteness
  - a. Watch movies, read books, do the work ourselves – lots of content/resources
2. Do not tokenize--- *create shared power*—may come from making actual sacrifice
3. Educating our youth, making ourselves accountable
4. Understanding our own white privilege
5. What substantial action can I do to make a difference?
  - a. How do we determine professionalism? Who are we hiring for positions in our agencies and programs? Where are we publicizing/posting these opportunities?
  - b. In our work – we see veterans of color are disproportionately experiencing homelessness, incarceration, eviction
    - i. Create an anti-racist tool for all, the VISPDAT is harmful
      1. Who is getting VASH exceptions, who are the assessors, who is successfully being approved for exceptions, etc.



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- c. Signing petitions – this is free
  - d. Educating ourselves – this is also free
  - e. Donate to community organizations run by BIPOC
  - f. Divest from Amazon
  - g. Invest/spend money at BIPOC-owned businesses
  - h. Language we are using when discussing impacts of racist systems – refraining from saying who is succeeding? Instead using language of who is succeeding based on the systems we have created/who are we setting up for success, etc.?
6. No time to wait to make sure we know enough – perfectionism is a symptom of white supremacy
    - a. Can't be truly informed on the issues as white person – we need to listen
  7. Language – opportunity, when you bring things up you know are right you will still be minimized
  8. Power dynamic
    - a. Finding words and framing -- when we say things to other white folks – we/they may be more willing to listen to us
      - i. May not have as strong of an emotional reaction to us
  9. Policy lasts longer than people, needs to be written into policy

### **White & BIPOC Combined Caucus**

Q: What can we do in our sector (veteran and/or homeless services in King Co) to begin to make changes?

1. Replace the VI-SPDAT with effective tools for all
2. Cannot straddle the fence. Anti-racist / Equality (if you cannot choose, then get out of the way)
3. Establish ant-racist values & guarantee they are woven into programs and agencies
  - a. Hiring – who are we hiring for our open positions?
  - b. Are we utilizing tokenism/strictly “diversity hiring”?
  - c. Where are we publishing/advertising for our open positions?
4. Engagement from King County (have the conversation). Put action into your words.
5. King County & other funders must listen to providers

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6. Stop using “case by case basis” – we know that the case by case basis prioritizes white folks and continues to disenfranchise BIPOC
7. Homeless work specifically: who is getting VASH exceptions, who are our assessors conducting VISPDATs, etc.
8. How can we create the work so that it does not burden BIPOC & that moves us all towards freedom and liberation
9. Continue these important conversations
  - a. Possibly Undoing Institutional Racism workshops quarterly
10. Establish shared understanding among service providers
  - a. Attend a protest together
11. Lead the way & break down barriers to housing
12. Center folks with lived experience
13. We must hold ourselves accountable with our colleagues and the veterans we serve
  - a. Immense power in collective decision-making
  - b. Impact not intent. How is this (any action) going to impact everyone involved?
  - c. This work must be prioritized
  - d. Policy lasts longer than people – we need to write these things down & refrain from gatekeeping
14. Action item: Create a caucus “How To” for larger group of King County veteran providers

## Next Steps

The next steps for the action items provided above will continue to be prioritized, based on what is most critical. We will send this document to all who participated in the four caucusing sessions and additional community providers to gather their input on prioritization.

We are still prioritizing and identifying how to develop action steps for each item. Some of this will need to be developed in conversation with King County, as they are one of our community's major funders and a backbone agency that can assist our collective with making the changes that need to be made.

## VOLT

The Veterans Operational Leadership Team (VOLT) meets on Tuesday afternoons; our focus is on strategizing and organizing the work as leaders of the efforts to end veteran homelessness. We recognize that not all veteran providers have a homelessness focus. However, we are continuing our discussions regarding centering anti-racism in our work with homeless veterans, and have created several possible steps and goals to increase equity, including:

- Leveraging Collective Resources
  - Many of our agencies offer financial and in-kind assistance – what are alternatives to purchasing items from Amazon? How can we redistribute our funds and support black-owned businesses and organizations?
- Who are our current partner agencies? Who could we be more closely collaborating with?  
Some agencies we can engage with are:
  - <https://nabvets.weebly.com/>
  - <https://www.sihb.org/>
- Who are we serving?
  - Utilizing King County Veteran By Name List & working with King County's Performance, Measurement & Evaluation (PME) team to coordinate these efforts, review this information
    - Who are we referring to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) resources?
  - Utilizing VA Data to inform conversations around HUD-VASH usage
    - Who are we referring to HUD-VASH resources, who is successfully acquiring these vouchers and who is staying in the program- long term vs short term voucher users?

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- Utilizing King County Housing Authority Data to inform conversations about HASP voucher referrals – who are we referring and who are we not?
- Working with WDVA Veteran Service Officers (VSO)s to see who has succeeded in applying for service-connected & non-service connected benefits through WDVA?
  - Can we work with DAV to get this data? VBA? Other VSOs?
- Hiring new staff
  - Where are we posting our open positions?
  - What are our interview questions?
  - Who is on our hiring boards?
  - What are the demographics of our leadership teams?
- VI-SPDAT & CEA --- (see below)

### VI-SPDAT

On June 26, 2020, Monique Brown and Kelsey McGarry met with partners (Lua Belgarde, Donald Lyons, and Derrick Belgarde) at the Chief Seattle Club, to discuss the racial disparities in the VI-SPDAT in further detail. Some of our concerns include, but are not limited, to:

- Scoring of VI-SPDAT:
  - Length of time homeless - 1-year vs 20 years - same score
  - One point given for 60+ y/o
    - Only one point given for 60 y/o as well as for 90 y/o
    - 50 y/o in Native Community are considered Elders – 60 y/o as seniors is through a white lens and a white life expectancy
- Who are our assessors? Mostly young white women, which is not reflected in population experiencing homelessness
  - Native, Pacific Islander (P.I) assessors — increase score when assessing Native, P.I. folks
- Some problematic questions that are often not answered (particularly if assessor is white and person experiencing homelessness is Black, Indigenous Person of Color (BIPOC):
  - Interactions with the police, ER, ambulance visits, Drinking and substance use
  - “Happy and fulfilled?”- Not a whole lot of additional follow up or screening for wellness
- Living situation — couch etc.
  - Punishing folks for having community
- Family VI-SPDAT:

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- 50% custody of child - yes or no
  - Ignoring Inter-generational families
- Certain questions have no required follow up:
  - “Are you fleeing Domestic Violence (DV)?”
    - Only asked once and asked in one specific way
      - Not a whole lot of other information
- Why don't we ever ask or prompt regarding preferences?
  - Often times, folks with certain criminal justice involvement are required to live or are not allowed to live in certain parts of the County or City (based on CCO requirements) this should be captured at the time of assessment to inform where folks can be referred for a potential housing resource
  - Why are we pushing folks out of their community – if they have been in downtown Seattle for 10 years, why are we pushing folks to Auburn or Shoreline?
- HUD — couch surfing?
  - Why is this never okay? Why is this not more time limited or nuanced
  - Women - Couch surf, more community members
- Score is not coming out the same way for all folks so why are we scoring it the same?

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Combined List of Action Items <i>Includes Tangible/Specific Steps and Large/More Abstract Goals</i>
Economics: Feed the poorest
Replace the VI-SPDAT with affective tool for all.
Cannot straddle the fence. Everyone here must be anti-racist and work for equality.
Unity amongst Veteran service providers.
Lead the way – people of color need to break down barriers to housing
Undoing Racism workshops for all providers on a quarterly basis.
Do not ask for a seat at the table (take one)
Hold King County accountable for racism in the office – Address the behavior
Partnership meetings
Discuss progress on changes, get updates, quarterly meetings
Allocate money and resources to this movement
Create an equity impact review tool
Get rid of barriers that disproportionately push out people of color
Include Veterans of Color we serve
Values woven into programs and agencies we work for
Engagement from King County - have ongoing conversations. Demand action be put into words.
Continue these important conversations
Hold ourselves accountable with our colleagues and the veterans we serve
Power in decision-making
Impact not intent. How is this (any action) going to impact everyone involved?
We have to discuss and chart the work; this work needs to be prioritized
How can we create the work so that it does not burden BIPOC, moves us all more towards freedom and liberation
Involve all funders – King County, federal, city, etc.
Stop using “case by case basis” – we know that the case by case basis prioritizes white folks and continues to disenfranchise BIPOC
Homeless work specifically: who is getting VASH exceptions, who are our assessors conducting VISPDATs, etc.

*Combined Notes for July 28 & 30, 2020*

**Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Caucus**

*Moderated by Monique Brown*

*Notes compiled by Monique Brown*

**Thoughts from those new to the space:**

1. Why do people keep bringing up President Trump?
  - a. He is who he is
  - b. This did not start with him
2. The President perpetuates it
  - a. This is why we keep bringing him up
  - b. The situation is worse under his presidency
3. People are more vocal about racism
4. Spiritual awakening is needed
5. Whose morals and values are we following?
6. Black families pushing children to get out of the ghetto through pushing sports
  - a. This is where the money is, Entertainment
  - b. Still want blacks to be “shuckin’ and jivin’
7. Racism is like Jenga right now
  - a. Pulling out pieces and now it’s wobbly
8. Folks need to be willing to take on our own personal work
9. These conversations can be polarizing
  - a. Where you stand with people
  - b. Can help inform what we need to do

**Prioritizing Action Items**

*The top three items chosen by the BIPOC group are as follows:*

1. VI-SPDAT: Make changes to the questions being asked
2. Allocate money and resources to this movement
3. Undoing Racism workshops should be held for the group on a quarterly basis

*Other items on the list that were mentioned as important, but did not make it into the top three were:*

1. Social Justice Agreement

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- a. Anti-racist
- b. Trauma informed
- c. Cultural competency
2. Engagement from King County
3. Finding the gaps
  - a. What is not working
    - i. Improve or get rid of
4. Engage effective policy

### **Notes from open discussion:**

1. Regional Authority
  - a. How do we and those who have “been there, done that” centralize funding services
2. Include folks with lived experience in this conversation
  - a. There is a Youth Lived Experience Board
  - b. We could do the same
3. Ask WDVA and KCVP to be involved in this effort
  - a. Staffing
  - b. Onboarding
  - c. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
  - d. Buy in from Human Resource
4. Like racial caucusing
5. Solutions
  - a. Look at list and add solutions to the problems identified
  - b. Create an alternative tool for the VI-SPDAT
6. Data
  - a. Dig into it
  - b. We need to know a lot
7. This is useful conversation
  - a. Like being involved
  - b. Overwhelmed by the issues
  - c. Hopeful
  - d. Optimistic
  - e. Grateful for the space
  - f. Excited about action steps



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- g. Inspired
- h. History repeats itself
  - i. How are we going to fix it?

### **8. How do we include others in this work?**

- a. DAV
- b. VFW
- c. American Legion
- d. Vietnam Veterans of America
- e. National Association of Black Veterans
- f. City of Seattle
- g. Rural representation

*Combined Notes for July 28 & 30 Sessions*

**White Caucus**

*Moderated by Kelsey McGarry*

*Notes compiled by Kelsey McGarry*

**Q.** As a group, we defined white supremacy, using some of the discussion points from previous sessions:

1. Patriarchy, Privilege, safety, fragility
2. Dehumanization of other races by white people – using power and privilege to build policies and systems to withhold that supremacy
3. Language – white privilege vs white supremacy
4. Power and access to every system
5. All studies center white folks but no studies specifically about white people as a group of
6. Good vs bad white people
7. White people can be average but BIPOC must be exceptional – often same results in any industry, access to resources, etc.
8. Colonialism & entitlement
  - a. Stealing from land and culture
9. System that has been created since white folks got here
  - a. “We are smartest, strongest, brightest”
    - i. Sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly

**Q.** Continued protests & police violence – Is there such thing as a peaceful protest if the police are involved?

1. The incredibly stark difference between police reaction to Black Lives Matter vs. white people with guns protesting masks
2. Police action -- incendiary and fiery
3. What’s the need to shut down a peaceful protest?
  - a. Intense violence, no dispersal orders
4. This is not a good vs bad white people conversation because this is war
  - a. We are all involved in this now
5. Militarization of police
6. Why do we as white people center and prioritize property over people?
  - a. Property damage
  - b. Capitalist society – money is key

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### c. Language of the oppressor

**Q.** What action steps do we think would be most appropriate at this time?

1. Centering race over gender, sexuality
2. Where is our “moral compass”
3. Intent vs impact
4. Acknowledge guilt, shame, silence & paralysis
  - a. We are afraid to say something wrong so we don’t say anything at all
5. Tendency to gatekeep – tendency to distance ourselves (“woke white people”) from “other” white people
6. Public accountability
7. Generating wealth over centuries – redistribute this wealth – donate, give funds to BIPOC-owned businesses
8. Where does the defensiveness come from and how can we fight that instinct?
9. Resist urge to “academicize” everything
10. We discussed “Mapping Our Roles in Social Change System”:

<https://fariharoisin.substack.com/p/on-revolution>

**White & BIPOC Combined Caucus**

Prioritizing Action Items (based on list created, found on p. 12)

- Stop using “case by case basis” – we know that the case by case basis prioritizes white folks and continues to disenfranchise BIPOC
- As white folks – working to undue defensiveness, as coworkers, providers, etc.
- Advocate to Landlords
- Focus on centering folks with lived experiences in conversations regarding policy changes (and all things) – whether it’s centering veterans or folks experiencing homelessness or both
- Building accountability between other providers --- something in writing to look at (policy)
- Policy lasts longer than people – we need to write these things down without gatekeeping
- As nonprofit/government employees working in social services, how can we participate in a non-harmful/non-white-savior way?
- Racism within CEA housing placements – we are not having these anti-racism conversations at Navigator, in agency conversations, etc.
- Demographics of providers, who are we hiring
- How is any action we take going to impact everyone involved?
- Centering people with lived experience – in context of homelessness or veteran work
- Homeless work specifically: who is getting VASH exceptions, who are our assessors conducting VISPDATs, etc.

## Resources

\*A tiny list of millions of helpful resources, but we see this as a good “starter pack”

### CAUCUSING

- A Fairly Comprehensive List of How-to Racial Caucus, FAQ, and Racial Caucusing as a Strategy  
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/act/strategies/caucus-affinity-groups>
- Why People of Color Need Spaces without White People  
<https://arrow-journal.org/why-people-of-color-need-spaces-without-white-people/>

### ADDITIONAL ANTI-RACISM LITERATURE

- “26 Ways to be in the Struggle Beyond the Streets”  
[https://issuu.com/nlc.sf.2014/docs/beyondthestreets\\_final?fbclid=IwAR3bIKmu8mgusYUO3PM5Tk28JLKNMxamCCwwFaqNOTvKBTH5IeW9VVeY](https://issuu.com/nlc.sf.2014/docs/beyondthestreets_final?fbclid=IwAR3bIKmu8mgusYUO3PM5Tk28JLKNMxamCCwwFaqNOTvKBTH5IeW9VVeY)
- Comprehensive List of Resources – Spit Up by LEARN, GIVE, ACT AND JOIN  
<https://airtable.com/universe/expg9UirgIKoQMIjb/justice-hub>
- Angela Davis – Freedom is Constant Struggle lecture -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u1aHpEtWyA>
- Me and White Supremacy  
[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/46002342-me-and-white-supremacy?ac=1&from\\_search=true&qid=um5AxvOGEv&rank=1](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/46002342-me-and-white-supremacy?ac=1&from_search=true&qid=um5AxvOGEv&rank=1)
- Rachel Cargle - academic, writer, lecturer, activist and academic – specializes in many subjects, including the whiteness of social work: <http://rachel-cargle.com/>
- Sonya Renee Taylor- poet, activist, author and leader: <https://www.sonyareneetaylor.com/>

### KING COUNTY & LOCAL MOVEMENTS

- King County Equity Now - <https://www.kingcountyequitynow.com/>
- Africatown - <https://www.africatownlandtrust.org/>
- WA Building Leaders of Change - <https://wa-bloc.org/>
- Decriminalize Seattle - <https://decriminalizeseattle.com/>

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### **STUDIES**

- <https://buildingchanges.org/news/2019/item/1042-system-that-apportions-homeless-housing-is-limiting-access-for-people-of-color>