



INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE (ICD)

RACISM AND SYSTEMIC BIAS

*George Floyd's death at the hands of police in May 2020, galvanized an intense concern about **Racism and Systemic Bias** – how it is manifested in our community, what is currently being done about it, and what we, as individuals and groups, can do to advance equity. To illuminate these issues and engage with others in working toward their resolution, ICD embarked upon a series of educational workshops that were open to all who wished to participate.*

Workshop 5, [Racism: Costs for Everyone and Ways to Prosper Together](#) (March 13, 2022) opened with a viewing of a 2019 [TedTalk](#) by economist Heather McGhee, author of *The Sum Of Us*. In a series of anecdotes, McGhee demonstrates the psychological and economic harm experienced by individuals and communities because of their racist assumptions, including the belief that our resources constitute a “fixed pie” and the fear of losing something by giving a larger slice of that pie to “others”. This zero-sum thinking, McGhee explains, yields bad policy for all. Engaging the community in team efforts can lead to revitalization and growth of the pie.

Workshop speaker **Karla Bruce**, who serves as Chief Equity Officer of Fairfax County, described how the county's One Fairfax strategic plan is identifying and addressing local disparities. Importantly, she suggested how individuals and local organizations can play a vital role in strengthening “communities of opportunity”. She showed that data drawn from a report of The Center on Society and Health depicts resource-poor pockets of lower income residents, creating an “uneven opportunity landscape” in the county. The One Fairfax philosophy of “We ALL do better when we ALL do better” puts a strategic focus on equitable access to opportunities in all Fairfax communities.

Splitting into small discussion groups, workshop participants shared their thoughts and experiences with zero sum thinking, personal visions of an equitable future, and opportunities for action.