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 2 examines *Racism in the Education, Police, and Judicial Systems* (November 8, 2020). Three local experts discuss the evidence and impact of systemic racism in each of these sectors and the ways in which they intertwine, resulting in long term disparities of opportunity.

Mike Woltz, Chair of the Title I Parent Advisory Committee of the Fairfax County School Board as well as Chair of the Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach Committee of the Northern Virginia PTA, describes differential perceptions and treatment experienced by young males of color in Fairfax County Public Schools, leading to both short- and long-term negative consequences.

Captain Darrell Nichols, the Equity Lead for the Fairfax County Police Department in One Fairfax and Co-Chair of the Human Relations Policy Committee notes that "Implicit bias, which people may not recognize as part of their outlook, affects everything - recruiting, promotion, training at the police academy, and arrests." His job is to train Team Ambassadors and the entire police department to recognize, understand and find solutions to adjust the lens through which they perceive and react to the people they encounter. He encourages his colleagues to ask: Who are we stopping and why? Are we recruiting from a more diverse population? Are we examining our personal assumptions?

Sean Perryman President of the Fairfax NAACP at the time of the workshop, is a leader in addressing equity issues including the school to prison pipeline, police reform, and technology and artificial intelligence policies. He cites data indicating the disparity of reaction to both students and adults from different backgrounds when they exhibit the same negative behaviors. For example, students of color are more likely to be removed from the school setting for disciplinary reasons leading to escalating disruptions in their education and subsequent charges of involvement in criminal activity, a phenomenon known as the school to prison pipeline. Mr. Perryman expresses hope that this pattern can be broken by asking questions such as "Who are we suspending and what for?"