

# CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY I.D.E.A. COALITION

A County-wide coalition to promote Racial and Social Justice through Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (I.D.E.A.)

The following document is a narrative that captures significant problems in our community, as defined by directly impacted community members themselves. These three barriers emerged as priorities during a series of town hall meetings and surveys held in the winter and spring of 2023. The next steps will be to develop solution teams to address these challenges. This report highlights one of the three barriers identified by the community.

## COMMUNITY/ SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

### Contents:

- Narrative defining the problem and causes of the hurdles to connectedness and belonging among the Black and Latino communities.
- Comparative data.
- Solutions offered by community members who attended April 2023 Town Hall meetings.
- Solutions proposed from the full I.D.E.A. Coalition meeting in May of 2023.

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## Community/Social Activities

*“Honor and celebrate diverse cultures.”*

### Definition of the Problem

Conversations and data-gathering with the Black and Latino communities of Chautauqua County revealed both a lack of social opportunities or gathering spaces, particularly for young people, and a gap in knowledge about what kinds of opportunities and resources are already available. Community members expressed how historically many resources are not just missing but have been initiated and then systematically taken away. The community has voiced their fatigue following years of many past and failed efforts to create positive change, a lack of trust in institutions and power structures, and frustration that there is little or no civic support for events and other celebrations of their cultures. The need for community initiatives and social activities and spaces are the topics that have been consistently brought up at the I.D.E.A. community meetings. In fact, it was the issue that came up the most consistently. People are looking for places where they can connect with each other and feel like they belong.

### From our perspective – what is *causing* this problem?

- Project grant terminations and funding for programs without feasible sustainability plans
- Lack of actual and accessible physical spaces for social activities. Accessibility includes physical accessibility as well as social. Community members have stated that they would like to feel safe to be themselves and have a sense of belonging in the physical environment.
- There is a lack of civic representation. People making decisions in the community do not necessarily mirror the community demographics and everyday experiences.
- Existing programs and resources are not meeting the actual needs of the community, or the community is not aware of the resources available to them.
- Chautauqua County has a lack of appropriate childcare. It is considered a “childcare desert”.
- Lack of affordable summertime care and activities for children

### What are the *effects* it is having on the community?

The absence of as well as inadequately used spaces, opportunities, and celebrations further pushes these communities into the margins, causing divisions within the communities themselves. Consistently through all our town meeting interactions, we heard the fatigue in the voices and words of older community members who wanted, and in some cases, demanded to know, *“How will this time be different?”* They have seen past initiatives with

similar goals for change come and go with little impact. And while they are eager for change, they need to have and feel ownership of that change, rather than being handed ideas and solutions from individuals and entities who do not and cannot fully understand the complexity and deeply rooted nature of their communities' challenges.

## Words from our community members

“We need a network of Latino (POC) professionals.”

“We need more spaces for artistic expression and celebration of culture.”

“It is not clear where to access resources or where to hang out.”

“Cultural representation is lacking in public spaces.”

“Free, affordable programs that cultivated Hispanic voices were taken from us.”

“[We need] more publicity for existing resources.”

## Comparison Data

Graphics of our particular community regarding these problems and their effects are not something that is readily available due to the lack of comprehensive research on the subjects. Basic demographic data can help us begin to examine the challenges and opportunities Chautauqua County faces in its effort to build a more inclusive and equitable community.

PEOPLE				
Race and Hispanic Origin	Dunkirk, NY	Jamestown, NY	Chautauqua County, NY	National
White alone, percent	73.3%	87.6%	93.2%	75.5%
Black or African American alone, percent	10.8%	2.5%	2.8%	13.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.4%	0.2%	0.8%	1.3%
Asian alone, percent	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%	6.3%

	Dunkirk, NY	Jamestown, NY	Chautauqua County, NY	National
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%
Two or More Races, percent	8.2%	4.5%	2.5%	3.0%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	28.2%	10.6%	8.5%	19.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	61.9%	82.3%	86.3%	58.9%
<i>*Data from census.gov</i>				

Due to the rise of steel production companies, manufacturing companies, and richness in agriculture, Chautauqua County witnessed an influx of immigration/migration, including people of color and traditionally marginalized communities last century. In the 1960s-80s, Puerto Ricans, Black families from the South, and Mexican/Central American immigrating people began planting roots in Chautauqua County and became an integral part of the workforce and economy. Of course, also due to the fall of industry in the community, these groups and the rest of the community have suffered a decrease in income and opportunity.

At first, not included in the traditional social clubs and community organizations of the area, these minority groups systematically were positioned as outcasts and relied on creating their own community-based organizations and stayed amongst their own ethnic and economic/income status groups.

Chautauqua County Organizations created for the empowerment Latino and Black Communities in 2023:

- Hispanic Community Council
- The African American Heritage House (Chautauqua Institution)
- Dunkirk Latino Lakefront Festival (Dunkirk, NY)

Chautauqua County programs within other organizations that primarily cater to Latino and Black Communities in 2023:

- Boys & Girls Club of Jamestown and Dunkirk
- SUNY Fredonia METS (Migrant Education Tutorial and Support Services)
- Eastside Jamestown YMCA
- Numerous outreach programs within established community service organizations that have created initiatives for the advancement of the Latino/e community. For example: Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc., The Chautauqua Center, Jamestown and Dunkirk Public Schools, Family Service of Chautauqua Region, Chautauqua Adult Day Care, SUNY JCC, etc.

Mentioned previously, the lack of representation of the Black and Latino/e community in legislative positions, local politics, private and non-profit organization boards, and in education has allowed for systemic policies to be created with either these populations not in mind or assistance to these populations that were not successful due to lack of cultural competency by decision-making bodies.

Below is a comparison of Jamestown, NY, Oswego, NY, and Ithaca, NY. Ithaca is considered a more inclusive environment and has many privileges that cities and towns in Chautauqua County do not have, including tourism, inclusive/belonging branding, larger workforce (working age), and higher income. This comparison is only shown to exhibit the possibility of creating a more inclusive and equitable environment of communities of this size in Upstate New York.

Population	Jamestown, NY	Oswego, NY	Ithaca, NY
Population Estimates, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	28,243	17,150	32,870
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	28,712	16,921	32,108
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	31,146	18,142	30,014
<b>Age and Sex</b>			
Persons under 5 years, percent	7.40%	5.1%	1.80%
Persons under 18 years, percent	24.20%	22.9%	7.60%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	16.60%	17.3%	6.60%
Female persons, percent	50.90%	49.4%	49.20%
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>			
White alone, percent	87.60%	91.6%	68.00%
Black or African American alone, percent(a)	2.50%	1.40%	5.70%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent(a)	0.20%	0.10%	0.10%
Asian alone, percent(a)	0.20%	1.40%	16.10%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent(a)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Two or More Races, percent	4.50%	4.30%	6.80%
Hispanic or Latino, percent(b)	10.60%	3.10%	8.40%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	82.30%	90.20%	64.10%
<b>Population Characteristics</b>			
Veterans, 2017-2021	1,755	1,025	411
Foreign born persons, percent, 2017-2021	2.3%	2.6%	16.8%
<b>Housing</b>			
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2017-2021	48.6%	52.4%	26.4%

\*The population has slightly decreased in Jamestown and Oswego and increased in Ithaca.

\*There is a larger 18–64-year-old population in Ithaca.

<b>Population</b>	<b>Jamestown, NY</b>	<b>Oswego, NY</b>	<b>Ithaca, NY</b>
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2017-2021	\$66,100	\$93,200	\$282,000
Median gross rent, 2017-2021	\$646	\$925	\$1,248
<b>Families &amp; Living Arrangements</b>			
Households, 2017-2021	12,313	7,199	12,547
Persons per household, 2017-2021	2.29	2.27	1.93
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2017-2021	8.8%	4.8%	24.9%
<b>Education</b>			
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2017-2021	85.6%	91.0%	96.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2017-2021	18.9%	27.0%	69.2%
<b>Health</b>			
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2017-2021	17.1%	12.9%	6.0%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	6.00%	5.3%	4.80%
<b>Economy</b>			
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2017-2021	57.70%	57.8%	53.3%
Total health care and social assistance receipts/revenue, 2017 (\$1,000)(c)	249,789	244,818	124,100
<b>Income &amp; Poverty</b>			
Median household income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$36,162	\$47,847	\$40,973
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$21,599	\$28,336	\$26,423
Persons in poverty, percent	28.10%	25.20%	34.50%
<i>*Data from census.gov</i>			

\*Income is higher in Ithaca and Oswego. There are more opportunities for a large workforce in Ithaca.

Ithaca, NY is the center for:

- The Latino Civic Association of Tompkins County. The Association “*dedicated to serving the Latino community of Tompkins County by providing a platform for its social, cultural, education and civic expression.*”
- Southside Community Center, *focusing on empowering and affirming the Black community in Ithaca.*
- Multicultural Resource Center
- All Black Everything Arts Festival
- Ballet Folklorico de Ithaca (Traditional Dance class)

It is recognized that Chautauqua County is not Ithaca. There are geographical and systemic differences that may not be changed or will need a comprehensive, decades-long equity plan. The purpose of this comparison is to illustrate the potential of a small city/county in Upstate New York.

Unsurprisingly, due to the low number of Latinos in Oswego, NY, there was little information available about Latino/e – based community organizations or activities. SUNY Oswego, a four-year state college, has a Latino Student Union for their students, and have created many events to teach others about the culture and empower their Latino students. SUNY Oswego also has a Black Student Union, an organization that creates programs for their members and all of SUNY Oswego. The town of Oswego, however, has no known organizations, programs, or activities created for the Black and/or Latino/e community. According to the article, “Diversity Lacking Among Oswego Business Owners”, on *The Oswegonian* in 2014, there are no positive initiatives by the town to create an inclusive and more equitable environment when it comes to its Black population. A local African-American physical therapist stated, that there is not even a hair salon or barber in town that “can do ethnic hair.”

The population under the age of 18 (children/adolescents) is large in Jamestown and Oswego in comparison to Ithaca. There has been, and still currently, a large demand for appropriate childcare and need for youth programs and activities in these economically disenfranchised communities. During the I.D.E.A. Coalition’s community meetings, these communities have also expressed the need for network and support groups for adults of color, specifically professionals of color.

Chautauqua County, primarily the Jamestown and Dunkirk-Fredonia communities, have initiated programs and cultural appreciation projects but have never been able to sustain them for a long period of time. During the town hall meetings, residents spoke about the need for resource centers that can actually assist the Black and Latino populations with their community needs and allow for the public to be educated on local resources. Throughout our community meetings, the people of Chautauqua County literally demanded out loud for change and for long-term inclusive programming.