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After releasing our Statement of Intense and Profound Love last February 2020, HopeWorks has embarked on a journey to recognize and disrupt the racist systems leading to homelessness. Founded in 1985, HopeWorks (formerly St. Martin's Hospitality Center) is now one of the largest nonprofit homeless service providers in New Mexico.

Why does homelessness continue to rise in Albuquerque?

Because until we tackle the intrinsic barriers of white supremacy that oppress people of color and those living in poverty, we will always take two steps forward and three steps backward. If we remain complacent, we are tacitly saying it is okay that some of us have homes and some do not.

What are some of the barriers?

- Wage inequality and disparity. Of extremely low-income households in Albuquerque, 63% are headed by a person identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color).
- Lack of access to high-quality education for all.
- High criminalization among those of color. In 2018, Black Americans represented 33% of the sentenced prison population, nearly triple their 12% share of the U.S. adult population.
- Generational poverty. Due to all of the above, BIPOC families cannot generate enough wealth to leave behind, and the cycle of poverty continues.

Just like being anti-racist denotes a conscious, daily effort to work toward dismantling racism (and a lack of effort leads to reinforcing racism), “anti-homelessness” denotes an obligation on the part of everyone to work toward ending homelessness.

Anti-homelessness means:

- Acknowledging that homelessness predominately affects people of color. Nationally, 40% of people experiencing homelessness are Black or African-American, and 22% are Hispanic or Latinx, comprising 13% and 18% of the U.S. population, respectively.
- Recognizing that rounding up people in tent cities, without adequate, affordable housing, is not a long-term solution.
- Calling out the City of Albuquerque and Mayor Tim Keller for an egregious use of public funds in purchasing the Gibson Medical Center. With no money to remodel in a thoughtful, trauma-informed way, this acquisition reeks of a hasty, politically-motivated money pit (long after Keller is gone), which feels more like a prison than a welcoming place for shelter and wraparound services. Did the local homeless service providers have input in this decision?
- Working toward investing in more affordable housing and housing + care (such as HopeWorks' Hope Village, the state's first single site project, to be completed in August 2021. This project on our campus provides housing for the community's chronically homeless and offers 24-hour supportive care.)

Until there is alignment in political will, and until we acknowledge that our society has failed our most vulnerable (and actually created homelessness), we will never end homelessness in Albuquerque.

The Urban Institute's 2020 report on the state of Albuquerque's housing market includes critical and urgent recommendations. We challenge our City and County partners, local business and community leaders, and stakeholders, to collaborate on ensuring the report's outcomes become reality:

- Develop an inclusive process to set a shared vision for increasing housing affordability and reducing homelessness.
- Increase the pipeline of market-rate and affordable rental units and preserve/expand affordable units with subsidies. The City Council just passed \$5 million for affordable housing, which is not enough. \$10 million was the standard a decade ago.
- Expand rental assistance.
- Increase exits to permanent housing.

We cannot continue to live in an unjust society that prioritizes those who are housed over those who are unhoused. We must work toward being anti-racist and toward anti-homelessness. Will you join us?

Annam Manthiram, *Co-CEO, HopeWorks*

Greg Morris, *Co-CEO, HopeWorks*