



Alejandro Queral

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Because facts matter.

A Note from the Executive Director

More than 12 months after the pandemic put much of life on hold, spring has brought for me a renewed sense of optimism. My hope is that the laws and policies we enact as a state and a country provide a reset on race-relations. As we have argued in the past, we can't go back to the old normal. A renewal must be anti-racist, reforming the systems and institutional policies that work against the interests of people of color, preventing them from building wealth and experiencing the same benefits of economic prosperity.

Our legislative agenda for the 2021 session addresses key areas of economic policy that leave Black, indigenous and other people of color behind. These include ensuring that all workers surviving on low wages can access the EITC and creating a tax structure that is based on people's ability to pay. Right now, Oregon's tax system asks proportionately more of the poor than of the rich, thereby diminishing economic opportunity and worsening racial disparities.

This is an ambitious agenda, one that is likely to take time to fully come to fruition. **Our success in moving this forward will depend on our ability to change the conversation in Salem – how well we are able to reach and educate legislators on the link between taxes and racial equity.** To this end, we are working with advocate partners and key allies in the legislature to hold hearings on the racial impacts of our tax code and to create other opportunities to hold conversations, present facts, and consider policy changes aimed at ending the entrenched unfairness of our systems.

I also believe that in order to be effective at changing the conversation, our collaboration with community partners must go deeper than discreet legislative priorities. As a policy shop focused on tax and budget issues, our ability to advocate for low-income and historically oppressed communities will depend on how well we understand the issues and barriers they face, as well as the assets and strengths that already exist in those communities. In the coming months we will engage these partners to understand how the Center's work can better support their economic policy priorities. Ultimately, we hope to enhance our collective ability to focus the conversation on policies that eliminate racial disparities.

The possibility for renewal is within our grasp. Together, we can seize this moment to fight for public policies that build economic prosperity for all Oregonians — Black, brown and white.

Thank you for making our work possible.

Alejandro