

# BHI Partner Highlight, December 2023: Habitat for Humanity of Seattle-King & Kittitas Counties

## **Who does HFH – SKKC serve?**

Habitat for Humanity of Seattle-King & Kittitas Counties has been serving communities in the area for 38 years. Our homeowners and repair clients are everyday people- nurses, teachers, home care workers, and other essential workers that serve our community every single day. A third of people we serve are Black and African America, a third are other communities of color and a third are white. Our applicants earn 80% of the Area Median Income and below and these are families that don't have alternatives and often face displacement from the communities that they've called home, due to rising housing prices.

## **How did HFH – SKKC become involved in BHI?**

We are proud to be a founding member of the Black Home Initiative. In the wake of the death of George Floyd we decided to look inward to see how we could do better and live up to our roots as an anti-racist organization. Therefore, we were excited to join the founding of the Black Home Initiative as a full team member.

## **Why does HFH – SKKC believe in the BHI shared priority?**

Habitat for Humanity was born out of the vision from Koinonia Farm in Americus, GA in 1942 as a mixed-race community. From that background, Habitat for Humanity was born, working to share the message of community and safe, decent, and affordable housing for all. If we want to create a world where everyone has a safe, decent, and affordable place to live then we must close the racial homeownership gap. The foundational inequality at the heart of housing and land use policy. Discriminatory barriers to Black and PoC homeownership are a major factor in our current housing crisis and increasingly segregated communities in terms of health and opportunity- fifty-five years after the Fair

Housing Act was signed into law. We believe closing the racial homeownership gap is essential and it is closely tied to our values and origins as an organization.

### **How does HFH – SKKC support BHI?**

We proudly support the Black Home Initiative as a full team member. We have made changes internally to improve our selection process to ensure Black (both American and Immigrant) homebuyers and other PoC applicants are successful. We listened to the Black community; in particular, we've listened to both successful and unsuccessful applicant feedback on our process. In addition to that, we've made advocacy around closing the racial homeownership gap a central pillar of our legislative agenda, which has resulted in successful legislative efforts. We have also created a department committed to Real Estate Partnerships and we are intentionally focused on partnering with community-led organizations to develop desperately needed affordable housing.

### **What inspires your work?**

Every time one of our homebuyers gets their keys, we have a bell in the office that the homebuyer rings. Without being prompted to, all our staff in the office clap or cheer for that homebuyer because, in the process of applying for that home and making their way through our process, we hear that person's story. Our homebuyers have often overcome personal or structural barriers to become Habitat homeowners. Each of those precious families enrich our communities and those precious families inspire us to do our work, regardless of a project or initiative presents a challenge.

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To learn more about Habitat for Humanity of Seattle-King & Kittitas Counties, visit their website at [www.habitatskc.org](http://www.habitatskc.org).