



Seattle
Office for Civil Rights

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Seattle Office for Civil Rights partners with ROC United to celebrate Seattle restaurant owners and release racial equity report

Seattle - (July 26, 2021)

The Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) United, in partnership with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR), released a report in July 2020 called "[*The Great Service Divide: Occupational Segregation, Inequality, and the Promise of a Living Wage in the Seattle Restaurant Industry*](#)," which highlights the disparities in racial equity and segregation in Seattle restaurants.

In order to determine the role of passive or implicit, and active discrimination in hiring practices in Seattle's restaurant industry, ROC United and SOCR examined restaurant hiring practices and the experiences of workers of color utilizing census data to analyze segregation patterns within the industry, matched pair audit tests of job seekers, and interviews and focus groups with restaurant workers. Patterns of discrimination were examined within the service industry in order to craft proposals to support and encourage the adoption of racial equity practices by employers and industry at large.

Some key findings from the report include:

- While workers of color represent 30 percent of the employed population in Seattle as a whole, they represent 46 percent of the employed restaurant workforce.
- Positions throughout both the "Front of House" (FOH, dining floor) and the "Back of House" (BOH, kitchen) are highly segregated by race and ethnicity. Although workers of color account for 46 percent of the industry's workforce, workers of color are concentrated in less visible, lower-wage jobs, and are underrepresented in the coveted, highest-paid FOH positions. Only 18 percent of bartenders in Seattle are workers of color.
- The distribution of workers of color among different positions based on earnings does not reflect the diversity of the industry's workforce, suggesting inequitable systems of



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hiring and promotion into higher-paying positions. Twenty-six percent of white bartenders and servers earn a livable wage, compared to 15 percent of bartenders and servers of color in Seattle.

- Matched pair audit tests of 105 fine dining establishments were conducted, with a total of 100 valid completed audits. Of these, there was no statistical difference in hiring outcomes based on interactions with hosts and management, however evidence of bias in social interactions favoring in-group, or white testers was found in 49 percent of audits.

The report led to an event which will pay tribute to Seattle-based restaurant owners who continue to practice sustainable racial equity models that champion living wages, essential benefits, fair promotion policies, and safety guidelines, most notably for workers of color. The [“Paying Tribute to Seattle ‘High Road’ Restaurant Owners”](#) event takes place on July 29, 3:00pm PST.

The event features:

- Dr. Sekou Siby, President and CEO, ROC United
- Mariko Lockhart, Director, Seattle Office For Civil Rights
- Erika White, Owner, Fat's Chicken and Waffles
- Geetanjali Vailoor, Owner, Union Coffee
- Kristi Brown, Owner, Communion Restaurant & Bar /That Brown Girl Cooks!
- Gina Tolentino, Owner, Bar Del Corso
- Jordan Brown, Assistant producer, Racial Equity Project / former server
- Gabriele Brownstein, Server
- Megan Krantz, Teaching artist / former server