Mission

As part of Academic Affairs, our mission is to engage in teaching, research and service to promote:

- Understanding of race and ethnic relations
- Appreciation of diverse peoples and cultures of the U.S. and other nations
- More equitable and inclusive communities and institutions

One Community

ONE COMMUNITY is the foundational theme that guides the Walker Institute in its mission.

ONE COMMUNITY draws on the American ideal of equal opportunity for all, and that our prosperity and quality of life depend on this. Unfortunately, ongoing racial disparities compounded by high poverty rates are slowing progress toward the achievement of this ideal.

ONE COMMUNITY is intended to function simultaneously as: A community indicators system highlighting indicators of well-being by race, ethnicity and class. A program of community-engaged research and service. A change strategy that engages persons of all backgrounds in a common conversation about overcoming differences in understandings and values across racial, geographic and class lines.

Meet the Team

Faculty
- Luchara Wallace, PhD – Director
- Don Cooney, PhD – Associate Director
- Lewis Walker, PhD - Emeritus

Staff
- Karika Parker, PhD – Post Doctoral Fellow
- Denisha Griffey, PhD – Program Manager
- Gus Calbert, PhD – Community Liaison
- Shaghil Husain, Research Associate
- Shimonta Dickerson – Administrative Assistant Sr.

Graduate Assistants
- Kemmel Palmer – Counselor Ed. & Supervision
- Asif Masum – Data Science

Student Office Assistant
- Mariana Bringas – Psychology

Recent Guest Speakers
- Ernie Paniccoli – HIP HOP 50th Anniversary (2023)
- Dr. Eric Thomas – DINE 4 JUSTICE (2023)
- Dr. Khalilah Ali – Women’s History Month (2023)
- Jemele Hill – MLK Day Celebration (2023)
- Gabby Rivera – Hispanic Heritage Month (2022)
- Thomas Abt – Bleeding Out Working Group (2022)
- Shaun King – Make Change Student Leadership Summit on Advocacy Day (2020)
- Daryl Johnson – Hateland Book discussion (2019)

Accomplishments
- Bleeding Out Working Group and Community Book Read – collaboration with the community to help address the gun violence in Kalamazoo (2022)
- Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows Program – newest WIRE program established to work with juvenile impacted youth and advocates (2021)
- Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo – the institute has played a key role in the planning, development, and implementation of the city’s initiative to promote equal opportunity and social mobility (2014-Present)
- Minor in Race and Ethnic Relations (2011-present)
- Office for Service Learning – the institute championed the development of service learning at WMU and was its first home (2010-2012)
- WIRE Youth Development Programs (2008-present)
Through WIRE, the Walker Institute fulfills an important part of its mission: to help build more equitable and inclusive communities through community service. Since 2008, more than 1,000 youth between 7 and 13 years-old have participated in one or more WIRE Youth Development Programs from the Walker Institute.

WIRE programs help youth envision themselves in college and in desirable careers—and provide culturally sensitive guidance and instruction to help them get there. All programs are free of charge.

In 2021, WIRE introduced the Youth Social Justice Fellows program targeted at youth 11 -21 that have been impacted by the juvenile justice system.

**STEM Programming**

Held since 2014, the WIRE Math and Science Summer Camp, celebrated 10 years serving the greater Kalamazoo County Community.

The program introduces youth with the opportunity to explore different areas in STEM through hands-on learning.

In addition to hands-on learning, the program provides math enrichment to strengthen the participants skills.

In 2019, the WIRE Program introduce the WIRE Saturday Academy. This program followed the same format as the summer program but allowed the participants to receive STEM enrichment throughout the academic year.

During year 2 of the program the fellows hosted their first judges forum to hear from candidates who were up for election in Kalamazoo County.

**Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows**

The Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows Program (YJFF) was established in 2021. The program focuses on justice impacted youth and youth who want to be advocates for their peers. During the first year of the program, YJFF developed a youth juvenile justice training advocacy program, which concluded with an Advocacy Day at the Capitol and a trip to Café Momentum in Dallas during year 1 and Pittsburg in year 2.

**WIRE Programs Offered since 2008**

- WIRE Chess Club (2023)
- Together Kalamazoo- An Exploration of Youth Creativity, Diversity, and Community through Arts – collaboration with BIGthink (2014)
- WIRE Golf (2013)
- WIRE Summer Book Club (2012-2013)
- Edison Cooks Nutrition and Food Preparation Program (2011)
- Razas United Youth Program – collaboration with Hispanic American Council & Boys and Girls Club (2008-2011)
- Kalamazoo Youth Media Initiative – a collaboration with the WMU School of Communication and the Public Media Network (2008-2009)