Over 2 million people live in Chicago, yet over 800,000 Chicagoans, many of them low-income children of color, have never even seen Lake Michigan, let alone been on a boat. The Jackson Park Yacht Club Foundation (JPYC Foundation) sees maritime activities as one way, though it should not be the only way, to address Chicago’s, boating’s, and especially the sport of sailing’s, racial and economic disparities.

In the city where one of the largest and most violent race riots, the Chicago race riots of 1919, started on the water on the South side of Chicago, it particularly incumbent on Chicago area boaters to remember our city’s tragic history regarding access to the Lakefront, privilege and race. 38 people – 23 black and 15 white – died during this week long period from July 27 to Aug 3, 1919. Over 537 more people were injured -- two-thirds of the injured being African American and one-third white. And approximately 1,000 to 2,000 people, mostly African American, lost their homes. The prolonged conflict made this one of the worst riots in the history of Illinois.

It came to a boil during a heat wave that summer with the murder of Eugene Williams, an African-American child, who inadvertently drifted into a white swimming area at an informally segregated beach near 29th Street. One white beachgoer, indignant at this affront, began hurling rocks at Williams, causing him to drown. The official coroner’s report cited that Williams drowned because the stone throwing kept him from coming to shore.

The JPYC Foundation mission is provide outreach, education, training, support and resources necessary to engage young people and adults in boating and other activities on and around the water, including non-traditional participants in boating activities. By connecting people to Lake Michigan -- one of Chicago’s greatest free assets for public enjoyment – the JPYC Foundation is changing both our nation’s history – of slave ships in the 1600s forcibly bringing African Americans to this county in their holds – and our city’s history – where for decades African American’s were not allowed by the Park District or the city to access the Lakefront.

Our Open Horizons Youth Sailing Program – a subsidized 2-week sailing camp that teaches youth, who otherwise might never have the opportunity to be exposed to sailing,
teamwork, resilience and other life skills -- not only connect young people to sailing, but uses it as a fun, challenging way to embrace education, including, maritime arts, ecology, literature, poetry and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), the natural environment and themselves.

Through sailing the JPYC Foundation literally hopes to open youth’s horizons and help them to navigate a new course in their lives, whether by learning new skills in a new environment or choosing to excel in a sport that provides life-changing opportunities that extend beyond sailing such as college admittance, first jobs and careers.

We are proactively dismantling racism, in society, boating and the sport of sailing, by building a pipeline of African American instructors and sailors of color who --- this time around --- will be steering the ship instead of being cargo in its hold!

We are and will continue to do our part. Now we are calling upon the extended boating community in Chicago and nationally to do their part.

For too long, we have allowed social and racial inequities in boating (especially sailing) and our society to continue. Yet, social and racial equity will not come without intentional responses by the entire boating community and our nation. We have both the ability and the obligation to bring about change. Doing anything less is being silent, complacent and continuing to contribute to the systemic racial inequities that have been the Achilles heel of our society, the boating community and the sport of sailing.

Join us by in our efforts to dismantle the racial inequity and change the color of boating by considering how you can:

• Provide funding to support black and brown teens to become junior sailing and boating instructors and inspirational examples for younger sailors/boaters; staff should reflect the diversity of the children we should be engaging in maritime activities. If you do not know where to donate, you can consider donating to JPYC Foundation’s pipeline program. To donate click [here](#) and indicate that your donation is for the JPYC Foundation’s diverse instructor training fund.

• Incorporate curricular lessons on diversity, empathy, implicit bias and racial equity, so that all boaters, young and old, boys and girls, white, black and brown, understand their responsibility for social justice and racial equity in our society and in our boating community.

• Connect with diverse boaters in Chicago and around the world who can be role models for all our young boaters, but especially young sailors/boaters of color so they see people like them thriving in our boating community.
• Create a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee to discuss ways that we can educate our community and empower our youth boaters of color on and off the water.

• Extend the influence of your organization to support facilitators and remove barriers for boaters of color when participating with other boating groups (e.g., yacht clubs, high school/college sailing teams, fleets) and events such as regattas and clinics.

We hope that today, July 27, 2020, on the 101 year anniversary of the 1919 Chicago race riots, you will not only stand with us in solidarity, but actually take action!

Only by acting together can we ensure that all Chicagoans have access to and enjoy our great Chicago Lakefront. And if we can achieve diversity, equity and inclusion on the water – then we can certainly achieve it on land and across our land.

Sincerely,

Jackson Park Yacht Club Foundation Board of Directors and Staff

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**DONATE TO JACKSON PARK YACHT CLUB FOUNDATION**

To donate click [here](#) and indicate that your donation is for the JPYC Foundation.
About Jackson Park Yacht Club Foundation:

Founded in 2012, Jackson Park Yacht Club Foundation (“JPYC Foundation”) is the 501(c)(3) affiliate of Jackson Park Yacht Club (“JPYC”), one of the oldest yacht clubs in Chicago (founded in 1896). Located in South Shore, JPYC has the largest number of African American sailors of any other yacht club in the country.  JPYC Foundation’s mission is to provide the outreach, education, training, support and resources necessary to engage young people and adults in boating and other activities on and around the water, including non-traditional participants in boating activities.  JPYC Foundation’s vision is to not only connect, young people to sailing, but use it as a fun, challenging way to embrace education, including, maritime arts, ecology, literature, poetry and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), the natural environment and themselves.  By using one of our city’s chief assets, Lake Michigan, to teach youth to sail, the JPYC Foundation literally hopes to open their horizons and help them to navigate a new course in their lives.

Videos:

WTTW CHANNEL 11: Chicago Sailing Camp Sets Sights on Diversity

NERDY MEDIA: Profile on JPYC Foundation’s Open Horizons Youth Sailing Program

TRUE STAR FOUNDATION: Highlights JPYC Foundation’s Open Horizons Youth Sailing Program

WTTW CHANNEL 11: Black Sailors Chart a New Course

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Youtube: The JPYC Foundation Sailing Program

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