

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE COMMUNITY: A Countywide Evaluation of the Black Child Legacy Campaign

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Finally, this evaluation focuses on the work of the people living or working in Oak Park, Del Paso Heights-North Sacramento, Arden Arcade, North Highlands-Foothill Farms, Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard, Meadowview, and Valley Hi. To all the organizations and people representing these communities, thank you for the opportunity to observe and listen to your stories of the Black Child Legacy Campaign experience.

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For decades, African American children have died at higher rates than other children in Sacramento County, a tragic, shameful and *preventable* loss of precious lives. These persistent disparities reflect systemic racism and the barriers it creates to the health and life chances of Black children. To address the disparities and break down the barriers, Sacramento County's Board of Supervisors asked The Center at Sierra Health Foundation, working with community leaders, public officials, and advocates, to create a plan for change. In response, the Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC) was launched in 2015 with the goal of saving children's lives by transforming community systems of support.

BCLC uses five strategies to spark this transformation: building community advocacy for anti-racist, pro-community policies; advancing equitable investment and systemic impact; coordinating systems of support for children and their families; establishing a system of accountability and collective impact; and creating communications that spur neighborhood pride and activism.

The report that follows—the result of a two-year evaluation conducted by researchers at UC Davis and Sacramento State University—provides evidence of the effectiveness of the strategies in building a sustainable system of support to protect children from preventable deaths. The evaluation findings are backed up by changes in Black child death. The most recent data¹ show that the rate of African American child death has decreased by 30% from 2014 to 2018.

BCLC is rightfully celebrated as a success in Sacramento.² The Campaign is not only saving children from dying but also building community capacity to end the generational cycle of trauma and heartbreak. By starting with community leadership and advocacy and building an infrastructure of care for children and their families, it is possible to change the trajectory of tragedy. But we know the work is not done. It isn't done in Sacramento and it isn't done in jurisdictions throughout the nation. In Sacramento, we are doubling down on the strategies, using evaluation findings and experience to continually expand and strengthen the work.

BCLC draws on the power inherent in Black communities to provide a legacy of health, pride, and love to our children. We offer our experience as inspiration to others.

Chet P. Hewitt

President and CEO

Sierra Health Foundation

The Center at Sierra Health Foundation

¹ Data on child deaths in Sacramento are provided by the Child Death Review Team, which reviews the deaths of all children, 0-17, in Sacramento County to ensure that deaths by child abuse and neglect are appropriately identified, provide accurate information on all causes of death, and develop recommendations for preventing child death. As a result of these intensive reviews, there is a lag in the availability of data. The most recent data available at the time of this report comes from 2018.

² <https://blackchildlegacy.org/news/>

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Program Overview: A Transformative Approach for Health Equity

Background of the Black Child Legacy Campaign

In April of 2013, the Sacramento Blue Ribbon Commission *Report on Disproportionate African American Child Deaths* presented data documenting 20 years of disproportionate African American child mortality in Sacramento County, recommended the adoption of the goal of reducing African American child deaths by at least 10-20 percent by 2020, outlined potential approaches to achieving the goal, and established the Steering Committee on the Reduction of African American Child Deaths (SCRAAD).¹ The report identified the four causes of death most disproportionately impacting African American children in Sacramento County: infant sleep-related deaths, perinatal conditions, child abuse and neglect homicides, and third-party homicides.

The report also highlighted neighborhoods with the most disproportionate rates of African American child death in the county. Seven neighborhoods (see Figure 1) became the focus of the efforts of the SCRAAD:

- Arden-Arcade
- Del Paso Heights/North Sacramento
- Fruitridge/Stockton Boulevard
- Meadowview
- North Highlands/Foothill Farms
- Oak Park
- Valley Hi

Within these communities, the aim is the strategic provision of targeted resources where systemic changes are urgently required to improve the health and well-being of the most vulnerable children.

Following an intensive community process driven by core values of collaboration, community engagement, commitment, accountability, innovation, sustainability, and service, the Steering Committee created a strategic plan in March

¹ The Blue Ribbon Commission report, strategy and implementation plans, and other documents and resources can be found at www.shfcenter.org/raacd.

2015, *African American Children Matter: What We Must Do Now*, outlining five priority strategies to transform public systems and foster meaningful community engagement:

- Promoting Advocacy and Policy Transformation
- Equitable Investment and Systematic Impact
- Coordinated Systems of Support
- Data-driven Accountability and Collective Impact
- Communications and Information Systems

FIGURE 1: MAP OF THE SEVEN NEIGHBORHOODS



In June 2015, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted to approve \$1.5 million annually for five years to support operationalization of the strategic plan. This funding commitment has complemented investments by the county's First 5 Sacramento Commission and public health, human services, child welfare, and probation departments. The funding from the Board of Supervisors was structured to focus on engaging community and building and strengthening community infrastructure to quickly mobilize to reduce four specific causes of death. In 2016, the City of Sacramento joined the initiative, committing \$750,000 in the first year. Additional funding has been garnered from other sources, including the

Obama Foundation and the Board of State & Community Corrections (See Figure 2).²

FIGURE 2: FUNDING FOR BLACK CHILD LEGACY CAMPAIGN

Total Investment to The Center (2014-2020)

\$10.9 Million

\$7,500,000	Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
\$1,321,000	First 5 Sacramento
\$750,000	City of Sacramento
\$500,000	Obama Foundation
\$500,000	Board of State & Community Corrections
\$257,000	Sacramento County (Cultural Brokers)
\$75,000	Kaiser Permanente
\$57,000	HealthNet
\$25,000	Sierra Health Foundation

Shortly after receiving funding from the Board of Supervisors, the Steering Committee issued an implementation plan that described how the five interdependent strategies would be put into operation. Seven Community Incubator Leads were selected to coordinate and implement services and communications at the neighborhood level. The Community Incubator Leads are respected institutions within their communities and responsible for strengthening community infrastructure to ensure that changes created by the initiative are sustainable.



Evaluation Plan

Overview and Strategy of the Evaluation

In July 2018, researchers from the University of California, Davis and California State University, Sacramento began a two-year evaluation of the Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC). The purpose of the evaluation has been threefold. It examines how the Steering Committee on the Reduction of African American Child Deaths implemented five strategies in seven neighborhoods to reduce African American child deaths, identifies the challenges and promising practices highlighted during implementation, and will assist with scaling this work in other jurisdictions and communities experiencing similar issues throughout the United States.

From July 2018 through July 2020, the evaluation team used multiple sources of data, including 20 stakeholder interviews, participant-observation in the Steering Committee’s Evaluation Workgroup meetings, observations of several other Steering Committee meetings, and review of archival documents. This evaluation provides in-depth analysis of BCLC’s implementation of the five strategies by addressing four research questions:

1. In what ways and to what extent has each strategy been implemented?
2. What are the challenges to and facilitators of implementation success?
3. How, if at all, are Steering Committee strategies influencing public systems and their relationships with community organizations?
4. How, if at all, are Steering Committee strategies strengthening communities in ways that are likely to reduce African American child death and sustain low rates of African American child deaths into the future (e.g. increased Community Incubator Lead capacity, reduction of risk factors for the four causes of death, improved utilization of services)?

² *Black Child Legacy Campaign: An Action Guide for Engaging and Strengthening the Social Safety Net, Annual Report (March 2020).*

Transformative Justice Framework³

Throughout this report we employ a transformative justice framework (as adopted from Maisha T. Winn pedagogical stances) when examining the Black Child Legacy Campaign.

History Matters is a pedagogical stance that draws attention to local, national, and global histories. It calls on communities to find ways to engage the histories and lived experiences of those who comprise the Black Child Legacy Campaign community.

Race Matters is a commitment to resist racist ideas that impede cultivating community. This stance allows community members to see the full humanity and potential of all and to develop tools to contribute to, initiate, and guide transformative conversations and learning environments that deepen community across perceived lines of difference.

Justice Matters is a pedagogical stance that acknowledges and honors social movements that have sought education, freedom, and access. Many such movements have been organized and carried out and led by community members throughout the world.

Language Matters invites communities to consider the powerful resource of language in defining/redefining, and how language can and should be used to illuminate the assets people bring to the community, rather than situate people and their experiences as deficit/burden.

Futures Matter must be co-created by stakeholders, re-directed away from racist ideas, invoke the reflexive questions, and imagine a world where Black Lives not only matter but legacies of love, hope, and joy are fulfilled.

This report organized into nine sections (including this section). In Section II, we outline the methods employed for this evaluation. In the following section, we look at the social, political, health and economic racial inequities in the year 2020. A historical analysis demonstrates how and why

*History Matters*⁴ when examining present day racial disparities. In Section IV we discuss the findings related to each of the five interdependent strategies listed above. Section V provides portraits to illustrate the humanizing aspects of the BCLC. In the following section we suggest area of improvements for implementing the seven strategies. In Section VII we highlight the future of Sacramento according to the interviewees, our observations, and historical archives. In Section VIII we offer recommendations and lessons for other counties and cities considering a collective impact and community driven model. The Appendix includes a poetic announcement, historical analyses of the seven communities, methodology of portraiture, and a list of articles and sources we used to evaluate BCLC.

Design, Data Collection Plan, Analysis, and Positionality

The design of this formative evaluation is transformative, participatory, and ethnographic—and intended to link to the quantitative data on changes in the rates and disproportionality of African American child death. The topic being addressed by the campaign is Black child death, which the Steering Committee identified as a systemic crisis impacting historically marginalized communities of color. Ethnographic research appropriately maintains “focus on the lived experiences, activities, and social context of everyday life from the perspectives of the participants.”⁵ Our team employed several data collection methods that are reflexive (culturally responsive) and refrain from being “damaged centered.”⁶ The evaluation approach is multi-dimensional and considers micro-level individual impact points in relation to macro-structural system shifts. In other words, examining

3 Maisha T. Winn, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018); Maisha T. Winn, *Paradigm Shift in Teacher Education* (University of Michigan TeachingWorks, 2019).

4 Maisha T. Winn, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018).

5 Donna Mertens.& Amy T. Wilson. *Program evaluation theory and practice* (Guilford Publications, 2018).

6 Eve Tuck, *Suspending damage: A letter to communities* (Harvard Educational Review, 79(3), 409-428; 2009).

data points at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional level informed our findings. Methods for the evaluation included:

Participant Observation

We conducted participant observations to fully participate and learn about the implementation of the five strategies. Participant observation provided us with deeper understandings regarding the implementation process. As participant observers, we immersed ourselves in the culture and social functions being evaluated through daily routines, practices, meetings, etc. For example, we participated in several weekly discussions held in the seven neighborhoods and attended board meetings and community engagement events. Supplementing our observations, we took copious field notes about interactions between individuals.

Qualitative Interviews

We conducted 20 qualitative interviews with selected participants and stakeholders. Qualitative interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended protocol that invited narrative responses and encouraged participants to speak openly about their personal experiences with challenges, successes, promises, etc. of strategy implementation.

Data Analysis

We analyzed our field notes first by writing conceptual memos to ourselves, which helped us organize our findings and bring in theoretical insights that emerged during our engagement in the field. We looked for patterns and themes that emerged from our field notes and observations and used words and phrases to come up with coding categories. For the interviews, we transcribed and analyzed for “significant statements,” organizing those significant statements into themes.

Historical Analysis

The disproportionality of African American childhood deaths in Sacramento did not develop just now or in isolation. It would be completely off the mark to study this crisis without an accurate understanding of relevant historical context. We

thus conducted a historical analysis using archival data and city and public policy review, as well as historical analysis of the communities participating in BCLC, to shed light on histories of homeownership, community investment, and services; and education, unemployment, and poverty rates. This information allowed us to look at how history matters to patterns of child death.

Portraiture

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, we relied on Portraiture, a qualitative research methodology that bridges science and art, that merges “the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature.”⁹ Developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, the Emily Hargroves Fisher Professor of Education at Harvard University, Portraiture seeks to unveil the universal truths and resonant stories that lie in the specifics and complexity of everyday life. *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), in particular, serves as a seminal text of this relatively new methodology that illuminates the complex dynamics and subtlety of human experience and organizational life. As the pioneer of this qualitative research process, Lawrence-Lightfoot’s own work becomes a roadmap for ideas and insights about how to mine for answers and develop the arc of the story. Her scholarship serves as a source of inspiration as more and more social scientists are utilizing her methods (e.g., Catone, 2014; Chapman, 2007; Harding, 2005; Hill, 2005; Ononuju, 2016; Watson, 2008; 2012; 2014; 2018). Details on this methodology are available in the Appendix.

Positionality

“A transformative approach to justice... addresses the harms and obligations inherent in social, economic, and political systems.”¹⁰

7 Robert C. Bogdan & Sari Knopp Biklen. *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon; 1992).

8 John W. Creswell. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007).

9 Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, *The Art & Science of Portraiture*, 1997, p. 4.

10 Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (New York: Good Books, 2015), 240.

This evaluation plan is led by three equity-orientated researchers from the University of California, Davis. Lawrence T. Winn (PhD and JD) and Maisha T. Winn (PhD), Chancellor Leadership Professor, are the Co-Founders and Co-Directors of the Transformative Justice in Education Center (TJE). Dr. Vajra Watson (PhD) was the UC Davis Director of Research and Policy for Equity and now serves as the Faculty Director of the Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Sacramento State University. This evaluation is guided by a transformative justice model and implements mixed-methods. Central to transformative justice model is the focus on cultural competency, commitment to community-driven solutions, and emphasis on structural and historic barriers. Thus, throughout this evaluation we employ “humanizing research” in which scholars become “worthy witnesses” in their sites by earning the respect and trust of participants. Our work is grounded in specific beliefs about research:

- We believe evaluators/researchers must resist conducting “damage-centered” evaluations/research in indigenous and marginalized communities. The seven neighborhoods identified for implementation strategies have been historically marginalized, racially segregated, and economically oppressed. As researchers who come from similar communities we know firsthand the damage of deficit-based interventions.
- We believe in “humanizing research” in which scholars become “worthy witnesses” in their sites by earning the respect and trust of participants.¹¹ We have collectively written over 100 articles, books, chapters, and reports that discuss participants as experts rather than objects/subjects.
- We believe *Histories Matter*, *Race Matters*, *Justice Matters*, *Language Matters*, and *Futures Matter* (see Figure 3) – and must be examined and explicitly addressed to get to the root of inequities.¹²
- We believe that the aim and approach of the Black Child Legacy Campaign aligns seamlessly with our own work and goals related to every child, and especially children from marginalized communities, having the access,

support, and opportunity to enjoy healthy and prosperous lives.

As transformative evaluators, we expect our social justice values to influence the process and outcomes of our evaluation work.¹³

FIGURE 3: MAISHA T. WINN, 2019



11 Django Paris & Maisha T. Winn. *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*. (New York: Sage Publications, 2013).

12 Maisha T. Winn, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018); Maisha T. Winn, *Paradigm Shift in Teacher Education* (University of Michigan TeachingWorks, 2019).

13 Donna Mertens & Amy T. Wilson. *Program evaluation theory and practice* (Guilford Publications, 2018).

Sacramento 2020: A Black Legacy of Justice and Equity at Work

The Black Child Legacy Campaign and local leaders speak out to address community needs during the coronavirus pandemic—

(A headline for ABC News-Sacramento in reference to Rev. Les Simmons, Kindra Montgomery-Block, and Berry Accius addressing need for resources for youth development, mental health service, violence prevention, and jobs).¹⁴

During the spring and summer of 2020, millions of individuals across the world stood in solidarity to protest oppressive, dehumanizing policies and practices that harm Black lives. A movement sparked by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery—on top of many other Black deaths in recent years—highlighted pervasive racial inequities impacting the life chances and opportunities of African Americans, as well as Indigenous, Latinx, and other historically marginalized communities. In a matter of months, though these overdue changes were decades in the making, states and cities removed confederate flags, monuments, and statues; universities and museums renamed buildings previously honoring white supremacists; food companies discontinued the use of racist images and stereotypes; hundreds of private business and philanthropic foundations agreed to invest billions of dollars into organizations focused on anti-Blackness and quality of life for Black

families; and cities such as Asheville, North Carolina began providing reparations for African Americans in under resourced communities.

The pursuit of racial justice spread to every corner of the world: from Minneapolis to London to Tokyo to New York to Portland to Washington, DC. In Sacramento, California thousands joined weekly protests led by local activists, leaders, youth, and organizations to oppose unfair justice systems and racial policies in the region. Established and emerging leaders held bull horns and led chants of “*Black Lives Matter*” and “*No Justice. No Peace.*” Protests moved from Oak Park to Greenhaven to Natomas. Rallies led by Black youth and leaders included individuals and groups representing diverse industries, ages, demographics, and ethnicities. Sacramento City Unified School District’s Board voted to end its contract with school resource officers and Sutter Medical Center removed a statue of colonizer John Sutter.

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Aubrey were not the only catalysts for action against anti-Blackness and police brutality. The devastating impacts of COVID 19 had already shed light on the racial disparities of historically marginalized communities, and particularly for those who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. In places like New York City, Chicago, New Orleans, and Atlanta, African Americans were infected and died at a disproportionately higher rate than their white counterparts.

14 ABC10.com Sacramento (May 29, 2020)



Similar data emerged in Arizona and New Mexico for the Navajo Nation and in cities in California such as Los Angeles and San Jose for the Latinx community. In Sacramento, communities such as Oak Park, South Sacramento, and Del Paso Heights, where large numbers of African Americans reside, experienced high infections rates.

Yet, the fight against injustices that harm Black children and their families and communities, with core focus on addressing the causes and impacts of racial health disparities, did not begin in 2020. The Sacramento region has experienced and pushed back against decades of state sanctioned violence toward Black adults and youth. In the spring of 2018, Sacramento communities, leaders, and activists marched for justice after Stephon Clark was fatally shot in his grandmother’s backyard by a police officer. Sacramento has lost hundreds of Black lives to gun violence, inadequate access to healthcare, and other avoidable causes. Local organizations have advocated for years to address these injustices.

FIGURE 4:¹⁵ RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP PHOTO

The Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC) has been a bridge connecting pre- and post-COVID 19, and pre- and post-Black Lives Matter protests, in 2020. BCLC’s work with community organizations, leaders, residents, and families to address the causes of Black death in Sacramento County has focused on the seven neighborhoods with the starkest racial disparities, using five strategies to improve the quality of health and life for Black families. Solid outcomes and the credibility of the Community Incubator Leads and partner organizations has made it possible for BCLC to respond fluidly to emerging needs associated with COVID-19 and a massively expanded Black Lives Matter movement.

Understanding current and emergent sources and experiences of racial unrest, disparity, inequity, and injustice requires committed review of Sacramento’s history. Dr. Maisha T. Winn has shown that *History Matters* as a core framework for analyzing policies and decisions that lead to and/or

15 Sarah Mizes-Trans. “Juneteenth Takes On Extra Prominence Amid National Conversation On Race” (CapRadio, 2020)



perpetuate oppressive systems.¹⁶ Scholars have shown that racist policies produce racist ideas and racial inequities.¹⁷ A historical overview of the seven focal BCLC neighborhoods is necessary groundwork to understand racial disparities, causes of death, and barriers in the way of progress and thriving today. Exploration of the creation and evolution of these neighborhoods also sheds light on various systemic and relational challenges those affiliated with BCLC have encountered while implementing key strategies.

Historical Overview: Making of Black Sacramento

“Why study history? The answer is because we virtually must, to gain access to the laboratory of human experience. When we study it reasonably well, and so acquire some usable habits of mind, as well as some basic data about the forces that affect our own lives, we emerge with relevant skills and an enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, critical thinking, and simple awareness.”

-Peter Stearns

Sacramento County Blue Ribbon Commission’s 2013 *Report on Disproportionate African American Child Deaths* analyzed 486 African American child deaths between 1990 and 2009, identifying third-party homicides, infant sleep-related death, child abuse and neglect homicides, and perinatal conditions as the leading causes of death for the focal cohort. Perhaps the most illuminating, though unsurprising, aspect of the report was that 81 percent (392 of 486) of these child deaths took place in six Sacramento county neighborhoods: Meadowview/Valley Hi, Arden-Arcade, North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights, Oak Park, North Highlands, and Fruitridge/Stockton.

The report endorsed the adoption of recommendations “specific to the four leading causes of disproportionate African American child death” that included increasing public

awareness and information about this issue, providing direct services and programs to families and communities, instituting policies that prioritize the needs of children, and developing data analysis tools to inform decision making. As comprehensive as the report was, it did not include any historical context situating the disproportionate deaths of African American children in Sacramento County. Beyond very useful data regarding notable childhood death location patterns, the report makes no attempt to analyze specific conditions in these areas that contribute to this problem. It is thus timely and critical, at this point, to introduce a historical analysis of each of these neighborhoods to determine and change specific conditions that have imperiled the health and safety of African American children. Any campaign to save the lives of Black children must reckon with the past or run the risk of never comprehensively addressing the root causes.

While the neighborhoods that have become the focus by the Black Child Legacy Campaign each have a unique history, all share common threads of divestment and neglect that explain, in part, why these contexts evolved into spaces hostile to the lives of African American children. All of these neighborhoods, except perhaps Del Paso Heights, were originally all-white. This is no coincidence. Like most American cities, Sacramento has a long tradition of residential segregation that dates to early 20th century, and acknowledging this history is key to understanding the current context of early childhood deaths in these neighborhoods. The following sections are snapshots of the seven neighborhoods to provide historical contexts for the communities the five strategies have been implemented. See Appendix A for complete historical analysis of the seven neighborhoods.

Oak Park

Established in 1887, Oak Park is Sacramento’s oldest suburb. Designed as a largely working-class community, Oak Park offered working-class families an opportunity to own their home while living in close proximity to downtown Sacramento. A city within a

¹⁶ Maisha T. Winn, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018).
¹⁷ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an antiracist* (One World, 2019)

city, Oak Park had developed a thriving business district along Broadway and 35th Street. Few African American families resided in the district prior to World War Two; however, the Second Great Migration and the redevelopment of the West End in downtown Sacramento brought many more Black families to the area. The most important factor that contributed to this pattern was the virtual impenetrability of other neighborhoods in Sacramento due to intense housing discrimination. In other words, Oak Park was unrestricted to African Americans, becoming one of the few areas where Blacks could easily purchase or rent property. The steady flow of Black families into Oak Park in the 1950s and 1960s set off a pattern of “white flight”—the gradual exodus of white residents and, in some cases, white-owned businesses, from an area that is becoming increasingly Black. By the late 1960s, Oak Park, which had one of the highest concentrations of African Americans in the city, had become Sacramento’s symbol for the “urban crisis”—a popular term used by the mainstream media and government to describe the plight of American cities struggling under the weight of so-called “riots”, crime, unemployment, and dilapidated housing. While Oak Park did show signs of divestment and decline by this period, it also became the center of Black culture and activism. When the Black Panther Party established a chapter in Sacramento in 1968, it operated its headquarters on 35th Street in Oak Park. Unfortunately, Oak Park never recovered from the economic fallout from the departure of homeowners and businesses. As the economic crisis of the 1970s worsened, so did Oak Park’s fortunes. Despite the efforts of community activists and organizations like the Oak Park Project Area Committee (PAC) to revitalize the area, the machinations of the local real estate industry that steered African Americans and low-income residents into Oak Park and the concurrent practice of “redlining” on the part of banks and other financial institutions made such efforts nearly impossible. Redlining is the practice by some lenders of refusing mortgage or home improvement loans even to qualified borrowers in high-risk, typically declining neighborhoods. By 1980, public housing projects and

a post office building had replaced the stretch of businesses that once stood along 35th Street.

The twenty-year period between 1980 and 2000 brought little substantial change to the area. This period could very well be described as Oak Park’s “nadir”—with high concentrations of poor, uneducated, unemployed or underemployed residents seemingly unaffected by the gains of the civil rights struggle. Parts of Oak Park has seen a resurgence in the past fifteen years but this has come largely at the expense of its most vulnerable residents. Gentrification—the process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste—has certainly brought much needed investment to the area. Restaurants and retail stores have returned to Oak Park’s business district—now dubbed as the “Broadway Triangle.” However, as property values and rents rise, many more low-income Oak Park residents will likely be pushed out.

Del Paso Heights

Del Paso Heights (DPH) is one of the oldest residential districts in the region north of the American River. Located in the former Rancho Del Paso, DPH joined several new subdivisions that developed north of the American River in the 1940s and 1950s. Intense housing discrimination, combined with the availability of cheap land, attracted many African Americans to “the Heights.” Similar to Oak Park, the Second Great Migration along with the demolition of the West End opened the floodgates for more Blacks into DPH. As an unincorporated and largely rural district, DPH suffered from inadequate services and infrastructure before it was annexed by the city in 1959. While annexation brought much needed resources to the community, it did not bring dramatic improvement to the lives of residents. Making matters worse, DPH lacked a central business district that could have provided steady employment for area residents. Freeway construction in the 1960s bypassed business districts on Marysville, Rio Linda and Del Paso Boulevard, further isolating DPH and creating unsustainable conditions for businesses to thrive. With few

major shopping centers in its vicinity and mostly small liquor stores created a food desert for many residents. Redevelopment efforts in the 1970s, like those in Oak Park, failed to generate economic growth and reduce unemployment among residents. Though DPH is still a struggling community, the last twenty years has seen some improvement. New housing developments such as Del Paso Nuevo and Renaissance have provided families of moderate income the opportunity to purchase homes in the district. Community-based organizations such as the Roberts Family Development Center and the Mutual Assistance Network have worked tirelessly for decades to provide services to DPH families and children.

North Highlands

North Highlands can be traced back to the establishment of McClellan Air Force Base in 1936. The base, along with other defense-related industries drew thousands of migrants to Sacramento during and after World War II. Eager to capitalize on this opportunity, local builders began to develop subdivisions around the base. Despite the significant presence of African American servicemen who worked at McClellan, the neighborhoods that made up North Highlands remained virtually all-white. This pattern was not accidental. Like most new postwar suburbs in Sacramento, the neighborhoods that comprised North Highlands excluded Black families. This was especially frustrating for Black McClellan employees who were forced to live in areas like Del Paso Heights that were further from their job. Just when North Highlands became more accessible to Black families it also began to show ominous signs of decline. Despite having a high population density, North Highlands lacked adequate amenities and services. A major cause for this had to do with a lack of sufficient tax revenue. The area's largest employer, McClellan Air Force Base, was tax-exempt because it was a military installation. Consequently, this made it difficult for North Highlands to sustain its parks and recreation district and fire services. Another factor that contributed to the area's decline was redlining. A major blow to North Highlands came in 1995

when the federal government announced the closure of McClellan Air Force Base, along with 350 other bases throughout the nation. When the base officially shut down in 2001, it resulted in a loss of over 11,000 people and over \$500 million in payroll. Making matters worse, the Great Recession of 2008 had an especially devastating impact on the community. North Highlands joined several distressed neighborhoods in Sacramento with a significant Black concentration that experienced a disproportionate number of home foreclosures. Many homes in North Highlands were abandoned and remained vacant for years.

Meadowview

Meadowview emerged as one of the many postwar suburbs in Sacramento County developed during the 1950s. Located between Freeport Boulevard and Twenty-Fourth Street and from Florin Road to an area south of Meadowview, the area offered middle-class Sacramentans an affordable single-family home. Up until the 1960s, the area of south Sacramento remained overwhelmingly white. The growing Black presence in the area touched off a wave of panic and "white flight." Many whites did not welcome Black newcomers to their neighborhoods and subscribed to the myth that integrated neighborhoods lowered property values; furthermore, many whites blamed African Americans for creating slums and bringing crime to areas. The combination of Black in-migration and the problems created by overdevelopment and speculation only hastened the departure of white residents from the area. White flight and the influx of low-income residents into Meadowview crippled the district's economic base. By 1990, many businesses operating in the area had left and had been replaced by smaller businesses that employed fewer people and generated little revenue. Despite its problems many Meadowview residents proved resilient throughout this period of transition and fought hard to bring needed resources to the area and to enhance the area's image. Meadowview has always had a proud history of civic engagement. After years of having almost no true political representation at the municipal level, Meadowview acquired its own council seat in 1991 after the City Council voted to redistrict itself. The following

year, Sam Pannell was elected to represent the district. Pannell and later his wife, Bonnie Pannell, represented the district for over twenty years.

Valley Hi

To the east of Meadowview lies the community of Valley Hi. Located west of Highway 99 and south of Mack Road, Valley Hi developed slowly over the next ten years; by 1975, it had around 3000 residents. Beginning in the 1980s, however, white flight gradually changed the face of the community. Despite this demographic shift, Valley Hi, like much of south Sacramento, remained mostly white and middle-class. Over half of all homes remained owner-occupied. Both the Kaiser and Methodist hospitals served the area and employed hundreds of people; Cosumnes River College served over 10,000 students; and the neighborhood featured several quality schools and recreational programs. However, the narrative that predominated in the local media cast neighborhoods like Valley Hi and Meadowview as Sacramento's version of South Central Los Angeles. The Rodney King Uprising in 1992 only heightened fear and anxiety about south Sacramento. Much of the media coverage of Valley Hi during this period tended to present a rather simplistic view of a neighborhood in crisis, beset by high rates of crime, unemployment, and despair. While Valley Hi did experience these problems, it also had a small yet thriving Black middle class. Similar to Meadowview, many African Americans were drawn to the suburb because it offered relatively affordable housing and decent amenities. Valley Hi, like many south Sacramento neighborhoods, took a serious hit during the Great Recession. Many Black residents took out subprime loans during the height of the housing boom only to see their monthly payments skyrocket beyond what they could actually afford to pay. In 2011, the *Bee* described Valley Hi as one of the epicenters of the foreclosure crisis, "converting scores of owners to tenants." This crisis had a devastating impact on Black homeownership and resulted in a major loss of wealth for African American families.

Fruitridge/Stockton

The Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard district is located between 14th Street to the North and 47th Street to the South, and between Franklin Boulevard to the West and Stockton Boulevard to East. A section of this area, known as the "Fruitridge Pocket," is unincorporated. This area comprises of several different subdivisions built mostly between 1940 and 1960. This district developed during Sacramento's postwar housing boom and is one of several districts that expanded the southern boundaries of the Sacramento Metropolitan area. Originally, much of the area was farmland that produced, among other things, wheat. With the demand for more housing, however, Sacramento-area real estate developers such as John H. McMahon and Paul B. Ford saw an opportunity to capitalize. McMahon and Ford developed what became known as the "Fruitridge Shopping Center," in the late 1950s. This popular shopping center served a growing population in South Sacramento. Although the FHA helped subsidize the expansion of the suburbs, it also contributed to the residential segregation of African Americans. The FHA required real estate developers to use race restrictive covenants to keep out all African Americans. Taking its cue from the real estate industry, the FHA considered any neighborhood with African Americans as high risk and refused to provide mortgage insurance in these areas. Thus, many builders like McMahon and Ford made sure to keep their developments all-white. As a result, the Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard district remained overwhelmingly white from 1950 to 1970. White flight during the 1970s finally opened up homes in this area to Blacks. During the 1980s, large numbers of Southeast Asians and Latinos also moved into the district. Not coincidentally, as whites fled parts of the district, the neighborhood entered into a period of decline. Many of the homes vacated by white families were then rented out to economically disadvantaged residents desperate for better housing options. However, a major turning point came in the 1980s with the introduction of crack cocaine to the neighborhood. The impact of this crisis cannot be underestimated. It led to rising addition rates and unleashed a cycle of violence and turmoil that impacts the

neighborhood to this very day. The so-called “War on Drugs” upended the lives of many residents—mostly African American men—and contributed to an increase in single-parent households, unemployment, and poverty. Making matters more complicated is the fact that the Fruitridge Pocket is unincorporated and has suffered from inadequate services for years.

Arden Arcade

Arden-Arcade is a census designated place in Sacramento County northeast of downtown Sacramento. Its boundaries include Auburn Boulevard and Arcade Creek to its north, the American River (primarily) to its south, Ethan Way to its west, and Fair Oaks Boulevard to its east. Covering nearly nineteen square miles, Arden-Arcade is a collection of dozens of neighborhoods of starkly different socioeconomic character. Some neighborhoods like Arden Oaks and Arden Park Vista, Arden Park Estates, and Arden Hills Country Estates feature million-dollar homes and represent some of the most exclusive real estate in the Sacramento region. Other Arden-Arcade neighborhoods, meanwhile, include a disproportionately high number of apartment buildings relative to other parts of the county. The collection of neighborhoods that became known as Arden-Arcade had its origins during Sacramento’s housing boom of the late 1940s. By 1960, Arden-Arcade featured thousands of new single-family homes and bustling new shopping centers. Due to Sacramento’s racially segregated housing market, Arden-Arcade and most of its surrounding districts began its existence as a lily-white suburb. Other Arden-Arcade neighborhoods, meanwhile, include a disproportionately high number of apartment buildings relative to other parts of the county. In the last ten years, Arden-Arcade has seen a rapid rise in residents who qualify as living below the poverty line. The sheer volume of apartment units combined with one of the lowest rental rates in the area has attracted many immigrants and poor residents—especially African Americans—to Arden Arcade who have been priced out of other neighborhoods due to Sacramento’s ongoing housing crisis.

Implementation of Five Strategies

The Black Child Legacy Campaign’s plan to reduce deaths of African American children in Sacramento County is a community driven movement supported by a multi-layered support system. Since 2015, the strategic plan developed by the Steering Committee on the Reduction of African American Child Deaths (SC-RAACD), *African American Children Matter: What We Must Do Now*, has focused on seven neighborhoods and five strategies to transform public systems and increase community engagement with/by local families and communities. The five independent strategies guiding the path to reduce Black child deaths include:

- **Strategy #1: Promoting Advocacy and Policy Transformation-** Local and statewide policy advocacy and initiatives toward systemic change.
- **Strategy #2: Equitable Investment and Systemic Impact-** Investment in systemic approaches to programming.
- **Strategy #3: Coordinated Systems of Support-** A systemic approach to wraparound intervention and prevention services that positions a trusted community-based organization as a hub for cross-agency collaboration.
- **Strategy #4: Data-Driven Accountability and Collective Impact-** The Quality Assessment process, which includes 11 Quality Dimensions, measures progress toward the BCLC’s goals to reduce the four leading causes of Black children’s deaths.
- **Strategy #5: Communications and Information Systems-** A dual approach to messaging that engages the broader community in BCLC work while expanding reach within seven targeted neighborhoods.

Between 2015 and 2019, the impact and successes of the five strategies have been well documented by BCLC and in the media. The March 2020 annual report, *Black Child Legacy Campaign: An Action Guide for Engaging and Strengthening the Social Safety Net*, highlights the following accomplishments:

- In 2016 BCLC surpassed the goal of reducing African American child deaths by at least 10 percent after only one year of implementation

- In 2018, after just three years of implementation, BCLC:
 - Reduced the rate of African American child deaths by 25 percent
 - Reduced the rate of African American infant deaths by 23 percent
 - Reduced the disparity in infant sleep-related deaths more than 50 percent
 - Saw zero juvenile homicides in 2018 and 2019
 - Assigned almost 200 cultural broker referrals since February 2018 through the Sacramento County Cultural Broker Program
 - On March 2, 2019 the success of the Black Child Legacy Campaign was recognized by the National Association of Counties Health Steering Committee

While these data points are statistical achievements that describe the targeted outcomes, they only tell part of BCLC’s story about reducing African American child deaths. The quantitative data collected and analyzed do not provide insight into the challenges, promises, experiences, learnings, and personal stories that shed light on the effectiveness of the five strategies. The sustainability and future success of BCLC’s work requires knowledge of the shared experiences of the individuals involved in day-to-day activities. This evaluation seeks to learn: *What did the participants experience? How is this connected to the participant’s personal story and what connects them to BCLC? What worked and what did not work and why? How is anti-Blackness or race a factor? What do community leaders deem successful? How do they envision the future? Do they believe this work is sustainable?* Many of the questions are guided by the five pedagogical stances of engaging transformative justice: *Histories Matters, Race Matters, Justice Matters, Language Matters, and Futures Matters*.¹⁸ Answers to these inquiries and many other questions provide data highlighted in the Findings and Lessons outlined in this section.¹⁹

The findings offer in-depth analysis of the five strategies drawn from interviews, archival data, and participant

observations (see Methodology). The findings are organized around the five interdependent strategies, starting with Strategy #5: Communications and Information Systems because a foundational decision regarding branding set the stage for the other strategies.

Findings

Communications and Information Systems

An Empowering Name: Building and Leaving a Legacy for African Children

“It’s always at the top of my agenda” to ensure “Black children know their greatness through the past, but for others to know our greatness, too, because people can’t see the greatness in you unless they know your history.”

– Community Incubator Lead

Although Communications and Information Systems is the fifth strategy presented in Steering Committee reports, communications have been an essential component of the other strategies and we thus present it first here.

Recognizing the need for an inspirational and forward-looking name for implementation, SC-RAACD led a community-engaged process that yielded the name “Black Child Legacy Campaign.” Since then, BCLC has become known as a positive and inspiring movement all over the Sacramento Valley and is motivating individuals and agencies to work collectively to improve the quality of life for African Americans. Community members and BCLC associates speak highly of the campaign.

The effectiveness of related Communications and Information Systems started with the naming of the Black

¹⁸ Maisha T. Winn, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018); Maisha T. Winn, *Paradigm Shift in Teacher Education* (University of Michigan TeachingWorks, 2019)

¹⁹ The evaluation interviews were guided by a University of California, Davis Institutional Review Board approved protocol/list of questions. All interviewees were asked the same questions, but follow-up questions may differ.

Child Legacy Campaign. Researcher Dr. Maisha T. Winn has shown that Language Matters because words or images either uplifts or deflates the morale of those associated with a particular group.²⁰ When asked about the effectiveness of BCLC’s messaging and ability to share information with the community and families, many BCLC participants mentioned the purposeful naming of the effort: Black Child Legacy Campaign. As one BCLC participant stated, “legacy is the antithesis of death.” The name of the movement is asset-based and challenges mainstream deficit models steeped in anti-Blackness and anti-racism. Rather than follow trends to lead conversation about Black child deaths with naming conventions and verbal framing that signal hopelessness, despair, and lack of agency, the strategic and purposeful use of “legacy” emphasis a fruitful past and bright future—despite the persistent systemic barriers that hinder the progress of African American families. Several participants commented about the significance of the naming

of the efforts to reduce African American child deaths:

“I knew very little of the Black Child Legacy Campaign prior to and at the time of, the name really had no significance to me because I heard the title Black put on a lot of different organizations, yet ... I was more so optimistic.”

“Black Child Legacy, you want to speak a message of hope.”

“I’m building a legacy of leaders.”

The name and mission of the BCLC has made it easier for partner agencies to do outreach and offer services to community residents in the seven neighborhoods. The name removes the stigma associated with Sacramento County services. According to one BCLC member, “BCLC gives me cover as a county worker to provide assistance in ways I could not because of the stigma that comes with working for the county.”

20 Winn, *Justice on Both Sides*.

21 Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an antiracist* (One World, 2019).



The Center-Sierra Health Foundation was responsible for ensuring the success of the brand as part of its implementation of the communications strategy. BCLC has been publicized in multiple ways, including widely distributed brochures, event displays, media coverage, and “swag” apparel. For example, at Sacramento County Board of Supervisors and Sacramento City Council meetings and local events such as the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebrations and marches, Sacramento Kings games, health fairs, and community town halls, BCLC’s green and black logo can be found on scarves, posters, t-shirts, handouts, and banners. At the January 29th 2019 Sacramento County Board of Supervisors over 100 BCLC supporters either wore BCLC shirts or had a brochure in their hand. Wherever there is a BCLC event, the logo and collateral material will be displayed, and in the lobby of the county building, artwork by youth illustrates the efforts and stories of BCLC.

The message of BCLC is also strategically displayed in Community Incubator Lead (CIL) spaces. For example, in the North Highlands-Foothill Farms and Oak Park CILs, literature and informative resources are neatly displayed throughout the lobbies and workspaces. Posters of Black families hang on the walls and one-page resource lists are readily accessible for guests and visitors.

The BCLC website and annual reports provide another means of communication and branding to get key messaging out to the community. The website features images of Black families (mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, etc.) and Black people celebrating or volunteering. The interactive digital platform provides information, data for all seven neighborhoods, videos, links to past interviews, upcoming events, and PDFs of every published report.

Very few of the participants cited the website as a way they communicate the BCLC message. Instead, they discussed other resources and tools such as one-pagers or annual reports they can distribute throughout the community. BCLC’s annual reports are at most 25 pages, with color

photos of participants and events. Data is often presented using info graphics, making it easy for readers to understand and interpret trends and details.

BCLC messaging is not only conveyed through reports, the website, and swag gear. Community programs and events such as the Kings and Queens Rise Youth Basketball League, the Peace Walks in Oak Park, podcasts and Poetic Service Announcements, Youth Participatory Action Research, and the Build. Black Coalition use their platforms to reach different audiences.

The visibility, marketing, and countywide presence of BCLC has gained media attention. The movement has been featured in the *Sacramento Bee*, *Sacramento Observer*, and local television news programs. In July 2019, Priska Neely, a Los Angeles public radio station reporter, described lessons from BCLC that should be applied by Los Angeles in order to achieve similarly positive results.²² Examples of articles in appearing in the news the last five years include (see Appendix for more articles):

1. Antonio, H. (2017, November 16-22). Black Child Legacy Campaign Reveals Progress. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from https://www.shfcenter.org/assets/RAACD/Sacramento_Observer_11.16-22.pdf
2. Antonio, H. (2018, July 12-18). Cultural Brokers Provide Support for Families. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from https://www.shfcenter.org/assets/RAACD/Sacramento_Observer_7.12-18.pdf
3. Anderson, S. (2017, November 23). A sleepless issue: Sacramento County gains ground on black infant deaths - Beats - Local Stories - November 23, 2017. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <https://www.newsreview.com/sacramento/sleepless-issue-sacramento-county/content?oid=25396758>

22 P. Neely, “Sacramento is Reducing Black Child Deaths. Here is What LA Can Learn,” Reported on radio station KPCC (89.3), July 29, 2019, www.scpr.org/news/2019/07/29/90390/sacramento-is-reducing-black-child-deaths-here-s-w/; P. Neely, “Sacramento’s Plan To Keep Black Children Alive Is Working — And LA Is Watching,” Reported in News, https://laist.com/2019/07/29/sacramentos_plan_to_keep_black_children_alive_is_working_-_and_la_is_watching.php?_ga=2.229535580.1102449588.1565028320-388005386.1564603552.

4. Caiola, S. (2018, December 3). Black Infant Death Rates Down In Sacramento Following Massive Community Efforts. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <https://www.cpradio.org/articles/2018/12/03/black-infant-death-rates-down-in-sacramento-following-massive-community-efforts/>
5. CBS Sacramento. (2019, January 21). For The First Time In 35 Years, No Children Were Murdered In The City Of Sacramento Last Year. Retrieved July 21, 2020, from <https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2019/01/21/no-child-murders-sacramento/>
6. Community Launches Program & Announces Partners To Reduce African-American Child Deaths. (2016, June 23). Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <http://sacobserver.com/2016/06/community-launches-program-announces-partners-to-reduce-african-american-child-deaths/>
7. Neely in News on July 29, P. (2019, July 29). Sacramento's Plan To Keep Black Children Alive Is Working - And LA Is Watching. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from https://laist.com/2019/07/29/sacramentos_plan_to_keep_black_children_alive_is_working--and_la_is_watching.php
8. Sullivan, M. (2020, January 28). Teen homicides fall to zero as Sacramento sees overall decline in murders in 2019. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article239093098.html>
9. Yoon-Hendricks, A. (2019, February 1). Black children were dying at an alarming rate in Sacramento County. Here's how that's changing. Retrieved July 21, 2020, from <https://www.sacbee.com/article225316230.html>
10. Yoon-Hendricks, A. (2018, December 4). 'Saving the lives of generations': Death rate for black children drops 45percent in Sacramento County. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <https://www.sacbee.com/article222568860.html>

Lessons from Communications and Information Systems

LESSON #1	The name Black Child Legacy Campaign is a powerful and inspired public call for action.
LESSON #2	Promotion of BCLC at public events and forums is bringing awareness of the issues and urgency facing the African American community.
LESSON #3	Swag gear/materials such as scarves, posters, and t-shirts help promote BCLC, resulting in more awareness and significant cultural shifts.
LESSON #4	The name and the promotion of BCLC challenges deficit paradigms steeped in anti-Blackness.
LESSON #5	BCLC's intimate connection with local communities impacted by child deaths and relationship with county agencies is making it easier for social services and community leaders to work together.

Promoting Advocacy and Policy Transformation

Building Social and Political Capital: Access to Opportunities and Resources

“We all receive training for this work. Now I have more opportunities.”
-Crisis Intervention Worker

The Advocacy and Policy Transformation strategy has been implemented primarily through a Community Leadership Roundtable comprised of residents who volunteer in the seven neighborhoods. Roundtable members meet monthly and receive trainings for advocacy, crisis response, and evaluation of CIL implementation quality (see discussion of quality assessments under Collective Impact strategy).

In addition, through this strategy, BCLC provides a platform to foster unity and address issues with one voice. CILs, the seven community-based organizations that lead BCLC at the neighborhood level, have gained access to committees, city council and county meetings, board commissions, and policy making forums. They have coordinated efforts to maximize impact. In addition, CILs have been able to cultivate relationships with local police officers, elected officials, universities, and businesses.

Youth projects such as Youth Participatory Action Research, SAYS spoken word events such as Poetic Service Announcements, Kings and Queens Rise Youth Basketball League all promote advocacy for youth programs and reduction of violence. One CIL states, “[For the youth] to use their voices, provide solutions, discuss their fears, and to actively collaborate for brighter futures.”

Lessons from Promoting Advocacy and Policy Transformation

LESSON #1	Trainings provide opportunities for community members to network with one another leading to trust, exchange of ideas, and support
LESSON #2	The coordination and collaboration of the CILs around common goals and outcomes is key to changing policy as the local and state level.
LESSON #3	Advocacy and policy transformation must be intergenerational



Equitable Investment and Systematic Impact

Building a Countywide Infrastructure to Support Black Children

“Seeing that services can collaborate, we don’t have to be in our silos—we’re able to each align ourselves with what best supports we can give them and then once we feel like they’ve completed that job, employment, mental health services, then we kind of reevaluate where they’re at.”
-CIL staff member

The Equitable Investment and Systematic Impact strategy was originally envisioned for implementation through an Interagency Children’s Policy Council comprised of executive leadership from county agencies that impact the lives of low-income and vulnerable children and families, as well as elected officials and other policymakers. While the Interagency Children’s Policy Council has not been formed, many instances of coordination across public agencies have been observed. The most significant example is the out-stationing of county staff in the neighborhood lead organizations and the use of multi-disciplinary teams made up of county and community service providers to provide wraparound services to families and children.

Prior to BCLC, there was limited collaboration and little feeling that concerned parties were working towards common and shared visions and goals. Nonprofits and county agencies often worked and operated in silos within their communities. By placing staff in the offices of community-based organizations, county agencies have built relationships with and through local resources and residents. Staff placed in the community come from Child Protective Services, Department of Human Assistance, Probation Department, and the Sacramento Employment & Training Administration. The significance of the multidisciplinary teams is best described by the service providers who participate:

“Through Black Child Legacy Campaign, we’re able to go above and beyond and dive deeper and be intentional on the cultural matches, be intentional on the wraparound services and all of that other great stuff that is important to actually bridging the gap.” -CIL staff

“First time as a county worker getting the chance to sit next to and across from others doing similar work. I see these people on TV or read about them. Now we are doing this together.”
-Multi-disciplinary team staff

“I’ve been with the county for 18 years and I’ve been out-stationed 10 years. So, this is the first time that I’ve actually been able to see the people whose name I recognize on email or whose name I see.”
-Multi-disciplinary team staff member

Lessons from BCLC’s Strategy of Equitable Investments and Systematic Impact

LESSON #1	BCLC has leveraged its collaboration of seven communities and multiple partners to procure more funds.
LESSON #2	Targeted investments allow for greater impact and transparency.
LESSON #3	Increased social and political coordination and access to resources and opportunities are key to systematic change.
LESSON #4	Turnover of the staff has been offset by strong relationships with community partners and support from other CILs.
LESSON #5	Systematic impact is only as effective as the investment in the sustainability of the strategies. Doubts of funding impacts the morale of participants.

As discussed in the historical analysis section, communities that have a higher percentage of African Americans have experienced disinvestment and faced economic challenges since the 1960s. The BCLC and the Sacramento County partnership provides CIL with human capital making it possible to provide the services and resources needed by the most vulnerable. Challenges remain despite the equitable approach. One emerging theme from participants was the sustainability of funding to continue making progress and improving the lives of Black families. “What happens if the County changes course or Serna is no longer around?” one MDT staff member wondered. She added “sustainability depends on the County support.” Other concerns include the high turnover rate among CILs. “The reason is for turnover of the CIL is better pay. They are talented and inspiring but need to be compensated more” commented an MDT staff member. In the last three years, some CILs that have had one or two staff employed and stay for multiple years, while other CILs have had three to five staff members leave only after six to twelve months on the job. This presents challenges for consistent record keeping, data collection, community outreach, and institutional knowledge. Some of these challenges have been offset by the support from other CILs and a strong network of community partners.

By fostering genuine collaboration of community organizations and public staff, community access to and trust in social services that address the risk factors for preventable child deaths have been transformed.

Coordinated Systems of Support Building Local and Countywide Social Network of Change Agents

***“Building partnerships is difficult. It means you have to let go of something, but you also have to invite others in. Ultimately it leads to change and change is hard.”
-Steering Committee member***

The Coordinated Systems of Support strategy, advanced primarily through the CILs as trusted community organizations implementing BCLC, is at the heart of the effort to reduce African American child deaths.

CILs are building a network for change within their neighborhoods and across the county. Among the seven CILs are two faith-based organizations. All CILs provide services, with some more focused on youth and family services and others maintaining a broader community development agenda. To develop the infrastructure and system of services and supports needed to reduce Black child death, CILs have leveraged partnerships with community-based nonprofits, churches, schools, and business located within their respective communities.

The emphasis on community partners is part of the collective impact framework employed by BCLC. The “community” “together” in “partnership” and “work[ing] across sectors” are consistently described in BCLC literature and annual reports. CIL-written “Making Equity Happen: Year, Actions, Learnings, and Deliverables (2019–2020),” a document shared with participants at the SC-RAACD retreat held in September of 2019 in Berkeley, stated on page one:

“The Black Child Legacy Campaign brings together members, city and county agencies, healthcare providers, community-based organizations and faith community to address the causes and disproportionate rate of African American children dying in the county.”

This language is consistent with other reports and collateral material. In bold blue print the *2018 Annual Report: Growing a Community Movement* states:

“The Black Child Legacy Campaign uses a collective impact approach to bring agencies and individuals across multiple sectors together to work toward a shared vision to improve outcomes for African American children in Sacramento County.”

Community and collaborative efforts are also underscored in a presenter application for the Gathering for Glory: Giving Love to Our Rising Youth Conference. The application states:

With this year’s theme of Building Our Beloved Community, this conference seeks to bridge wisdom, perspectives and experiences from the faith-based community to those of our Black Child Legacy Campaign communities ... this year’s conference will focus on collaborative community-based strategies ...”

Community partnerships play an important role in the coordinated system. The number of community partnerships may vary from one CIL to the next. For example, one CIL

member shared that there are over 40 community partners in Oak Park.

CILs are required to regrant a portion of their grants to community partners. Known as Legacy Grants, these regrants are intended to build local capacity to support Black children and supplement CIL activities. Grant recipients are determined through a systematic process of proposal submission and review. Other formal partnerships, including those developed with local schools or school districts, are established through Memoranda of Understanding. To reinforce these partnerships, most CILs have monthly partner meetings in which all the organizations supporting the neighborhood’s campaign to reduce Black child death come together to review and coordinate their work. CILs also rely on informal partners, including volunteers and local businesses, to strengthen the network of supports they can provide to families and children.

As mentioned previously, prior to the Black Child Legacy Campaign, CILs and other stakeholders often worked and operated in silos within their communities. The significance of the coordinated network is best captured through participants’ reflections.

Lessons from Coordinated Systems of Support

LESSON #1	Cultivating relationships with local community leaders and nonprofits builds trust between historically marginalized communities and outside and government agencies.
LESSON #2	CILs are providing much needed support for nonprofits and agencies located within the same community, allowing organizations to align their goals, review data, collaborate for events, and share information – collaboration that helps avoid administrative overlap and replication of services.
LESSON #3	Coordinated meetings (monthly for local teams, multi-disciplinary teams, etc.) are contributing to structure and common purpose.
LESSON #4	Coordinated meetings, group emails and calendars, etc. are improving communication/support systems for African Americans families city-wide.
LESSON #5	Establishing a collaborative structure (in the form of a “link” that is “bridging the gap” or a “community connector”) through which nonprofits, community leaders, county and city officials, government entities, health organizations, etc. focus their efforts on reducing black deaths is critical to collective impact.

“I think for our community to come together to see that there’s something outside of this neighborhood and that we can do something collectively together and make the impact that we have made, that’s huge. I think that’s historical for Sacramento.” -Community intervention worker

***“Our greatest success is the community coming together. Not just Oak Park but Meadowview, Del Paso, North Highlands. BCLC has brought everyone together.”
-CIL staff member***

With a strong focus on shared outcomes, goals, and deliverables, CILs have created both local and county-wide advocate networks. At the same time, interviews revealed that some CILs would like more recognition of programs and experiences they brought to their work with BCLC, so that all progress is not attributed to BCLC. In addition, while some CILs are working closely with schools to reach youth, this connection needs to be strengthened and expanded to keep youth engaged in education—an essential strategy for reducing deaths by third-party homicide.

During the spring of 2020 when families Sacramento County announced shelter in place, many families in the seven neighborhoods were severely impacted. The CILs held several Zoom meetings to assist families with meals and other essentials. While on a Zoom call in April, over fifty participants joined the call to discuss their community needs and actions taking place. The CIL leads provided updates. One participant stated, “I only have 20 minutes for the call because I have to meet the families and pass out the food.” Another participant responded, “I will be right behind because we have families coming now.” In addition to coordinating a network for families to receive essential services, BCLC members also spoke out against the lack of resources during COVID 19. ABC News-Sacramento featured a press conference led by Rev. Les Simmons, Kindra Montgomery-Block, and Berry Accius. They addressed need for resources for youth development, mental health service, violence prevention, and jobs.

Data-driven Accountability and Collective Impact

Beyond the Numbers: Humanizing the Data

“Data is essential.” -CIL staff member

The Data-driven Accountability and Collective Impact strategy has been implemented in multiple ways. The campaign focuses on reducing Black child death, so analyses of changes in child deaths and the disparities between rates of Black child death compared to those of all other children in Sacramento County are at the core of the work. Individuals, entities, and communities participating in BCLC seek to reduce the number of child deaths in their community. Although quantitative data do not tell the entire story or humanize the process and work involved, data on the disproportionate rates at which Black children die in Sacramento County *have* led to a commitment to change. According to one participant, “BCLC made Black health and Black lives a high priority in Sacramento. As a result, deaths and violence has been down and communities have been made safer.” Data are not only helping communities learn and understand disparities but also giving hope for better life outcomes for the next generation.

Data is the driving force of the BCLC. The website has information about upcoming events, resources, and CIL updates. The most prominent feature on the website is data. Each CIL has a link to a “Neighborhood Profile,” “Education Dashboard,” and “Neighborhood Crime and Safety Profile.” These user-friendly profiles created and prepared by LPC Consulting Associates, Inc. make it possible for community members and CILs to have access to data specifically for their communities. Data is also the highlight and focus of each annual report. At the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors meeting in January 2019 and the RAACD retreat (September of 2019) in Berkeley, data was the rallying cry and reason to celebrate.

At the CIL level, implementation of the strategies is assessed through progress reports submitted by the CILs and quality

assessments of and with the CILs. Several participants discussed the challenges of completing the reports and the advantages of some CILs because of their capacity and human capital. The challenges of data collection are described in the reflections of several of the participants.

“It is a struggle and we have to find the time with all that we have to do. We don’t have the help but we get it done.”

“Our data sucks. We’re just not good at collecting.”

“They have been collecting the data [on disparities] for 20 years. That’s another example, I think, of institutional racism and poverty pimping because you’re in these neighborhoods collecting this data and you’re not analyzing it for the benefit of the neighborhood.”

“Early on there was a lot of challenges in creating forms, getting them to use the forms, getting people to upload data, getting people to have the right technology to do that. We now have the database.”

“Data is essential. You have to show the numbers. You have to show what you’re doing for it to reflect is this impactful?”

The Steering Committee has made data systems and training a priority for CILs. Recognizing that the CILs had different degrees of experience with data collection systems, The Center created a data hub with consultants that have

provided technical assistance and periodically updated reports with neighborhood data. Although the data hub has worked to reduce the burden of data collection, some CILs continue to feel burdened by the time it takes to input and analyze the data requested. Over the years, data systems and data collection have improved; the challenge now is to establish a uniform tracking system that is user friendly, secure, and accessible. During a visit with a Hub data analyst, she discussed how over the years collecting data has been made easier through trainings and taking the time to meet with each CIL. An assessment of each CIL data system was conducted to determine the capabilities and capacities. She acknowledged the unique strengths and differences between the CILs. She states, “There is this big broad spectrum so we come with a blanket approach. There are some CILs with years of experience while others have tried to invest in data systems but have no funds to invest.” The data hub support team tries to make collecting data and submitting progress reports as easy as possible.

In addition to progress reports, each CIL has had the quality of their implementation assessed through quality assessment site visits carried out by teams of four to six that include representatives from The Center, TA providers, CIL staff, and others. Each team member uses a rubric to rate the CIL’s implementation of BCLC work in related dimensions such as youth engagement, community capacity building, mission focus, and communications. Site visits are repeated every six months and have affirmed continued improvement in CILs’ implementation of

Lessons from Data Accountability and Collective Impact

LESSON #1	Data collection is essential, but participants need to know why they are collecting specific information.
LESSON #2	Data has given BCLC participants a sense of purpose and motivation to improve negative indicators such as rates of infant mortality and homicide.
LESSON #3	Communities need to own the data. Instead of outside organizations or researchers, data should be collected and analyzed in partnership with the community being represented in/by the data.
LESSON #4	Open conversations about data inform, encourage, and inspire action.
LESSON #5	The implementation of data systems/collection must be consistent from one organization to the next.

activities intended to reduce Black child death in the county. The importance of data in the Campaign is reflected in the following quote from one a Steering Committee member:

“Data plays a role in that we have to be able to show the numbers of how many families we’re with and [show] their successes and the outcomes.... Data definitely speaks to the collective impact. I think the other aspects are important to highlight just because there is a change.”

As demonstrated and highlighted in the findings in this section, the implementation of five strategies require an approach based in the community and supported by resources, opportunities, and additional human capital. Early BCLC successes have been the result of targeted and well-planned strategies that transform how families, community members, agencies, organizations, and institutions communicate and collaborate to advance common, shared goals. Below is a summary of the Lessons.

Results in Brief and Lessons from the Black Child Legacy Campaign

Training and support for advocacy and community leadership is part of engaging community residents in the campaign.

- BCLC established the Community Leadership Roundtable for community volunteers to come together across the seven neighborhoods and gain skills and experiences with advocacy for resources to reduce African American child deaths.

Public agencies must commit to the mission of reducing all child deaths, starting with addressing racial disparities in rates of death.

- Sacramento County and City agencies have out-stationed county staff in community-based organizations and supported staff partnership with local nonprofit service-providers.
- BCLC continues to work toward the creation of a public entity that will be responsible for children’s wellbeing and health equity in the county.

A coordinated system of support for the reduction of Black child death requires trusted, capable neighborhood organizations taking the lead, partnership with other county and local agencies, and an entity that serves as a connector and backbone for the work.

- BCLC is implemented through seven Community Incubator Leads, trusted, local nonprofit organizations that are responsible for coordinating efforts in each of the neighborhoods.
- The intimate connection with the local community impacted by child deaths and its relationship with County agencies is making it easier for social services and community leaders to work together.
- BCLC’s collaborative structure has been facilitated by The Center, a nonprofit backbone organization that is responsible for distributing funding, facilitating learning, driving communications, ensuring accountability, and providing other supports.

Communications are key to building a movement toward a common goal.

- The name “Black Child Legacy Campaign” challenges deficit paradigms steeped in anti-blackness and as a result is a powerful and inspired public call for action.
- Promotion of BCLC through swag gear/materials, such as scarves, posters, at t-shirts, at public events and forums is bringing awareness of the issues and urgency facing the African American community.

Data and measurable goals for the reduction of deaths keep the work focused and mission-driven.

- The targets set for reduction of African American child deaths and the regular reporting of progress toward those targets have given BCLC participants a sense a purpose and motivation.
- Regular quality assessments of the work at the neighborhood level have helped the community lead agencies strengthen their strategies for reducing African American child deaths.

Portraits of the Legacy

This evaluation, like *The Black Sunrise*²³ (Watson, 2014), is personal, political and purposeful. It is also grounded in Portraiture, a humanizing methodology first utilized by Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot at Harvard University. This report and the data collection process centers on the people who have envisioned, created, and sustained the Black Child Legacy Campaign. It is individuals, together in collective relation, who represent the seeds of solution to social change.

Consider for a moment a tree metaphor: a lot of research focuses on the leaves, that is, the facts and figures that are the byproducts of certain kinds of work. Then there are studies that emphasize the branches, those correlations of how, why, and where the leaves connect. And there are plenty of examinations that simultaneously consider the historical context: the roots. Our focus, however, was to dig (literally and figuratively) through years of information and layers of discoveries, constantly triangulating among multiple sources, to uncover the seed of the story—for it is the seed that holds the soul of the work—the essence. Building on this idea of a tree, neither policymakers nor practitioners can plant a tree with leaves, limbs, or even roots. To authentically grow this work in Sacramento and beyond, seeds need to be planted, nourished, and cultivated.

To humanize the data collection process we turn towards Portraiture. Portraiture is a unique qualitative methodology rooted in a style of vivid storytelling that allows the reader into the moment. This kind of account permits a multifaceted reality to unfold that feels alive and authentic. The depth of writing is meant to show, rather than tell, the process of transformation and empowerment. Portraiture is a practice of emancipation, unfolding in the form of human archeology. Further details on this form of scholarship is in the Appendix.

“Just because you remove the leaves of racism doesn’t mean you’ve disturbed the root of it.”²⁴

Throughout this process, we made every attempt to depict effectiveness in a way that is nuanced, accurate, and authentic. If we fail to accomplish this, we take full responsibility; these individuals within the Black Child Legacy Campaign became vulnerable to us so that they might become real to you.

Let’s turn to them now.



23 Watson, V. (2014). *The Black Sunrise: Oakland Unified School District's Commitment to Address and Eliminate Institutionalized Racism*. Final evaluation report submitted to Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement. <http://www.ousd.org/Page/12267>

24 <https://educationpost.org/what-if-your-entire-school-system-was-the-racist-monument-that-should-come-down/?fbclid=IwAR0VZ1C1BGtq5Q-IBC-Jf8VgTJVfTlI95E99-I3TXj7KDCsNb-zrx-ij1f5Y>

Supervisor Phil Serna: Collective Stewardship

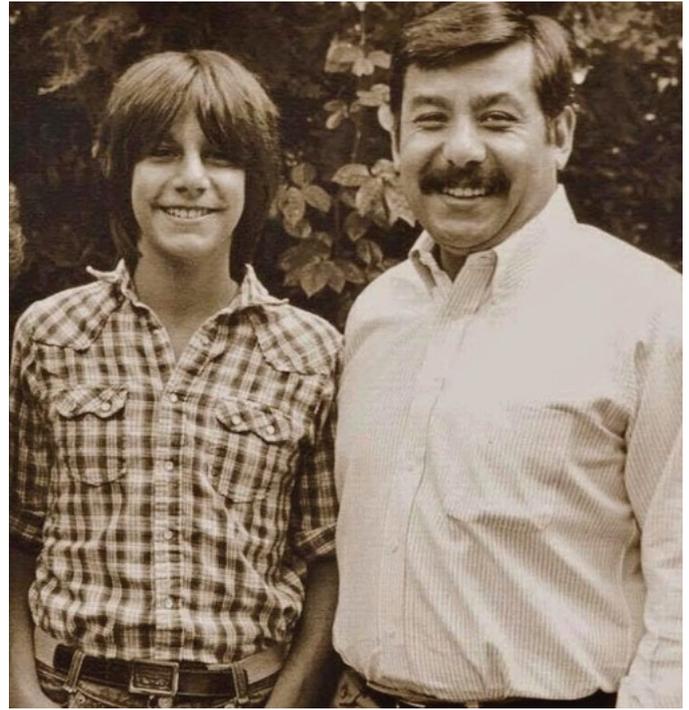
By: Dr. Vajra Watson

Supervisor Phil Serna's reputation proceeds him. Yes, he's in the spotlight as a political figure, but more than that, he's a homegrown leader within the Sacramento community. Phil grew up in the Curtis Park neighborhood and attended local schools. He is the son of Sacramento's first Latino mayor, Joe Serna, Jr. Phil's understanding of public service came from his immediate family and the United Farm Workers, led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Early experiences with activism shaped his career trajectory. He has shared, "Growing up in a home where civic engagement was a part of everyday life, I learned at a young age that it is not enough to sit on the sidelines and let government happen to you."²⁵

In June 2018, voters re-elected Phil Serna to serve a third term as supervisor of the first district on the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. The 112 square mile district Phil represents extends from the Sacramento-Sutter County line south to Florin Road east of Power Inn Road, and from the Sacramento River east to stretches of Watt Avenue. Within this large area, he oversees the Sacramento International Airport on the one hand and older established neighborhoods such as South Oak Park on the other. Phil's reach is broad, and he considers it a "privilege to serve," proudly representing "one of the region's most diverse constituencies."

As the state capitol of California, Sacramento is unique on numerous indices. The city is heralded as one of the most multicultural and integrated places in the United States. In 2018, Sacramento ranked sixth on a list of the nation's most diverse large cities. The following year, Sacramento ranked fourth among over 500 of the nation's largest cities with respect to ethno-diversity.²⁶ Some may call Sacramento a true melting pot. Unfortunately, while residents may witness the same sunset, their horizons of opportunity tend to differ intensely along racial lines.

Diversity does *not* ensure equity.



Phil with his Father

Supervisor Serna has a commendable collaborative work ethic and political track record. I'm curious about his perspective on racial injustice in Sacramento. A recurring question Phil asks himself is, "How do we improve the quality of life for all Sacramento residents?" He recognizes that the answer is not one-dimensional because the underlying problems and solutions are systemic.

According to Phil, the overall health of Sacramento is not beholden to one person, organization, or institution. His ideas are interdisciplinary and his ambitions cooperative. For any policy to take root and solve a real-life problem, it must involve various stakeholders and encompass an intergenerational, multi-tiered approach—as exemplified by the Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC). Phil was instrumental in bringing this movement to life throughout the region, and I am eager to learn more from him. I am particularly interested in the ways he serves as an outspoken and unapologetic champion for Black life. At his office in downtown Sacramento, we delve deep into dialogue.

²⁵ <https://bos.saccounty.net/District1/Pages/default.aspx>

²⁶ <https://wallethub.com/edu/most-diverse-cities/12690/>; researchers analyzed ethnicity and race, language, and birthplace.

I make my way from my home in Naomasa to 700 H Street in Sacramento. Traffic is light, but parking is difficult. I meander through the downtown area until I find a metered parking spot on this brisk fall day in October. I walk as fast as possible to make it to my 10:00 a.m. appointment with Supervisor Serna. As I make my way toward the Sacramento County Administration Center, I am taken aback by its jailhouse demeanor: concrete on top of concrete. The institutional milieu of this edifice is heavy, even intimidating. I straighten my blazer, open the large tinted glass door, and begin looking for room 2450.

When I reach Supervisor Serna's office space, I am relieved by the ambiance and welcoming staff. While his political work is embedded within this large administration building, Phil's own work area appears to be a stark contrast. I write in my notebook: *Like an oasis. A place to exhale.*

Phil's office décor is colorful and musical; he has guitars near his desk. I am not surprised to learn that he plays the bass and the drums with several local bands. I also know from following him on social media for many years that he enjoys fly fishing and prides himself on cooking elegant and exquisite meals for his wife, Roxanna. Underneath this public persona is a thoughtful leader and ambitious agent of change.

In 2011, Phil was considered a "freshman Supervisor" because he had only been serving for a few months. Although he was relatively new to the position, he did not want to placate through politics. His focus, quite admirably, was to make an impact. Phil's ideals and political acumen were tested when he received a shocking report detailing extreme inequities in Sacramento, the city that raised him.

The study that came to Phil's attention was an analysis of childhood health and well-being in Sacramento from 1990–2010. Demonstrating painful patterns and startling statistics, and aptly called "The Child Death Report," it highlighted the fact that African American children were dying at twice the

rate of any other ethnicity (102 deaths per 100,000 children). Phil had a visceral reaction to this information. "My anger" came from the "fact that Sacramento County" has this "incredible disparity in the number of deaths between African American children and children of other races." This was not about "any given year," there was a pattern of inequality, Phil says, "it has been chronic." He felt compelled to do something: "I really made the case that this is our number one issue in Sacramento County."

The longitudinal evidence in the report served as a catalyst for some honest and courageous conversations. Why are racial disparities status quo? Why is preventable death for Black children so intergenerational? Even though Supervisor Serna was committed to action, he did not have the answers. Supervisor Serna also recognized his own limitations: "Child welfare is not my background. I'm an urban planner." He thus decided to get experts into the room and established a Blue Ribbon Commission "comprised of health professionals, child welfare, law enforcement, clergy, mothers, grandmothers, fathers" able to create a "collective focus" and "understand the problem a bit more" as depicted in the "death reports." "Not only understanding the nature of the problem, the challenge, its history," he explains, "but also moving forward." "Most importantly," he continues, "the group continued to ask, 'What do we do about it?'"



The Blue Ribbon Commission built momentum to address the welfare of Black children and youth in Sacramento, yet even this group of experts felt that they lacked the full semblance of a solution strategy. So, they “took it on the road.” I ask for clarification. “We went to various neighborhoods, those neighborhoods [where] the death report tells us the disparity is the greatest” and began to share the data. Inside these listening sessions in these communities, emotions were stirred and deeper wounds were revealed. “I think, anecdotally, everyone kind of understood where the tough neighborhoods are in Sacramento County” and “most deaths associated with violence occur,” but something shifted when we had “hard data.” In the 21st century, racial demographics still greatly shape a child’s probability of survival.

Black families in Sacramento County were angry, “which is totally understandable ... they had never known about this, they had never heard about it!” There was an assumption, among all of us, that “children in Sacramento County basically have access to the same types of health care and parents have access to the same type of education.” Supervisor Serna underscores that “[the] anger people expressed was very palpable.” It was also “cathartic for a lot of folks.” He shakes his head and looks down at his desk. With a soft invocation, he admits, “it was cathartic for me.” He utters these words quietly, even a bit rhetorically: “How do we address the most intimate problems that we have?” The word intimate lands between us.



The intimacy of race relations in this country; the remnants of all that is still wrong, here.

While political activism and government service was integral to Supervisor Serna’s upbringing, for many communities of color—and for Black folks in Sacramento, in particular—politics are not synonymous with people power. Too many times, politicians have endorsed, enforced, and rationalized institutional racism. Although it was hard for Supervisor Serna to hear families openly discuss their disdain for city politics, these were truths he needed to acknowledge. Perhaps a lot of leaders might have stopped there, content with having received feedback from constituents. Supervisor Serna, however, was not satisfied with simply knowing about the problem. He felt responsible. Momentum continued to build, and he was determined to make a difference.

I try to dig into the details. What were his next steps? “How did you go from facilitating the commission to really creating a line item in the budget and moving the bureaucracy, so to speak, to align with the will of the people?” Phil is emphatic: “I really kind of view myself as not doing the heavy lifting, quite frankly ... I’ll be very honest. It was all the folks around the table—literally, figuratively, with the Blue Ribbon Commission—that really gave a lot of thought to, um ... [Phil reaches for a metaphor and connects it to a meal] ... bite off a chunk of meat that we can chew and swallow.” That’s how the problems of childhood deaths got distilled into “four leading causes of death” and BCLC began to get a foothold with funding: “I’m a big believer that our budgets—your tax dollars—should be reflective of our value sets.” At each milestone, Phil understood his position: “for me, politically, it was keeping this issue at the forefront of our discussions, and when I say our discussions, I mean the Board of Supervisors.” In addition to his advocacy, Phil remained active as chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission, “quite frankly, kind of [laying] down a challenge to folks to tell me what’s a more pressing problem.”

In retrospect, these collective efforts were successful. Yet there really was no precedent for any of this. Early on,

individuals were forced to make the road by walking. Eventually, “gradually, more and more” people joined, and Supervisor Serna describes the shift from “talk” to “application.” Just this step took eighteen months, he admits, “it didn’t happen immediately.” Shaking his head, he repeats, “That was an eighteen-month process.”

As a helpful recap, the strategies used to build this city-wide initiative are noteworthy. Supervisor Serna established a commission, including a wide range of stakeholders. This commission examined the “death report” and shared information via listening sessions with the community. Thereafter, members of the commission came to consensus around key focus areas and recommendations. Supervisor Serna remembers, “The ultimate goal, quite frankly, was to reduce African American child deaths 10 to 20 percent ... “pretty intense accountability that we set for ourselves.” At this point, a permanent steering committee was created, the Steering Committee on the Reduction of African American Child Deaths, to “dig a little deeper” regarding the budget and “make specific recommendations for the Board of Supervisors.” Supervisor Serna gets serious: “We’re talking tens of millions of dollars and we didn’t want this to be an instance where people felt like we’re just throwing money at a problem.” Finally, a vote was held and the funding was approved.

These essential actions occurred primarily at the policy level, helping catalyze a larger journey toward racial justice in Sacramento. Now, the real work begins. Supervisor Serna has long understood that impact must be tangible on the ground, inside people’s homes and neighborhoods. Yet, even with good intentions and some institutional support, a gap between city government, social services, and Black families persisted. To gain access and build trust, partner agencies such as Sierra Health Foundation and Community Incubator Leads became critical conduits for engagement, advocacy, and empowerment.

The work grew exponentially, so I wonder about push-back. Race-based policies that support Black life are still controversial. Supervisor Serna was not distracted by the debates and is still convinced a specialized approach

benefits all of Sacramento. His analysis reminds me of targeted universalism, a framework developed through John Powell’s extensive legal scholarship on structural racism. Essentially, targeted universalism alters the usual approach of universal strategies (policies that make no distinctions) to achieve goals such as improved health, and instead suggests we use targets to expose, address, and uplift those least served. Strategic inputs then create improvements that cascade out, affecting the policies and practices of the larger ecosystem.

Not unlike Powell’s theory of change,²⁷ Supervisor Serna contends that the Black Child Legacy Campaign does not just benefit African Americans. He recognizes the connectivity of inequities. Even though the Campaign focuses on educating Black families about safe sleeping habits for infants, for instance, “we are pursuing interventions that will help all children.” He continues, “I think everyone’s going to have some important takeaways ... The interventions that we develop around child abuse and neglect, homicides, third-party homicides will probably, most likely, benefit the broader community.” He provides another example: youth gun violence is often nestled inside particular areas of the city, but Black people are not the only folks who live and spend time there. “Just because you’re white or non-African American, you’re not immune to violence.”

I shake my head in agreement and go right into my next question: “What do you think are the root causes of the disparities that we’re seeing?” His answer is thought provoking: “I think there’s a lot of things. I mean, some of it is institutional racism.” I ask Supervisor Serna to be more specific. His analysis is grounded in deep understanding of interlocking forms of oppression. He delineates that there are “inequities socioeconomically, inequities when it comes to educational opportunities, inequities in the history of investments in different parts of our community, different stressors when it comes to racism.” He takes a moment and leans back in his chair. It seems he is pondering his answer a bit.

“It’s odd, quite frankly, for a non-African American to say it, but I’ve come to learn a great deal about it from professionals and people, the PhDs that study this. I’ve had some really enlightening conversations with folks that know the subject matter a lot better than I do.” These conversations have led

“It is much more challenging for African Americans to raise healthy children.”
As he shares his insights, a wave of names come over me: Tamir Rice (12 years old), Trayvon Martin (17 years old), Michael Brown (18 years old), Stephon A. Clark (22 years old), Ahmaud Arbery (25 years old).

him to a stark conclusion: “It is much more challenging for African Americans to raise healthy children.” As he shares his insights, a wave of names come over me: Tamir Rice (12 years old), Trayvon Martin (17 years old), Michael Brown (18 years old), Stephon A. Clark (22 years old), Ahmaud Arbery (25 years old). There are many contemporary instances of police murdering Black men and women, and when these bullets hit children and young adults, it just hits differently. African American families do raise healthy Black children, but this is often despite a deeply entrenched system of white supremacy designed and nurtured through policies, practices, and policing that’s wedded to anti-Blackness.

With the vision of these unarmed victims stirring in my mind, I push back a bit on Supervisor Serna. “As someone who does represent government,” I assert, “what are some ways that the system is trying to address and eliminate institutionalized racism?” Phil helps connect the dots between collective activism and institutional responsibility. “You have to remember,” he exclaims, that “the death report” and the formation of the Reduction of African American Child Deaths committee “all happened, interestingly enough, during the infancy of Black Lives Matter.” He describes a type of

“serendipity” where “there was a broader realization across the country that racism is by no means evaporated from the American milieu.” He expounds on this point: “The incidents of violence against African Americans ... thrust this conversation to the forefront: What do we do as local government? What do we do as state government? Now, unfortunately, with the Trump administration, it has become all too prominent an issue. It’s inescapable for everyone. And to some degree, that’s kind of a good thing because it forces us to talk about it.” Phil brings the conversation full circle. “Institutional racism,” he attests “really presents itself in the form of these massive disparities.”

Even though inroads have been made and the death toll has significantly decreased, this work is by no means complete. “The nature of what we’re trying to tackle” is complicated and not conducive to a quick “mission accomplished.” Demanding and creating healthy environments where Black children thrive is a process, much more than a destination. Since this is a lifelong quest, we have “to remind everyone, including the media, that we have a long way to go.” “Not for a minute,” he contends, “do I think that Sacramento County is somehow an outlier and the disparities based on race is solely a Sacramento County phenomenon.”

Supervisor Serna’s advice for other counties is straightforward. Disaggregate data based on race and do not be afraid of the findings or try to rationalize the disproportionalities. “If it weren’t for that data,” patterns of inequality would not have been unveiled in such a blatant and concerted way. “That information,” he believes, “really sparked some hearty conversations” and “tough questions early on.” Serna is in the early stages of legislation that would require all 58 counties in California to collect similar information and gain greater insight into the “the environment of child welfare” and lifelong well-being. We cannot change what we cannot face. According to Supervisor Serna, “institutional racism is happening everywhere” and that’s why each person needs to “engage in the process of your own governance.”

Democracy functions through advocacy, but people do not

have the same access, opportunities, or time to deal with the government. “I know they don’t necessarily want to write emails,” he quips, “or perhaps even some are afraid of public speaking” and yet that’s “absolutely what it takes.” He insists, “Politicians come and go. We are only temporary occupants of our offices.” Phil wants his constituents to understand that priorities shift, especially when there are new mayors and supervisors around the table. Regardless of who has been elected, it is “incumbent upon the community to keep this at the forefront.” Change, he affirms, “sustains itself from the bottom up.” Then he chuckles and looks right at me: “And, quite frankly, keeps it in the discussions every June” throughout the budget negotiation process. “What I don’t want to see happen” is that we are forced to get “our budgets balanced on the backs of the good work that happened.” Budget cuts to BCLC “would be a travesty.”

A lot has happened since the initial “death report.” As we reflect on the past eight years, I ask Supervisor Serna what he feels most proud of. He instantly tells me that “I’m just proud” of all the ways Community Incubator Leads came to “own it ... and by that I mean this ought not to be a top-down approach, this ought not to be big government telling the communities where the disparities are the most pronounced how to do everything. This needs to be a set of solutions, a set of interventions, that is a little more organic than that ... derived from a great deal of input from the communities themselves.” Solutions and expertise exist among those who “have been *feeling* the disparity” and “*living with* the disparity.”

The more I listen to Phil Serna’s convictions and understand his work behind-the-scenes, I gain greater appreciation for his role as a servant leader in this movement. Yes, he is a politician who cares immensely about equality, but he does not let politics define the possibilities. He codifies his convictions with clarity; the results are real and innovative. Instead of colonial modes of operation wherein the many serve the few, Phil Serna is a Latino leader who exists to serve the people. “I see myself, fundamentally, as someone that’s responsive for doing everything I can to try and give voice to those that don’t

usually have it or have never possessed it or find it difficult to express themselves politically when it’s necessary.” In terms of the Black Child Legacy Campaign, Serna is “very grateful that the community has really taken the reins and really identified it as a very, very high priority for themselves.” Building on this energy, Supervisor Serna wants everyone in Sacramento to “become activists in their own right.” He is adamant: “People just need to keep in mind that they really hold the power.”

I challenge Supervisor Serna to move from the general to the specific. I ask him to think about a 15-year-old African American student whose cousin was recently murdered. *What would you say that young man? What would you do?* “I’m a Latino politician. I don’t know what it feels like to be an African American 15-year-old” but I still have “an obligation.” Phil emphasizes that he wants this student to “know that he’s not alone. He’s got a community behind him; he’s got people that care about him. Even if we’re not family. Even if we’re not friends. Even if we’re not the same race. Even if we come from different neighborhoods.” Phil wants to convey the importance of a “focused opportunity” and “stress that he’s at a fork in the road.” While Supervisor Serna empathizes with the need to grieve (“mourn his cousin’s death in his own way”), he wants to immediately “nurture the alternatives.” Many people have similar experiences and find ways to “advance their chances of not being the next victim.” So, he surmises, while this young man “has a choice, we have an obligation.” Together, “that’s where the magic can happen where you can really change someone’s mind about their limited time on this earth.” Supervisor Serna speaks in terms of transformation and purpose. Cornerstones of his own life.

The work of racial justice is psychological, physical, and spiritual. In many ways, it is embodied long before it is politicized. Supervisor Serna agrees and shares that the life and legacies of Black children far exceeds “some county supervisor that had an epiphany in 2011.” Building on his words, I ask what exact legacy Phil Serna is trying to leave for the Black children of Sacramento. His response is profound:

“That they’re living longer.... It’s a pretty simple way to look at it, but that’s what, fundamentally, this is all about.” He expounds on his point, “It’s not a foreign concept. It’s one that has been steeped in the civil right movement. And I challenge anyone to tell me there’s something more important than our kids.... We’re talking about life and death.”

Our interview draws to a close and we look into the future.

“I would like to look back in my old age” and see a “new generation of political leadership.” He tilts his head to the left and seems to be peering far into the distance. With a glint in his eye, he shares his sincerest hope: “It would be wonderful” though “probably impossible.” I lean forward and prod, “What would be impossible?” “What if,” Phil opens up, “one of the African American young adults” whose life has been impacted and influenced by the Black Child Legacy Campaign becomes a change agent? “Somehow, we could trace back to the effort and say, well ... *that* baby.” While we cannot know if the babies whose lives were saved through this work will become our next leaders, it certainly seems that we are moving in the right direction.

In our final moments together, I pivot the conversation. I ask Supervisor Serna to finish sentences. I probe him poetically. Without a moment’s hesitation, he offers his responses quickly, simply, and with purposeful recitation:

Black childhood is difficult.
Freedom sounds like a *ballot dropping*.
Black power feels like equality.
I am fighting for my community.
I am fighting against *the harm of my community*.

As will be shown in the forthcoming section, the portrait of Ms. Jackie highlights her definition of Blackness as “nothing but greatness.” Her conceptualization and reflection on being African American echoes a similar sentiment articulated by Imani Perry in *Breathe: A letter to my sons*: “I do not believe the

acts of oppressors are my people’s shame. For me, that my people became, created, and imagined from a position of unfreedom is a source of deep pride, not shame.... There was love and legacy everywhere.”²⁸ While Ms. Jackie and author Imani Perry both assert an asset-based analysis of their identity as glorious and victorious, Supervisor Serna’s perception is different. Perhaps his sympathy is a natural inclination because he is not African American. As an onlooker and witness, he believes, “Black childhood is difficult.” The distinctions between these outlooks are important and may point to deeper schisms. I think about the initial naming of this work when it was in the hands of the Blue Ribbon Commission, and the committee overseeing it: *the* [Steering Committee on] *Reduction of African American Child Deaths*. I cannot help but grin inside my soul when I consider that it is now a community-driven movement called *The Black Child Legacy Campaign*. Terminology matters, and names often reflect our values, perceptions, and ambitions. While racism is problematic, shameful, inhumane, gruesome, and challenging, Blackness is not. Blackness is legacy and this sentiment is simultaneously a compass, definition, and destination.

28 Imani Perry, *Breathe: A Letter to my Sons* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2019), 21–23.

Chet P. Hewitt: “A unique opportunity. A unique responsibility.”

By: Maisha Winn

As I entered Chet Hewitt’s office, he informed me right away that his wife had called and our time together would need a hard stop at 3:00pm, so he could pick up one of his sons. “I’m one of eight kids ... and I was raised by my sisters,” shares Mr. Hewitt, “[my sisters] were always in charge. As I always say to my wife, ‘I take instruction very well.’”

Laughter filled Mr. Hewitt’s office overlooking the Sacramento River. The entire building housing the Sierra Health Foundation, where he serves as President and CEO, is a study of light. Generous windows throughout reveal why Sacramento has been referred to as the “City of Trees” as well as the “River City.” When talking to Mr. Hewitt, it is apparent that the vision of Sierra Health Foundation, “A healthful life for Northern Californians,” as well as the organization’s mission, “To invest in and serve as a catalyst for ideas, partnerships and programs that improve health and quality of life in Northern California” are informed by his love for his family, and his mother, in particular. According to Mr. Hewitt, his “deep appreciation” for his own mother is manifest in the Sierra Health Foundation program portfolio: “some of the things I saw and some of the things that I’m probably most known for saying are really either direct interpretations or reinterpretations of the lessons my mother shared with me.”

From surviving to thriving

The Black Child Legacy Campaign, for example, seeks to reduce instances of infant sleep-related death, child abuse, and third-party homicide in Black families. The inclusion of “legacy” within the campaign name is strategic and purposeful. While Black death is often foreshadowed, notions of “Black legacy” are not. Mr. Hewitt understands this. He noted that only six of his eight siblings survive: “I can recall my mother’s response to losing her oldest son to an asthma attack. And the impact was profound on both the siblings but clearly on my mother who, for the rest of her life, would



Chet P. Hewitt

mourn the fact that she buried a child. It was very clear in her mind that it was supposed to be the other way around.” Mr. Hewitt went on to talk about tensions between the “joy” and “pain” of life and his desire to “advance” the former: “It is much easier for me to think about advancing joy and having kids alive and flourish ... having their families thrive ... that comes very easily born of my own experience and interpreting what this means in my professional life.” Indeed, scholars have recently argued that Black children and their families want to “do more than survive” and that there must be ways to counter the “survival industrial complex” too many Black children experience.²⁹

Through Sierra Health Foundation, community members meet to strengthen and create legacies for Black families. Chet and his team provide space and structure for engaging deeply in public health issues that impact Northern Californians. Created by the Steering Committee on Reduction of African American Child Deaths, the Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC) addresses four central issues that disrupt legacies: perinatal conditions, infant sleep, child abuse and neglect, and third-party homicides. BCLC’s goal has been a 10-20 percent reduction in the deaths of African American children in Sacramento County by 2020.³⁰ This goal has been pursued through undertakings guided by Community Incubator Leads

29 B. Love, *We Want to do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2019).

30 <http://blackchildlegacy.org>

in Sacramento communities that need support, including Arden Arcade, Fruitridge & Stockton, Oak Park, Meadowview, Valley Hi, Foothill Farms & North Highland, Del Paso Heights, and North Sacramento.

Mr. Hewitt sees BCLC as a potential model for the nation and posits, “I know we’re a modest-sized foundation ... but I do think Sacramento is like many jurisdictions that with the will and investment can turn the tide on the national crisis that black maternal and child mortality represents, and so we have a unique opportunity and unique responsibility.” In addition to direct programs that specifically benefit Black children and their families, sleeping assessments now conducted in hospitals help all families, as a result of BCLC advocacy. “Good policy for Black families is good policy for *all* families,” asserts Mr. Hewitt.

The art and science of negotiation

Mr. Hewitt began his time with Sierra Health Foundation in 2008 and has come to be known as an advocate who can engage in the art of negotiation. At times, his ability to negotiate has challenged Mr. Hewitt’s relationships with young activists who want to see things move quickly. “I’m a big believer in strategy ... we have to think about what we’re doing and why ... and that the art of negotiation is not a weakness.” Mr. Hewitt has compelling ideas to share with young people who wish to engage in equity-oriented and justice-seeking work to bolster the well-being of Black communities:

- The enemies of one’s prosperity are not the people in their communities.
- Creating a new narrative is possible through one’s scholarship, music, art, etc.
- The change one hopes for and aspires to cannot be done without one’s personal involvement.
- Young people have the right to demand that adults in their community act in ways that promote all the above.

Mr. Hewitt spoke passionately of his desire for young people to know that violence against their peers or within their communities would not help them. Reminiscent of hip hop artist Jay-Z, who implored in his last album, “Please don’t die

over the neighborhood that your momma rentin,” Mr. Hewitt encourages youth to instead strive toward ownership themselves.³¹ However, Mr. Hewitt has a more expansive vision than other elders who simply want youth to pull up their pants and “do better” in situations without any obvious path for doing so.

Adults must demonstrate accountability to children and youth, as well as positive vision for their futures, or youth have a right to demand it, according to Mr. Hewitt. There is historical context for this ideology. Independent Black Institutions established in the last 1960s and early 1970s throughout the United States asserted such norms when public schools were failing Black and Puerto Rican students. The EAST, for example, in Brooklyn, New York, was home to the Uhuru Sasa School, *Black News* Newspaper, and The Black Experience in Sound performance space. Black teachers, parents, and students who grew tired of the New York City United Federation of Teachers broke away to establish an African-centered education through which Black educators encouraged youth to hold adults—including their own family members—to high standards when it came to education and miseducation. When listening to Mr. Hewitt talk about young people, one is reminded of the wisdom that comes with long, slow work, and, perhaps, the enduring fable of the tortoise and the hare.

“Most kids don’t know my story”

During his tenure of leadership, Mr. Hewitt established programs such as Build Black, Kings & Queens Basketball, California Funders for Boys & Men of Color, My Brother’s Keeper Initiative, and Positive Youth Justice Initiative. Mr. Hewitt put in the work and the time. If one were to see Mr. Hewitt in his sunlit office, though, they might not know his trajectory. “Most kids don’t know my story,” shared Mr. Hewitt. “I am one of eight kids from the projects. Grew up in places that had very similar challenges in a different time. [Youth] need their own contemporaries to show them what that can look like and to guide and help shape their potential, their ideas, their own aspirations,” he continued. Invoking Harold Melvin and the Blue Note’s song, “Wake up Everybody,” Mr. Hewitt shared a line he

³¹ Sean Carter, *The Story of O.J.*, 4:44, 2017.

would repurpose for 21st century educators: “Teachers, teach the truth.” He explained that “the niceties in which we try to think about and speak about the history of challenge in this country need to be unpacked in ways that allow the reality of both the impacts and pushback on those practices and policies to be more clearly understood.”

One example Mr. Hewitt gave was the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four African American girls—14-year-olds Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, and Carole Robertson, and 11-year-old Cynthia Wesley. Susan Collins, Addie Mae’s little sister, survived but was permanently blinded. Mr. Hewitt was recently working with a group of young men unaware of this historical act of racial terror and hatred. Mr. Hewitt’s interview took place in March 2020, just prior to people of all ages around the globe collectively witnessing George Floyd’s final 8 minutes and 46 seconds of life after a community member filmed the tragedy on a smartphone. This time, the murder was witnessed by countless young people who had been sheltering in place, isolated from peers due to sudden COVID-19-related closures that exacerbated the shameful inequities of the public education system. The names George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Elijah McClain are now likely deeply imprinted on the hearts and minds of those and other youth who had never learned the names of “the four little girls” who were earlier victims of the ongoing pattern of racism and murder in the United States.

Setting the table

Mr. Hewitt notes that effective responses to historical injustices have been strategic and purposeful. “There was real strategy and thinking. There was a value and a commitment to a cause. There was a willingness to take on risk. And there was a commitment to this notion of agency and voice in the midst of all the chaos that people saw surrounding them.” This strategy is evident in the innovation and foresight of Black Lives Matter founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi, who brilliantly created a decentralized movement that now has chapters throughout the United States. The Black Child Legacy Campaign has

similarly created impact and established a network by distributing leadership and resources throughout Sacramento to ensure that communities that have suffered the most have been engaged with in personalized ways. In keeping with Mr. Hewitt’s firm belief that teachers are not solely in classrooms and schools, BCLC’s Community Incubator Leads have a strong presence in many settings across under-resourced Sacramento neighborhoods.

Mayor Darryl Steinberg credited progress decreasing the number of homicides involving Black youth in Sacramento to the work of Sierra Health Foundation in a 2019 *Sacramento Bee* article, in which Mr. Hewitt talked about the importance of proactive and holistic engagement, “not just waiting for someone to shoot at somebody, that is not the case ... it really is around the things we know that add additional stress and trauma in their lives, which sometimes causes people to respond in ways that are not healthy for themselves, their families or their communities.”³²

“At this point in my career, I am adamant about sharing ... getting old is a challenging thing but what really makes it worthwhile is that you acquire a level of wisdom ... I want to set up folks [who] are going to be next.”

While Mr. Hewitt has little interest in garnering accolades for himself, he is keenly interested in the futures of emerging leaders, “At this point in my career, I am adamant about sharing ... getting old is a challenging thing but what really makes it worthwhile is that you acquire a level of wisdom ... I want to set up folks [who] are going to be next.” Despite all Mr. Hewitt has achieved with Sierra Health programs and fundraising, he is still not satisfied. Expressing concern that

32 M. Sullivan, “Teen Homicides Fall to Zero as Sacramento Sees Overall Decline in Murders in 2019,” *Sacramento Bee*, www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article239093098.html, January 28, 2020.

progress on racism and racial disparities has not gone far enough during his 35 years of committed work, he shared, “I am not as far as I hoped to be at this point ... there is still more to be done for communities of color ... I think over the last number of years we’ve actually gone backwards.”

Mr. Hewitt’s ability to look beyond all he has done and toward the work that has yet to be done is perhaps his greatest gift; his temerity and tenacity to desire more for Black people is palpable. You can see the boy in a family of eight wrapped in the love of older siblings and a mother who protected and guided him along the way so he might be of service to others. Mr. Hewitt is a constant gardener; he never lets up and is consistent in his mission to problem solve on behalf of those who need it: “I don’t know everything. I don’t have the answers to everything, and I always come to the work with a willingness to listen and learn. I think that’s what makes you a really good advocate because it’s the integration of the best ideas that allows you to have the best chance for success.”

This gardening is not missionary or colonizing, but an intentional leveraging of resources, experience, knowledge, and his own innate ability to facilitate dialogue that Mr. Hewitt draws from. Using the metaphor of gumbo, a dish credited to Louisiana that varies in terms of the ingredients but always begins with the foundational roux, he explained, “I’ve always said to folks, it’s like making good gumbo, you know ... it ain’t one thing ... and you know gumbo can have several people cooking it from the same ingredients and it ain’t all gonna be the same. Some folks, maybe they should fry the chicken [laughter] but you leave those experiences with an appreciation of what other people can bring to the table. And it doesn’t have to minimize what you have to offer at all.”

Setting the table so that others may bring their offerings defines another of Mr. Hewitt’s perspectives about leadership: “Leadership is like love. [There’s] not shortage of a need for it to be present. And we should not in our own way construct that, where we see leaders going against leaders for what they believe is a limited amount of ear time or space for leadership deployed”

Kindra Montgomery: Mothering Black Leadership

By: Vanessa Segundo

On March 19, 2020, exactly ten days before the mandatory state lockdown announced by Governor Gavin Newsom, I met with Kindra. The realness of COVID-19 began to sink deeper and deeper into my body, mind, and spirit. I was five months pregnant at that point, and all I could think of was about my son, who moved and kicked inside my womb, not knowing how to best prepare for protecting him in what quickly became a global pandemic. I sang to him. I rubbed my belly. I prayed over him.

“The anxiety and isolation many have felt during the past few months while staying at home to prevent community spread of COVID-19 is a peek into the uncertainty and fear Black communities face daily.”

Kindra shared this wisdom as she noted that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed how nationwide, states have had to make the decision to either “prioritize the health of residents” or “the health of the economy.” This decision underscores the values that sustain the various systems of inequities that not only harm, but also persecute Black communities. What is worth saving? Who is considered worthy enough to save? Who is making this decision?

Legacy Begins at the West End of Louisville, Kentucky

I met Kindra during meetings with the Sierra Health Foundation, when I not only learned about the Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC), but also came to understand her leadership role. As Associate Director of Community and Economic Development for the Sierra Health Foundation, Kindra spent the past six years spearheading the establishment of the Community Incubator Lead model that forms the foundation of BCLC programming. Kindra has been seminal in creating personalized programs for communities around workforce training, job placement, counseling, maternal health, infant and child health, and county services.

Her footprint in dimensions of evaluation, planning, and execution are underscored by her fervor to center and uplift community partnerships. She is in the business of forming and sustaining relationships. It is no coincidence that Kindra played a central role in BCLC’s effort to surpass a 2020 goal of reducing Black child deaths by

33 percent in a 5-year timeframe, while securing financial investments totaling \$10.9 million dollars for capacity building across the seven communities engaged in this initiative. These are the same communities Kindra and her family belong to, places and people that have raised her, mentored her, loved her.

“My name is Kindra Montgomery-Block.” As she breathed her full name into existence, the empty walls became adorned with the images of women from her own maternal and paternal lineages who have guided and uplifted Kindra in the important work of “loving Black mommies.”

I made the short 15-minute drive to the Sierra Health Foundation, deciding to take the streets that day to enjoy the spring breeze and sun that entered through my car windows,



Kindra Montgomery

dancing and bringing with it the smell of newly blossomed flowers and trees that lined Arden Way. I let the calmness of the Sacramento River guide me to my destination. While it was not my first time visiting the Sierra Health Foundation, the picturesque foliage and sound of the gentle river waves surrounded me like it was our first encounter. The beautifully manicured bushes and lawn hugged the three-story modern building and its gradient beige to brown brickwork. I pulled into the visitor parking spot right across the main entrance and took a few minutes to stand outside before entering, taking in the calmness and silence that seemed to permeate the entire building. I made my way up to the second floor via the half-spiraled wooden staircase that led me to our meeting location, a small conference room, where I sat in an executive chair, one of six that framed the medium-sized oval table. Kindra's presence immediately added life to the space, as energy radiated in her word and the work she described to me during that moment.

As she breathed her full name into existence, the empty walls became adorned with the images of the women that are part of her maternal and paternal lineage, that guided and uplifted Kindra in the important work of "loving Black mommies."

Kindra. Inspired by Hurricane Kendra, Kindra's mother wanted to name her daughter with a unique moniker. Indeed, the decision to select a name from the last season in history to use an all-female Atlantic hurricane naming list,^[1] 1978, manifested her expectation that, like the two key features of the related natural phenomenon, Kindra would have a path and strength that was not undermined, but forecasted for its power.

Hurricane Kendra touched ground in Puerto Rico on October 28, 1978 and became a tropical storm that lasted for a week, producing heavy rains and damages upward of \$6 million dollars. Exactly 36 years later, when Kindra gave birth to her own first child, Simone, on October 28, 2014, she also marked her first month as the program officer then overseeing the Steering Committee on Reduction of African American Child Deaths, groundbreaking work that lay the

foundation for the Black Child Legacy Campaign. Prior to this role, Kindra served as Director of Training and Community Relations for the Center for Community School Partnerships of the School of Education at the University of California, Davis. Her 20 years of experience strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations demonstrated Kindra's commitment to "civic duty and a need to improve the lives of youth and families."

Kindra's paternal Great-Grandmother, Frances, lived in Louisville, Kentucky. Named in honor of her, Kindra acknowledges that her Great Grandmother Frances embodied the legacy of mothering for transformation. A Black woman, Great-Grandmother Frances defiantly married a white man and raised twelve sons and one daughter despite the racism and targeted discrimination they experienced. Great-Grandmother Frances' daughter was Kindra's Great-Aunt, Georgia, an American politician and celebrated civil rights pioneer. During her 21-year tenure as the first Black senator in the state of Kentucky, Great-Aunt Georgia Montgomery Davis Powers sponsored civil rights legislation prohibiting sex, job, and age discrimination, while also introducing the first statewide fair housing laws. Kindra's admiration for her kinswoman instills a sense of pride and also represents a standard of advocacy to "hold my head up high about this work."



Kindra understands the level of commitment and sacrifice Great-Aunt Georgia made to navigate the racist Kentucky legislature and is reminded that there are no excuses not to do the work. While her Kentucky family draws constant comparisons between Great-Aunt Georgia and herself as two “spitfires,” Kindra honors the role of Great-Grandmother Frances in raising “this great Black woman” who engaged in acts of “reimagining a future where Black lives flourish and thrive in their totality.” In fact, Kindra’s own mother, an attorney at law for the entity that was formerly the Department of Mental Health Services in Sacramento, California came from a family of doctors and educators who were compelled to serve and advocate for Black communities. Collectively, they set a precedent regarding the expectation that you give back and contribute something to this world.

Montgomery Block. The Montgomerys are a household name in Louisville, known for their critical contributions to Black life and activism. Kindra recalls Black excellence as central to the advocacy work of the Montgomerys. It was no surprise to learn that they mentored youth and instilled a commitment to fight for the future of their community. Kindra’s father and two sisters grew up next to professional boxer, philanthropist, and social activist Muhammad Ali, a close family friend. In fact, Kindra’s grandfather gave Muhammad Ali his first job, working alongside the Montgomerys. Kindra’s married name, Block, represents a similar legacy of community activism in Sacramento, where Uncle Harry Block was caringly referred to as the mayor of Del Paso Heights. Becoming part of the Block family amplified Kindra’s ability to cultivate strong community ties and sustain relationships with Black families who rightly distrust government-sponsored support services. This lineage is the backdrop to Kindra against which she is “not just the pushy Black girl from Valley High,” but a public steward from and within the community.

Black childhood is *necessary*.
Black power feels like *self-love*.
When I look into our past, *I see our future*.
When I look in the mirror, *I see Samone*.

Motherwork as Leadership, Activism, and Liberation

The undeniable connection between becoming a Black mother and serving mothers is woven into Kindra’s work and life. “My story is for Samone,” she told me.

An expectant mom myself, I asked Kindra about what her experience was like to birth her first child and BCLC at the same time. Kindra had exactly one month to plan a strategic blueprint for initial phases of the work, while embodying what it is and means to be a Black mother. She was living with all of the tensions and possibilities of Black maternal health while unraveling and unveiling the deeply-rooted systemic issues of oppression, injustice, and inequity systemized through



practices and policies within and beyond the health sector. “You have to make sure you have the right cortisol in your body.” I was taken aback by this response. Cortisol, a steroid hormone produced by the adrenal glands, has several functions, mainly assisting the body in responding to stress or danger, commonly referred to as our fight or flight response. Recent studies have shown a direct connection between unbalanced levels of maternal cortisol and neuropsychiatric disorders. Kindra seems to read my mind, and enters my curiosity, “Cortisol. That hormone is about love. It’s about justice. It’s about producing the best human that you can. How can you do that if everything else around you is on fire?” My baby kicks. We both sit with what Kindra offered, in silence.

“Throughout this journey, no one ever said, I love Black moms.” As we both stared at each other, I knew we both understood what her statement meant, in all its dimensions and forms.

It is unforgivable to focus on infant and child mortality without acknowledging the persecution of Black women in American society, given their disproportionate experiences with violence, rape, homicide, police brutality, incarceration, and institutionalized racism. “No one ever says, I love Black mommies. I do.” As tears entered our space, we both honored the depth and truth of her words. Kindra’s work is not only about building the capacity of community organizations to empower Black children and youth to thrive, but also creating justice-centered futures where Black mothers are sacred.

“Our bodies are on fire. Our environment’s on fire so we can’t have healthy babies all the time. Someone has to love us enough to speak about it.” She asked if I was expecting my first child and I responded that I was carrying my second beautiful brown baby. “Then you know. You understand.”

At that moment, I no longer was in a meeting space, but transported to the last month of Kindra’s pregnancy, when she received the call from Sierra Health Foundation to “work on saving Black kids’ lives” while preparing to have a Black child of her own. Kindra has spent her entire life preparing

and being groomed for that particular call, a call to help “the Black community strategize with system leaders” to “lift and love Black people.” Growing up in south Sacramento, Kindra expressed how her pride in being a Valley High School graduate rooted her interest in studying political science at the University of California, Riverside where she worked at a nonprofit organization that developed substance abuse intervention and prevention programs for youth. Inspired by this experience, she worked for several years at the Youth Leadership Institute in San Francisco after graduation. Upon completing her master’s degree in public administration from Golden Gate University, Kindra returned to her hometown, Sacramento, to work for 10 years at the University of California, Davis’ School of Education. Collectively, these experiences reinforced her commitment to community-led advocacy efforts for equity and justice.

I was transported to her short-lived maternity leave, time when she celebrated the growth in her family while negotiating health equity initiatives to center Black families at an institutional level. Kindra was nine months pregnant when she joined Sierra Health Foundation. Thirty days after her start date, she was initiating her recovery from a high-risk pregnancy while simultaneously preparing to return to her leadership role overseeing the Steering Committee on Reduction of African American Child Deaths. Shifting her own care to prioritize community needs meant that personal sacrifices were made—another reason Kindra deems it important to ensure that the work culture she is part of normalizes motherhood.

At the core of Kindra’s work is celebration of Black mothers. “It’s not that I don’t love all mommies. It’s kind of like the Black Lives Matter conversation.” I am intrigued and asked her to tell me more. “My house matters. Your house matters. But my house is on fire. We have to do immediate things to focus on that house because if we don’t, then it’s going to spread to your house and spread to your neighborhood.” The Black Child Legacy Campaign represented an opportunity to create equity transformation in health systems, particularly in communities that are home spaces for Kindra. Reflecting on over 20 years of community organizing, she notes that most of her time has

been dedicated to prevention work that did not focus on interrogating, building, and protecting infrastructures and economic investments that positively impact Black communities. “Now is an opportunity to think ahead, to strategize.”

Kindra points to the window at the corner of the room in which we are seated and begins to describe the economic development being poured into downtown Sacramento. The skyline is framed by the addition of new high rises, condominiums, and gated communities, constant roadwork improvements, and renovations to the city landscape. Kindra describes how the concentration of economic investments in white neighborhoods signals the inequitable distribution of wealth and sustenance of poverty in neighborhoods where predominately low- income folks of color reside. Take, for instance, Meadowview, the community where Kindra played softball as a youth, which continues to look like the place she visited in the 1990s when “not a spotlight or pothole is being fixed.” BCLC has demonstrated pathways to inclusive economic development through direct investment into Black communities that positively influence the welfare of not only children, but entire family units. In essence, BCLC represents “Build Black”—infrastructure by which to forefront issues of inequity experienced by Black communities “like never before, without impunity.” This, Kindra says, is the driving force that compels this work forward.

I was transported, too, to the many meetings Kindra held with various stakeholders across the state and country who expressed varied beliefs about whether BCLC would be successful. She recalls the first meeting she coordinated with the Board County Supervisors, where she coordinated the participation of various community organizations to demand funding and resources that represented re-investment into defunded neighborhoods. “They said to elected officials, not only are we going to be able to take on this challenge, we’re going to be the ones to fix it.” Indeed, community partnerships were the heart of the Black Child Legacy Campaign, leveraged to amplify pre-existing efforts. The resulting success of this solidarity work was rightfully

celebrated and acknowledged. However, it was no surprise that several of the organizations and stakeholders who were once on the sidelines and skeptical about the work now publicly claimed ownership and credit of this movement. Kindra, always intentional and strategic, knew the significance of this self-proclaimed involvement. “The more people that own it, then they really got to own it. We can find a spot for you too.” She was not interested in who wanted to take credit for reaching benchmarks, but who was invested in these neighborhoods to ensure that Black communities “actually stay alive and thrive.”

***She took a deep breath.
Inhaled. Exhaled. “It’s the
opportunity to save Black lives.”
Another deep breath.
Inhaled. Exhaled.***

I was transported to community circles where the work of building Black futures are rooted and protected. Kindra had shared with me the various reports her team developed that described the benchmarks and associated quantitative data sets that confirm the success of their work. I asked her to speak further about what she considers the most significant lesson her community partners taught her. She took a deep breath. Inhaled. Exhaled. “It’s the opportunity to save Black lives.” Another deep breath. Inhaled. Exhaled.

The vicious murder of Stephon Clark, an unarmed Black youth, by the Sacramento police on Sunday, March 18, 2018 represented a pivotal moment for Kindra in her roles as part of the Black Child Legacy Campaign and as a Black mother in Sacramento. “When something so tragic like this happens, it takes the soul out of the neighborhood,” she reflected. All the accolades directed at BCLC programming seemed small as the realities of “picking Black people off the cement or burying a Black person” sink in. No benchmark or data point could revive

Stephon. No recognition could ease the pain of Stephon Clark's mother grieving the loss of her son, like so many Black mothers had done before her. "Stephon Clark's murder served as a reminder that our unprecedented results were insufficient and insignificant at the same time." Caught between her role as a community activist and an activist from within the community, the tragedy was a personal and professional issue; Kindra had grown up and had direct relationships with the families affected. "These families that I had grown up around my whole life did not have a way to create an opportunity for that generation to thrive. It wasn't about services or better resources." Compelled to strengthen the solidarity among the "Black civil rights infrastructure in Sacramento," Kindra organized a gathering among key Black stakeholders and organizations to work toward a unified voice that not only responded to the state of violence against Black bodies in Sacramento, but also planned for the future of Black Sacramento. Birthed from this gathering was the "idea around inclusive economic development," infrastructure and systems designed to create long-term investments in all aspects of life in Black communities. "Build Black." More than an economic strategy to reduce poverty, it was a strategy to redistribute wealth in communities that had systemically and historically been depleted and denied resources. It was no coincidence that these communities were the seven neighborhoods that were part of the Black Child Legacy Campaign. The true work lies in helping these communities heal.

The true work lies in empowering the community by leveraging their knowledge and assets to reimagine futures that are in the "active pursuit of justice." I felt compelled to ask her thoughts about a proverb her reflection triggered. Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter. "Figure out how to write like a lion. Honestly, we're not speaking the right language or writing the right language." Kindra has been writing in lion, in fact, she has mastered it. As a systems leader, Kindra advocates for Black communities to assert themselves for themselves.

Kindra's passion is guided by an unwavering commitment to not only facilitate capacity building to create and build futures for Black communities, but also to humanize Black lives through the process. Kindra's advocacy does not end when she walks out of her office or when the clock strikes five. Having interacted with colleagues from the multiple spheres that Kindra navigates, I know she is highly involved in various initiatives, community boards, etc. In admiration, I ask how she sustains herself. "Through the grace of God." She tells me her faith is central to grounding her work and word. Her husband and daughter are constant sources of support and joy. The genuine smile that swept across her face was pure happiness when she described Baron, the new puppy they gifted Simone. Time with her family is "protected time," as nothing interrupts Kindra's role as mother and wife. She also describes her circle of "sister soldiers and mentors" as a consistent source of empowerment to all dimensions of her being, people with whom she has no need to compartmentalize herself, for they see her for who she truly is. "We do what women do, lift each other up." They help her strategize and maintain clarity about the real work that needs to be accomplished in the community. As I stare at Kindra, I can feel the depth of her genuine commitment to do right by the community that raised her, mentored her. Her energy transmits an unwavering life mission to continue the work of "celebrating Black folks' lives." I am interested in learning what she considers the biggest success of the Black Child Legacy Campaign. Rather than reference a data point or describe a personal victory, Kindra insisted that the true significance of the work was the ability to amplify pre-existing community initiatives created by and for Black families, and to re-affirm their role in creating transformative change. "I want Black communities to know that they are powerful," she said with conviction.

Crystal Harding-Jenkins: Black is.... Love, Beautiful, and Celebration

By: Lawrence Torry Winn

Sitting at her desk several feet away from her Black Child Legacy Campaign colleagues' workspaces, Crystal juggles her time between answering phone calls, troubleshooting with staff, and preparing for her upcoming activity with teens from Foothill High School and Highlands High School. "We have a teen event in a few hours that we are getting ready for. We try to make them feel welcome and for them to know they matter," she says referring to the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) program associated with the Black Child Legacy Campaign. She continues to talk about the event and urges me to stay to participate or as she suggests "observe the teens in action."

In the middle of sharing the logistics, details, and purpose of the teen event, a young African American woman opens the door, positions herself in the middle of the entryway, and requests a few minutes of Crystal's time. Crystal lets me know that this will only take a moment. She quickly steps away, walks towards the woman, and listens closely to her concerns.

As they are talking, I want to give them their privacy to discuss the issue at hand. I slowly stand to my feet to look around the office. This is my second BCLC office visit so I am curious to see the difference in the layouts and decoration of the sites. I count five work desks. I see two other people that I have yet to be introduced to. They are immersed in a conversation but they acknowledge my presence with a gentle wave. In one corner of the office, literature is neatly placed on a table and posted on a wall. I begin to drift off wondering: Who works in the office with Crystal? How often do visitors come into the space for help? Do all Black Child Legacy offices look the same with neatly decorated collateral material? How do the different agencies coordinate their schedules or share data? Who is responsible for the communication?



Crystal Harding-Jenkins

The woman, who needed a hot-quick second with Crystal, now seems re-assured by Crystal's confidence in her. She tells Crystal thanks, then dashes down the hallway and disappears. I look at Crystal and laugh saying "Real time, real time needs." With a smile, she also laughs and nods, "My goodness!" Translation: there is a lot going on here today but "it's gon be alright." Now we are both laughing. This brief moment of humor, laughter, and optimism is what the entire hour and a half with Crystal felt like.

Crystal's gift to respond with grace and patience to a series of sporadic urgencies describes some of the qualities required to be successful at meeting the needs of others. The ability to be interrupted and getting back on task is a specialization and talent. Moving from answering the telephones to responding to emails, to sending off texts, to sitting down for an interview, to giving someone just a minute of your time, can be exhausting for many but for Crystal—and many of her Community Lead Incubators (CIL) colleagues—juggling roles, coordinating community events, meeting with clients and partners, supervising volunteers, inputting data, writing reports, applying for grants, responding to injustices, completing assigned deliverables, and remaining positive are necessary components of her effectiveness. I am curious about her job description, how she manages to get it all done, and

why she is committed to serving the Black community of Sacramento. I also want to know how does she remain motivated and positive? These daily tasks and impromptu meetings (as well as the sporadic urgencies) are all part of Crystal's lifetime goal to help people, work with youth, and collaborate with others to improve the quality of life for marginalized communities of color.

Just within a few minutes of meeting her, it is evident that she has the capacity and competence to comfort others who are in dire need and reassurance of "it's gon be alright." She exudes a sense of confidence that rubs off on the individuals she encounters. Crystal, like many of her CIL peers, is very experienced and skilled—they are a valuable and integral member of the Sacramento community.

A 10,000-mile Journey of Liberation and Hope

As the Program Director for the North Highlands Foothill Farms Black Child Legacy Campaign, Crystal finds herself thrust into the middle of her dream of a social worker. She and the supporting agencies for the Community Incubator Lead dedicate their time and resources to the local youth and families of North Highlands, Foothill Farms, and surrounding neighborhoods. Their purpose is clear: "[We are here] to serve as a conduit connecting people to power. Let them know that we are here for them. We can hold their hands and walk with them along the way." Her walk with others during challenging times and steady hand in moments of uncertainty is deeply rooted in her life journey—literally over 10,000 miles—and the lessons she learned along the way.

Crystal's zealous fight for families begins 7,000-miles away from Sacramento. As a child she and her family resided in Liberia. Located in Western Africa on the Atlantic Ocean, free American and Caribbean slaves (Americo Liberians) found Liberia. It is Africa's oldest republic. When Crystal was seven years old, a civil war broke out. The war killed more than 250,000 people and destroyed homes, businesses, and infrastructure. It also forced Crystal and her family to leave Liberia and make the journey to Oakland, California in the

early 1990s. After residing in the Bay Area for a few years, in 1994 her family moved another 100 miles east to Sacramento where the cost of living and employment opportunities were advantageous.

Upon graduating from Foothill High School, she journeyed another 2,300 miles to Montgomery, Alabama to attend Alabama State University (ASU), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Montgomery is the home of Rosa Parks and where the 1955-1956 boycott of public buses helped elevate the Civil Rights Movement to a national and global level. It is the place where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. pastored Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. ASU is situated within the legacy of America's freedom movement and the fight for the recognition that Black lives matter. Crystal's educational experience at an HBCU gave her insight into race and social justice issues. She began to grapple with the impacts of colorism, anti-blackness, oppression of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). More importantly, she was surrounded by a community of Black students and professors—very similar to her native country of Liberia where Black-African culture, thought, and life was celebrated. Crystal graduated with a Bachelors in Social Work then traveled another 2,300 miles back to Sacramento. She then received her Masters in Social Work from Sacramento State University before working for several nonprofits in the region.

Crystal first learned about the Black Child Legacy Campaign when invited by the Liberty Towers CIL to attend a Profound Purpose Institute. In the fall of 2018, the North Highlands Foothill Farms incubator hired her as the Program Director. Her dream as a social worker came to fruition: "When I was younger, I told people that my dream job was to be president of helping and giving. I did not know that was social work and philanthropy." As the Program Director, she feels right at home advocating, creating innovative solutions, helping, and working with community members. She is applying the lessons learned from her 10,000-mile journey responding to the needs of the community where she grew up, currently lives, work, pray and play.

A Celebration of Life

Crystal shares her workspace with the North Highlands Foothill Farms multidisciplinary team. Standing up from her desk she points out the layout of the room and where her team members work during the day. But before she is able to provide the details of office space, the phone rings and we both laugh again at her “real time” requests. She finishes her call then points out that one seat is for a representative from the Department of Human Assistance (DHA). Then there is a space for a Child Protective Services (CPS) employee. The last desk area is for the Probation Team. She introduces me to the DHA employee. The middle-aged woman describes her work and the collaborative efforts between the different agencies. She points out that she has already witnessed success in the community and that Black lives are being saved and their needs are being met. Crystal later shares a passionate description of the multidisciplinary team:

“[We] meet the families as they are.

Connecting with them. No judgment. Just open arms and open hearts. And with genuine love and empathy, so that they know they have someone, a team, and network that’s there to support them through it all.”

The team works together to ensure families do not fall between the cracks and do not miss out on any opportunities or resources. Crystal makes it clear that programming, resources, staffing, and the name of Black Child Legacy Campaign is important but “a personal story or personal connection” makes it relatable for the community. Crystal’s natural gift to relate and show compassion for the concerns and needs of others makes it easier for local community members to trust her. Trust is essential to building healthy relationships with vulnerable families. Many of the families seeking services and resources are skeptical of government agencies or nonprofits because of failed promises.

The role of the Program Director is not just about connecting the family to resources and helping individuals figure out urgent issues. “We are here to celebrate with them,” asserts Crystal. This is evident in the abundance of love and support that the youth of North Highlands Foothill Farms receive throughout the year. After visiting with Crystal, I received an email inviting me to a February 2019 Student Voices gathering. Local leaders, elected officials, law enforcement, school administrators, and community service providers came to listen to the youth, and the incredible insight they bring to “the table”. According to Crystal, “the youth are the why.



They are our present and future, we are doing this work for their generation to thrive and really live fully. We need to start engaging and connecting with them when they are younger. We will be able to have greater impact partnering with them.” Every two months, I still receive an email from Crystal highlighting and celebrating the progress and achievements of young people.

Black Beauty, Liberation, and Education

Several posters with positive and uplifting sayings and images of Black youth and families decorate the walls of the North Highlands Foothill Farms Black Child Legacy Campaign office. They are neatly displayed on a table and perfectly angled on a wall. The big green words of BLACK CHILD LEGACY CAMPAIGN spread across every piece of literature drew me near. This small space dedicated to BCLC literature, news, and information feel sacred. The images of Black families and black excellence featured on the collateral material brings joy to Crystal. As a native of a country that was the first republic in Africa and founded by freed enslaved people from the US and the Caribbean, she appreciates black beauty, liberation, education, and self-determination. Crystal did not always see these images and language of Black empowerment in Sacramento.

As a child and later as a young adult, she experienced the impact of the media’s negative portrayal of Black people and the agonizing pains of colorism. “Being darker skin and not seeing us on TV all the time or teachers not reflecting my culture or respecting my difference” frustrated her. Crystal speaks adamantly about the way Black children are represented in school textbooks and in the media. The great histories of Black legacies are not accurately described and are most often invisible or left out of the K-12 curriculum. If Black children only see anti-blackness themes and negative images of them and their communities, it becomes internalized. She expresses how school and the media perpetuate these harms and lowers the self-esteem for many Black students—especially Black girls. “What are we teaching our babies? Our Black babies?” asks Crystal.

Not only is anti-blackness, white supremacy, and cultural imperialism pervasive in K-12 schools and the media an issue for Crystal but she also opposes colorism. Colorism is when light skin individuals are given preferential treatment over darker hue individuals. Every ethnic group (Latinx, Asian, etc.) struggle with colorism. Crystal recalls attending Alabama State University and learning about African American history and discussing the impacts of colorism. It was one of her first times she felt liberated and connected to others who thought like her. Similar to ASU the Black Child Legacy Campaign provides a space and platform for her and others to talk about the

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mistreatment and dehumanization of Black folk because of the color of their skin. She embraces the name Black Child Legacy Campaign because it elevates Black people and highlights the past and the future. It also gives hope to young people in elementary, high school, and college to see themselves as leaders in their community. CIL’s and other BCLC leaders are often serving in the community, working with apartment complexes, schools, staff and students, community-based organizations, and partner agencies. Additionally, the constant promotion of the name Black Legacy Campaign and the appearance of Black leaders speaking positively and eloquently not only about the issues in the Black community but also about the successes and accomplishments pushes back against the deficit model narrative of Black people. She believes

that the Black Child Legacy helps to shape a positive narrative. The leadership of the BCLC provides black youth with positive role models and examples of Black people changing the world.

Futures Matter

Crystal leads me down one of the hallways of Liberty Towers Church. The church is the site of the North Highlands Foothill Farms BCLC local office. It is located about 15 minutes north of downtown Sacramento off the I-80 and along Elkhorn Boulevard. We enter into a room that is bustling with teens. The students are preparing to participate in a circle to discuss school, social justice, and music. An outside facilitator leads the discussion.

Student Voices is one of the emerging success stories of the North Highlands Foothill Farm BCLC. It connects local high school students with local leaders, elected or appointed officials, and service providers. The youth are the trusted experts in charge. This is a “brave space” and time for them to let their voices be heard and share their concerns, ideas, solutions, and perspective on the present and future. They

provide authentic recommendations to policymakers. The intergenerational attendees share their hopes for their community.

This method is one effective way Liberty Towers CIL engages the youth in a unique way to reduce black child deaths. It is not always about reviewing data or participating in protests, finding ways for “them to use their voices, provide solutions, discuss their fears, and to actively collaborate for brighter futures.” The goal is to collectively amplify teen voices and implement their suggestions without the red tape.

Crystal stands back away from the YPAR circle and watches the youth with a proud smile. The youth are lively, bubbly, talkative, and engaged. Crystal continues to smile. She knows that the future is bright. This is why it’s gon be alright.



Jackie Rose: Intergenerational Justice

By Dr. Vajra Watson

The Rose Family Creative Empowerment Center is located at 2251 Florin Road in Sacramento, California inside the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum. Rose Family Creative Empowerment was officially founded as a non-profit organization in 2013 and has steadily expanded. Through a variety of roles and capacities, the organization's staff have been serving the South Sacramento area for nearly three decades.

Sacramento is known as the city of trees because of the dense diversity of elms, oaks, sycamores, and other species that cover nearly a quarter of the urban landscape. It is fall of 2018 and this time of year is especially colorful as leaves change colors and dance toward the ground. Today, the air is brisk and the sky an aqua blue with scattered white clouds on the horizon. This picturesque backdrop surrounds me as I journey from my home on the northside along I-5 South and into the Meadowview neighborhood to meet with the Center's founder and executive director, Jackie Rose.



Jackie Rose

I exit on Florin Road East, make a left on 24th, and pass the Chevron on the left and California Bank and Trust on the right before making my way into the large parking lot of an array of storefronts that include Mi Rancho Grocery and Boost Mobile. Among these buildings, an established community hub houses artwork and various social services. As soon as I enter through



the tinted glass doors, I am greeted by a large mural overhead depicting local African American heroes and sheroes of Sacramento, among them Cornel West. The space feels historic and welcoming. I am eager to find Ms. Jackie.

I go down a dim hallway, make a left, and see a sign in green, black, and white announcing the Black Child Legacy Campaign. I know I am in the right set of offices and after talking to a few members of staff am asked to wait for Ms. Jackie in their conference room. The walls are full of images of Black excellence. There is a framed poster of Coretta Scott King and another of President Barack Obama, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. A caption reads: *Rosa Parks sat so King could walk; Obama ran so that our children might fly.*

History Matters

Ms. Jackie has deep roots in Sacramento and these roots have shaped her understanding of leadership and social change. She begins by stating, definitively and proudly, “I was born and raised here in Sacramento.” Ms. Jackie grew up in the Del Paso Heights neighborhood (north Sac) and emphasizes that it was “a community village.” Today, much of Ms. Jackie’s work revolves around reclaiming and rebuilding this sense of a village. Although she has spent the latter part of her professional career working in Meadowview, Ms. Jackie’s most profound life lessons came from the homegrown “village of elders” that nurtured her development as an adolescent. “That was in the 70s with bell bottoms and platform shoes,” she tells me, smiles wide, and winks, seeming to know she doesn’t quite look her age. Then, rather abruptly, her facial expression changes; her posture straightens when asked about some of her most influential mentors.

Among the community that raised her, one man stands out: *Mr. Echols*. Mr. Echols was the custodian at Grant High School, “a gentleman that only had a sixth-grade education.” He was originally from the South and had a distinct Southern accent. “He would always talk very slow but the words that he would leave you with would be so profound.” When

Ms. Jackie was in high school, she could always turn to Mr. Echols for advice. Even as an adult, he continued to probe her to get involved in the community. She provides a quick example.

Years ago, when her son’s little league team was in turmoil, Mr. Echols told her to join the board. Following his advice, Ms. Jackie became Vice President, at a time when it was “pretty much male dominated.” “I thought my interest was just my son, at the time,” she remembers, “but it wasn’t really just my son, it was all those kids. It was hundreds of kids that were part of that, cause sports is a big deal in Del Paso Heights.” Ms. Jackie helped the league become financially solvent and better organized. As she contemplated leaving the board because it was “pretty stable” and she wanted to “kinda just play a mother’s role,” Mr. Eckles told her, quite frankly, *it’s not time for you to do that*. Again, he played a pivotal role, convincing her to coach her son’s senior league team. She laughs as she remembers his directive: *you gotta go coach*. Ms. Jackie pushed back and told him, “I don’t know nothing about baseball.” He was forthright: *You sat on the benches long enough. You know a little bit about, you know, baseball*. After some trepidation, “I became the coach.” Mr. Echols had that way of making an impact. When Ms. Jackie stepped into that role, it “really opened the door up for a lot of women in Del Paso Heights to [gain] leadership roles that were male dominated.”

This illustration provides a glimpse into the ways she was mentored, sometimes with a little tough love and nudging. Mr. Echols shaped Ms. Jackie’s trajectory of service, but he was not the only one who did so. She speaks seriously about adults who surrounded her with an ethic of care, critical consciousness, and consistency. When asked what exactly this village taught her, she is precise and narrows it down to four key components:

1. “The first thing they taught me is to watch and listen to them. You needed to sit at the table, really hear what they were saying, how they were saying it, and what was being said. I think there’s a lot to be said for just sitting back and watching someone.”

2. At a relatively young age, Ms. Jackie accompanied community leaders to neighborhood association meetings and city council convenings. In these spaces, she learned a valuable second lesson: “watching them come to those meetings very organized, very systematically, with an agenda of items that they wanted to see changed or they wanted to make sure that the entire community was informed about.”
3. The third piece was to be “really intentional about this work.” She repeats, “Really being intentional. Being intentional about picking your battles and not getting caught up in the small stuff that wasn’t going to be impactful. And so, I learned that from them.”
4. Finally, Ms. Jackie witnessed the ways adults in her life interacted and had “strong relationships with the community.” She explains that “relationship building” is paramount, especially with families that have been systematically disenfranchised. To disrupt cycles of hopelessness and marginalization, genuine trust must be forged. That is the only way “they [will] feel comfortable that you are their advocate” and “that you are going to serve them.”

Growing up in Del Paso Heights, Ms. Jackie was taught about the importance of observation, discernment, intentionality, and activism—cornerstones of the lifelong work that has made her a consistent force for change throughout Sacramento.

Intergenerational Impact

For the last 30 years, Ms. Jackie has been supporting families in South Sacramento. In the late 1990s, she was working for a development agency that was managing an infamous apartment complex called by many names: G-Parkway, Jean Parkway, Franklin Villa, or Phoenix Park. While that area improved “one family at a time” as people were “connected to social services,” other pockets of Sacramento remain painfully marginalized. Ms. Jackie brings up Providence Place Apartments in the Valley High area, where she is currently working to disrupt the “same patterns of poverty. Same patterns of hopelessness. Same patterns of

crime.” “We have a model that we used in Phoenix Park,” she explains, “where it doesn’t have to be that way.” She is adamant: “We must make sure that we serve those people in a way that is gonna be supportive of them in a very dignified way.”

The word *dignified* causes a pause between us.

Ms. Jackie has discovered that a lot of people who work with the most disenfranchised populations provide horrifically low-quality services—and get away with it. She explains that families do have challenges, and that it is “still my job to make sure that I service them at the highest level.” This is, indeed, something Ms. Jackie is known for throughout Sacramento; people often tell her, “I know you don’t do no junk.”

“The dignity that people come to the table with,” she asserts, “gets lost in the traditional service delivery model.” “These institutions,” and she shakes her head as she provides an example, “where you have to sit out in the lobby for two or three hours at a time with four or five kids just waiting for an appointment.” The institutional apparatus foreshadows the humanity and it “don’t work.” Even services with the best intentions can strip people of their dignity. And then, logically, folks do not want to come back because there is so little common decency and basic respect. “So, who loses in that?” Ms. Jackie asks rhetorically. “The babies I love so dearly lose in that!”

Ms. Jackie’s alternative approach centralizes relationships. She creates spaces for a connection to unfold where “barriers are broken” and people are “basically pouring out to you things that they wouldn’t be able to tell someone else.” Along this journey, Ms. Jackie and her team try to show, rather than tell, families how to navigate these bureaucracies. “We are by their side navigating these institutions. Going in there with them.” Again, Ms. Jackie brings it back to “what my elders did for me” when they brought her to the table and led by example.

A pedagogy of commitment provides stability and consistency families can depend on.³³ Ms. Jackie echoes this point: “When

³³ Vajra Watson, *Learning to Liberate: Community-based Solutions to the Crisis in Urban Education* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

I'm out here in the community or they walk in here, they say, 'You're still here!'" She elaborates, "I think that one of the things that a lot of the young people I have crossed paths with will tell me is, 'The only thing I can feel good about, Ms. Jackie, is that you are still here and you are constant.'" Ms. Jackie leans forward and looks down at her folded hands, which are resting on the table between us. She begins to shake her head as she looks up and talks about the "abandonment issues that a lot of our young people and families go through." This, she explains, is why it is imperative to have "consistency" and "somebody that they can always go to." She repeats, "It's very, very important."

Unfortunately, "we don't have a lot of those consistent people that stay around for decades that are going to be there for the people that are the most vulnerable." Some people burn out or relocate, or a new reform emerges or funding streams change course. Irrespective of the reason, the point is that there is a lot of transience. For families surviving various, often multiple instabilities, impermanence can be devastating. It makes sense, then, that a large part of Ms. Jackie's effectiveness is her lifelong commitment to Black children and families in Sacramento. For Ms. Jackie, the seed of social change is reliable, respectful relationships.

She grins with joy as she tells me about celebrating a baby shower the previous weekend, referring to the intergenerational impacts that arise through ongoing commitment to the same type of work, over time, in the same location. Place matters. "Most of those mothers" at the baby shower were once "a lot of my young people." Ms. Jackie was able to "touch their lives" and they are still part of her extended family. She laughs under her breath: "They were swarming us like bees on Saturday!" Ever the consistent mentor, Ms. Jackie counselled the new mom regarding the "importance of loving this baby like I love them."

Laboring with Love

"You have to love what you do ... you have to love the people you serve ... all those kind of things to really be authentic in

the delivery of anything that you are going to do with this underserved population because they already have gone through enough. And they don't need someone that is gonna take them through more."

Unlike some service providers, "we're not just giving them a bus pass and leave them. If you need a bus pass, there is some other stuff going on. We need to sit down and really open up a case and open up this Pandora's box and figure out what else is going on." Ms. Jackie and her staff provide hands-on holistic and intensive case management with the goal that families become "stable enough to stand on their own." The work is not easy and it is beyond full time. The current caseload of Rose Family Creative Empowerment is "about 44 and growing."

"You have to love what you do ... you have to love the people you serve ... all those kind of things to really be authentic in the delivery of anything that you are going to do with this underserved population because they already have gone through enough. And they don't need someone that is gonna take them through more."

After three decades of serving Black families, Ms. Jackie seems like an expert. She chuckles a bit with this observation and describes what she was like when she first started working in the projects. By day it looked calm and conservative, but by nighttime it was like "New Jack City." During this time, Ms. Jackie was working for a housing corporation: "I was the only African American at the time that worked in this department ... *of course they're gonna send the Black girl to Jean Parkway.*"

"Now I'm Black," Ms. Jackie states, and "most of the community was Black." But she surmises, "I didn't know anything!" She shakes her head and folds her arms: the families

would not engage with her at all. Ms. Jackie doesn't like to fail and she wanted to be an advocate, but she did not know how to build the trust necessary to get the work done. "I went home and I prayed on it ... I'm not giving up on this one. There [has] got to be a way to engage my people." She started anew and left the adults alone. "I'm going to start with the kids," she decided. Ms. Jackie started a "little after-school program" in "one of the 4-plex units" and 10 kids showed up. After some time passed and the program started to grow, she asked the children, "Why do your parents not want to talk with me?" The babies were clear-as-day and told her bluntly: "They think you're the police."

Again, Ms. Jackie had to reevaluate her strategy. "I had system written on my face ... I was going out there in my little suits and my heels, and all of this stuff." To gain the trust of the neighborhood, she literally gave herself a makeover and toned it all down. "I went and got me some colors" and "some jeans." Essentially, she humbled herself to the tone of the community, and families started to talk to her. "And they would tell me, 'We thought you were Po Po. We didn't know you were here to help us.'" Slowly, a partnership began to forge out of everyone's love for the children. "The gang bangers would send their kids over," explaining that "even though I'm out here in the streets, I want my kids to get an education." In exchange for this support, they told her: "we'll protect the place where you provide the after-school program." She explains that they literally had "this handshake deal" that anywhere the "kids did activities was off limits."

From that point on, the center began to thrive inside those projects. Over the years, she worked with nearly 100 kids and they defied stereotypes ("bottom of the barrel, not doing anything successful"). She is especially proud that many of them went "off to college and came back to the community. My dream for them is to always come back and serve ... because who knows your community better than you?" Ms. Jackie repeats, "I need you to come back and serve."

Collective Accountability

After decades of working with the housing authority, Ms. Jackie had her eye on retirement. "I had done my 30 years, I was ready to retire," she says with a smirk. "It was time to go and then" something unexpected happened. "I was sitting in Phoenix Park" and felt something stir deep inside that said, "You are not finished. So, I started my own 501c3." She has been steadily expanding the service model over the last six years, with a tremendous amount of support from Sierra Health Foundation. "The Black Child Legacy Campaign," she says, connected her to systems change and neighborhood networks in a whole new way.

The Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC) provided Ms. Jackie and her colleagues with tools to push against the system and to "vet these folks" mandated to improve the quality of life for poor folks, who are disproportionately African American. She provides the example of Child Protective Services (CPS) often "hold[ing] families feet to fire" with various deliverables needed to keep or regain custody of their children. With the help of the BCLC, Ms. Jackie and others created cultural competency checkpoints for CPS, and CPS now uses cultural brokers to foster bridges between families and social workers.³⁴ As a result, when a case is referred, mechanisms are now in place to ensure that CPS staff approach their work in ways that are culturally sensitive. "Parents are being accountable to certain deliverables," says Ms. Jackie, but her job is to hold *the system's* "feet to the fire," as well. In other words, deliverables are not one-directional; deliverables need to be reciprocal.

Over the years, BCLC has provided a vital partnership between community members and social services. Relationships have improved. Ms. Jackie explains, "The Black Child Legacy Campaign has given us the latitude to actually present and produce this kind of model" where we are "working *with* CPS, working *with* DHA, working *with* Probation, working *with* the police department, working *with* SETA," so Black children in this city survive and thrive.

34 www.sacbee.com/latest-news/article203997389.html

Race Matters

We started our conversation with the past, and here we are, again, looking backward.

Ms. Jackie's earliest memory of racism was in elementary school, specifically second grade. The school she attended was predominately white and she was "always singled out" with "racial slurs." Her expression is stoic and unbothered as she retorts, "They would basically use the n-word quite often." These experiences inside school were drastically different from the community that raised her. In a soft tone that soothes the soul, she utters slowly: "Black childhood is precious."

"It's always at the top of my agenda" to ensure that "Black children know their greatness through the past, but for others to know our greatness, too, because people can't see the greatness in you unless they know your history." Without knowledge about African civilizations and the ongoing legacies of liberation, "How are we gonna feel great? How are we gonna resonate in that greatness if we don't know it? And oftentimes our kids don't know it. They absolutely don't know."

The Black Child Legacy Campaign is about showing children how great they truly are. Yes, it is a city-wide initiative, a policy shift, a call to arms, a funding stream, a coalition of care – but at the end of the day, BCLC is a bolder horizon for the city of Sacramento.

Horizons hold the rising and setting of the sun. Horizons hold time, symbolizing intersections between imagination and reality, theory and practice. The horizon is a meeting place between sky and earth, between past ancestry and future possibilities. On this horizon, BCLC is rising with people like Ms. Jackie Rose, who holds Black children at the center, like the sun. These children's lives are the precipice of a city's quest for progress, a community's need for partnerships, and a people's continued perseverance.

Black people build worlds within worlds; they always have. These alternative spaces exemplify life and liberation, joy and

justice. The struggle for Black excellence and equity is real and can be cruel, yet there is beauty in the fight. There is profound purpose in Black power.

In our final moments together, I provide Ms. Jackie with some prompts. Her answers pour out poetically, like a future calling itself forward:

**Black power
Feels free**

**Freedom to me
Sounds like a Marvin Gaye song**

**When I look into our past
I see nothing but greatness
When I look in the mirror
I see nothing but beauty
When I look into our future
I see hope**

**I am fighting against a system
That doesn't include us**

**I'm fighting to dismantle
the system**

**I'm building a legacy of leaders
who will carry out my vision**

I love what I do.

Areas of Improvement

Our findings suggest early success for the Black Child Legacy Campaign. We have also identified several Areas for Improvement which can benefit the growth, sustainability, and success of BCLC. The following are participant quotes that summarize some of the suggestions for improvement.

- “More funding for support staff. There so many issues that needs to be addressed but little resources.”
- “We need more time. 2020 is here and there is going to be so much work to do. We must continue past 2020 and work toward sustainability.”

- “The future of BCLC and its sustainable depends on County’s support. What happens next.”
- “There are seven incubators in the city, and one that’s not, so we want, they want us to look like them, but we can’t look like them. We don’t have the natural resources that come.”

Areas for Improvement (AFI)

AFI #1	Giving credit and the acknowledgement to existing efforts by non profits prior to joining BCLC.
AFI #2	Urgent need to sustain the progress from bottom up but also important to get support from county, city, and foundations.
AFI #3	Less funding relied on from the county. BCLC needs diversity in its funding streams.
AFI #4	Connection to Schools (PreK-12): There is a correlation between marginalization within education and youth violence. Wood and Howard (2018) found that Sacramento is <i>literally</i> the capitol of disproportionate suspensions for Black male students. Sacramento City Unified School District is the absolute worst place to be a Black male in the State of California.
AFI #5	Providing more financial support for CILs to engage in this work.
AFI #6	A clear focus on mission and refrain from agenda/mission drift.
AFI #7	Retention of dedicated and talented CIL’s.
AFI #8	Staff turnover impacts the collection of data. It requires personnel to be re-trained and data knowledge is lost.

Recommendations and Lessons for Other Counties and Cities

1. There are no band-aids that can effectively cover up systemic racism in this country. The wounds run deep. **Therefore, solutions need to be systemic, consistent, and courageous.** As John Lewis taught us, “Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.”
2. **Examine the historical context of the target communities.** The racial inequities and injustices are the result of discriminatory policies, practices, and processes. The seven communities of the Black Child Legacy Campaign each have a unique history and all share common threads of divestment and neglect that explain, in part, why these contexts evolved into spaces hostile to the lives of African American children.
3. **Any new plan, strategy, or action should be inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist.** Local residents, organizations, activist, leaders should have as much say, influence and decision-making authority as the elected official, policymakers, and funders. Community-driven initiatives depend on the belief that “we are all in this together” and the future depends on every member in the community.
4. Political pressure from a wide range of stakeholders is imperative. It holds powerful positions accountable to the genuine needs of the people. **Alongside strategic advocacy, the dollars need to make sense.** The Black Child Legacy Campaign used data from the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform which estimates homicides cost a city \$2.5 million dollars per death. Therefore, decreasing the death-rate among Black infants, children, and youth in Sacramento saved the city nearly \$32 million.

The Black Child Legacy Campaign just received another \$2 million dollars from the City of Sacramento. Yes, this is a win. But if you look at this funding in relation to the larger budget (say, for instance, the amount provided to law enforcement) it underscores that the actual struggle over equitable and preventable resources is still contentious. **The recommendation here is not to examine any one cause in isolation.** How does Black health and well-being connect to white privilege and property? An intersectional analysis fortifies a stronger bridge to racial justice.

Future Forward: Building a Legacy for Black Families

“There [are] so many issues that need to be addressed but little resources... We need more time. 2020 is here and there is going to be so much work to do. We must continue past 2020 and work toward sustainability.”

–MDT Staff

“The future of BCLC and its sustainable depends on County’s support.

What happens next?”

–MDT Staff

In the year, 2020 Black Lives Matter became a global cry and urgent call for justice, equity, defunding of school resource officers and the end of racial, (both physical and social), violence towards Black people all over the world. Demands to end racist policies producing racial inequities in health care, education, criminal justice, employment, and housing prompted deep examination of institutional and systemic oppression. As the movement carries forward, one burning question lingers: “What actions do we need to take as we move forward?” As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once famously asked on the heels of the Civil Rights movement, a year before his death, “Where do we go from here?”

The Black Child Legacy Campaign’s community driven efforts and collective impact model are examples of what is next and what the future holds for Black communities across the United States. From the beginning of the establishment of the campaign, its mission was to protect and support the growth of Black children. Saving the lives of Black children remained central throughout BCLC’s process of forming its committee, outlining the goals and outcomes, selecting the seven neighborhoods, and determining the strategies and priorities. Intentionally selecting the word “legacy” connected the present to the future as the work took

place in the present. The collective action of the SC-RAAD, CILs, Cultural Brokers, Crisis Intervention, community partners, and Sacramento County and City of Sacramento agencies ensured the ground was stable for the present generation to prosper in the years to come. In the *Black Child Legacy Campaign Five Year Report* (2020) Chet Hewitt states, “We’ve created home grown infrastructure that can continue to serve communities, save lives and build more promising futures.”

“What is the legacy you’re trying to leave for black children in Sacramento? They can expect to live a life of hope, peace and have longevity.”

–CIL

What is next for the Black Child Legacy Campaign? How does BCLC future forward? Future forward is not merely moving, but requires intentional and strategic thinking and planning for the next 10 to 20 years to affirm that *Futures Matter*³⁵ for Black children and their families. What is meant by future forward in the context of BCLC? Here, we argue that it is imperative to imagine possible lives, while working to liberate the public from fatalistic renderings of Black children and Black lives. Futures forward is embedded in the name Black Child Legacy. The *decision* to focus on *legacies* as opposed to *mortality* is key here. As we imagine the future of BCLC we think about the year 2030. What is the preferred future of BCLC and Sacramento? What is needed to create this preferred future? The portraits of stakeholders in this report provide a mapping of assets and identifies areas of growth that need to be addressed to move BCLC in this direction. Can we get BCLC to this place?

The findings in this evaluation indicate early success to and within communities was critical for the success of the BCLC. As described in Section III, considerable progress has been made on each strategy. However, to sustain the infrastructure that has been developed, continued fiscal support is essential. CIL’s are concerned about sustaining progress as 2020 marks the final year of fiscal investment. The Center-Sierra Health Foundation has had the role of supporting the Steering

35 Maisha T. Maisha T. Winn, *Paradigm Shift in Teacher Education* (University of Michigan TeachingWorks, 2019)

Committee and coordinating implementation of the strategies through public funding. It has also successfully leveraged BCLC accomplishments as an approach to obtain additional philanthropic funding. However, this evaluation demonstrated that it is critical for BCLC to move towards securing a permanent infrastructure in the public sector while the CILs build on their work to seek funding from diverse sources. It is no surprise that the prime concern shared by the Steering Committee and BCLC stakeholders is considerations on sustaining the movement.

Bold investments and commitments from Sacramento County, City of Sacramento, regional and national foundations, and private businesses are required for the work of BCLC to continue. As discussed in the historical analysis section, under-funding and disinvestments in communities with predominately Black families in Sacramento, led to disproportionately high racial disparities. Despite forthcoming budget cuts and deficits in Sacramento County and the City of Sacramento, the progress made by BCLC should not be hindered. The resources and funding exist. In less than two months, throughout the country over

two billion dollars was donated for anti-racist, racial equity, and anti-Blackness awareness and initiatives. Several corporations pledged \$100 million dollars. The future of Black children in Sacramento depends on similar commitments to investment millions of dollars each year to sustain BCLC. A \$100 million investment is a start to building a legacy of just-futures for Black families.

Through the work of BCLC, Sacramento Valley is becoming a national model of how to create a community-driven effort to build legacies for Black children. BCLC has surpassed and exceeded its bold and audacious goals by focusing on the data, engaging and supporting the community, providing resources to local organizations to lead, and coordinating systems. Cities such as Los Angeles are looking to Sacramento for best practices. If the Sacramento Valley is going to continue paving the way for other cities to reduce Black child death, then it must remember its past. To avoid past mistakes and to cultivate promising futures for Black families, Sacramento governmental agencies, philanthropic foundations, and private business need to make a substantial investment in the lives of Black children growing up in the Sacramento Valley.



Steering Committee

Conclusion

Transformative communities are built upon cultural, economic, spiritual, and political work. The leaders within the Black Child Legacy Campaign sought to embody this praxis—connecting the head, heart, and feet. Various modalities shapeshifted the dynamics: from community peace walks throughout every hood, to organizing food pick-up stations during quarantine, to mobilizing families to mourn together and heal together over the loss of their children, to developing funding streams to sustain the movement. There is not one finding nor is there one solution; rather, it is plural and democratic. The power of the Black Child Legacy Campaign lives in its collective and intentional pursuits.

Applying Maisha Winn's *transformative justice framework*³⁶ to the BCLC evaluation provided necessary depth and complexity to our investigation. Each component shed a ray of light on the whole and provided a humanizing tapestry to heal and restore. Sacramento is not a lost or hopeless city; rather, it is a complex ecosystem struggling between oppression and liberation. This report sought to provide analysis on how a city moves towards equity and racial justice.

Let's take a moment to revisit the paramount themes around mattering.

- **History Matters:** The history of Sacramento was carefully scrutinized to understand how/why current disparities exist.
- **Race Matters:** The county examined their data, giving particular to racial disparities. This focus on race provided a catalyst to do the work and centralize the health and well-being of Black children and youth.
- **Language Matters:** Words reflect our visions of the world and the name change from reducing Black deaths to the Black Child Legacy campaign signifies an important shift in purpose.

- **Justice Matters:** The quest for justice echoes throughout the data; it is the commitment to do the work and love Black families and communities publicly, unapologetically, and courageously.
- **Futures Matter:** The Black Child Legacy Campaign continues to reimagine the possibilities of Sacramento. Centering the children is significant: for if you want to know the future, walk alongside the children.

As the report comes to a close, we are reminded of the Poetic Service Announcements that were commissioned by the Black Child Legacy Campaign. In partnership with Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS),³⁷ young people throughout this region came together to provide insight and inspiration through spoken word performance poetry. During this process, the SAYS director, Patrice Hill, also created a piece. Her words cascaded through the data, piercing it to its core:

Every Black child deserves to have a legacy

*Every Black child deserves to have a legacy however
in my city it seems like there's and intentional campaign
for pain on Black babies*

They out here dying in streets

We trying to advance peace

The youth searching for peace

So some carry piece to maintain peace

But the pain from black child slain on the concrete

Means no peace and the cycle repeats

How long the cycle gonna repeat?

How many more youth funerals to attend for you and me?

Every Black child deserves to have a legacy

Even if all we have is this poetry

Let it be enough to swim through this poverty

Why Black children twice as likely to die in my city?

*From low birth weight to third party homicide just two of the
several reasons why Black children in the city of trees die.*

36 Maisha T. Winn, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018)

37 <http://www.says.ucdavis.edu>

Every Black child deserves to have a legacy

*Maybe there's a youth posted near your block right now
Having to make the choice of being broke and going to school
or come up the only way they know how
It may seem crazy but poetry can save lives and if spoken word
can save souls then why don't want more youth know
They can make school their hustle and be the rose that grows
from the concrete like Tupac told you and me*

Every Black child deserves to have a legacy

*Even if all we have is this poetry let it be enough to swim
through this poverty*

Let it build legacies

Let it help Black children be free

*Let it strengthen you and me to be here for these Black babies
building beautiful legacies.*

How do we build legacies when freedom isn't free?

Take these liquor stores out our hoods and give us us free!

Every Black child deserves to have a legacy.

Every Black child deserves to have a legacy

*None of us are free until Black children are unchained and free to
build legacy's.*

What is the ultimate discovery? The seed of this evaluation story is for us to live our legacy. Our history is our future. As a form of transformational justice, may we reclaim, reimagine and manifest communities where all Black children thrive.



Appendix A: Historical Analysis of Seven Neighborhoods

Oak Park

Oak Park is one of Sacramento's first suburbs. On August 25, 1887, a team of Sacramento real estate investors, led by Edward K. Alsip, purchased for \$330 an acre the 330-acre ranch of William Doyle for the purpose of "improving it by irrigation and otherwise, cutting it up and disposing of it to actual and other desirable purchasers." As Alsip and his associates made plans for residential expansion, they also negotiated with the city to build its first cable street railway system. The proposed route began at the Southern Pacific Railroad Company depot on Third Street and eventually found its way to the Y and Thirty-First Street intersection, future site for the "Oak Park Addition." Alsip and his associates were keenly aware that Oak Park would be worthy of investment only if a transportation system was established to connect the area to the city. A major trend throughout California in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, electric railway lines significantly advanced the physical growth of metropolitan areas by allowing city employees to reside in the suburbs, often in more comfortable single-family homes constructed on cheaper land.³⁸

After completion of the electric railway, Oak Park gradually developed into a bustling district and attracted home seekers from around the city and state with several advantages. Property values remained well within the reach of working-class families who may not have otherwise been able to afford a home in Sacramento, many lots provided families the opportunity to cultivate a garden, and the area's unincorporated status offered working- and middle-class families the opportunity to own property without the burden of municipal taxes.

In 1911, Oak Park was annexed to the city of Sacramento. Subsequent internal improvements included a new sewage system, paved streets, and a new fire station on Thirty-Fifth Street. By the 1920s, Oak Park had developed into a "city

within a city," supporting a business district that catered to local and broader Sacramento residents alike. This district began at Alhambra Blvd and ran southeast along Sacramento Street (later Broadway) and south down Thirty-Fifth Street. By 1927, the *Bee* estimated that there were at least "200 merchants transacting business in the trading area."

By the end of the 1920s, Oak Park began to take on a more varied socioeconomic character, facilitated by the expansion of local industries such as the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific rail yards and canning and food processing centers. City directories during this period show most Oak Parkers working in service-sector occupations. Blacksmiths, mechanics, and railroad personnel counted among the most common types of occupations found among district residents. A 1938 Home Owners' Loan Corporation survey described Oak Park inhabitants as ranging from "common laborers to upper bracket white collar workers." Though it defined Oak Park as essentially an "old middle-class district," the survey concluded that the area was in a "slow decline." It was also in this period that newer, middle-class subdivisions in nearby Curtis Park and East Sacramento began to draw a larger share of the city's professional and middle-class constituency.

Prior to World War II, only a handful of black families called Oak Park home, but beginning in the 1950s more African Americans began to move into the area. This pattern was not coincidental. Sacramento's radicalized housing market channeled African Americans into neighborhoods like Oak Park and Del Paso Heights and away from neighborhoods such as Curtis Park, East Sacramento, and Land Park. One of the main weapons used by white homeowners to exclude African Americans, race restrictive covenants, appeared in property deeds and included language that specifically barred non-whites from owning or leasing a specific property or, in many cases, an entire subdivision. Though they could be traced back to nineteenth century, race restrictive covenants became more widespread in the 1920s.³⁹

38 "Very Like a Boom," *Sacramento Record-Union*, August 26, 1887; "Sacramento Colonization Company," *Sacramento Record-Union*, August 23, 1887.

39 Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 77-91.

Black migration into Oak Park accelerated during the 1960s, particularly in the wake of urban redevelopment of Sacramento's West End, which had been home to many African American families. Dr. Leonard Cain, Jr., Associate Professor of Sociology at Sacramento State College and a founding member of the Sacramento Committee for Fair Housing, published a groundbreaking report entitled *Housing Discrimination in Metropolitan Sacramento* in 1961. While Dr. Cain had already participated in several studies on housing discrimination in Sacramento sponsored by the Sacramento Council of Churches, this was the first detailed analysis of residential segregation in Sacramento. Drawing on census reports and other documents to support his conclusions, Cain wrote, "It is abundantly clear ... that Oak Park has replaced the redeveloped West End as Sacramento's new downtown Negro community, with a concentration of Negroes not previously experienced in the West End." Cain charged that real estate firms, lending agencies, and home sellers were primarily responsible "for keeping many Negroes from exercising a wider choice in the purchase or rental of homes."⁴⁰

This decade of African American influx into Oak Park took place during a time of economic decline and divestment from the area. By the early 1960s, the Sacramento City Planning Commission had already identified early signs of blight in Oak Park, reporting "a tendency to neglect necessary maintenance of old dwellings, many having obsolete electrical or plumbing facilities." In addition, one in five housing units in Oak Park was identified as either deteriorating or dilapidated. "Unless these circumstances are corrected," the report warned, "nearby properties are similarly affected, discouraging necessary maintenance and improvements, lowering the appearance of the neighborhood, reducing property values, spreading like a cancerous growth to affect increasingly larger areas."⁴¹

As early as 1950, the Sacramento City Planning Commission had proposed the construction of a north-south freeway along the border between Oak Park and Curtis Park to connect the central area to expanding suburbs south of the

city. Yet, when construction of the South Sacramento Freeway (Highway 99) began in 1959, and the Department of California Highways and Public Works used right-of-way powers to acquire and demolish hundreds of Oak Park homes, it quickly became clear that Highway 99 was never designed to benefit Oak Park. The seven-and-a-half-mile highway opened in 1961 without convenient access points to Oak Park or its business district, which for years had attracted people from across the city.⁴² Routing residents from the central areas to new shopping centers on Florin Road in south Sacramento by bypassing, rather than passing through, Oak Park, Highway 99 channeled potential capital away from the district to places like Southgate Shopping Center, which opened in the 1960s. Besides destroying many Oak Park homes, Highway 99 thus became an informal boundary between a declining, racially mixed Oak Park and a vibrant, predominantly white, middle- and upper-middle class Curtis Park. Physically separated by a freeway, these communities could not have been more different.⁴³

By the late 1960s, Oak Park had become Sacramento's symbol for the urban crisis with its crumbling infrastructure and high rates of poverty and unemployment. By the time the city decided to address Oak Park's rapid decline, it was already too late. Furthermore, many Oak Park residents and community organizations blamed the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency (which by 1981 had become the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency) for contributing to crisis conditions by focusing narrowly on building low-income rental housing rather than bringing much-needed business and jobs to the area. "They're supposed to be clearing out the slums, but they're bringing in another one," complained Jonathan Smith, a 71-year-old black retired businessman. "Without businesses," Smith claimed, "there are no jobs. There will be more crime."⁴⁴

40 Leonard D. Cain, *Housing Discrimination in Metropolitan Sacramento* (Sacramento, CA: Sacramento Committee for Fair Housing, 1961), 3.

41 Sacramento City Planning Commission, *A Community Plan for Oak Park* (Sacramento, CA, 1963).

42 Ronald W. Powell, "Revitalizing Oak Park," *Sacramento Bee*, December 14, 1983.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.*

Organizations such as the Sacramento Urban League adamantly opposed the construction of low-income housing in Oak Park on the grounds that it contributed to the concentration of poverty in the district. “Forty-four (public) housing units brings in forty-four more poor people,” said George Dean, president of the Sacramento Urban League. “It increases the depression of the neighborhood from an economic standpoint. The neighborhood won’t improve as long as you’re only building housing.” Like Jonathan Smith, Dean and others argued that more jobs were needed in the area to break Oak Park’s “cycle of despair.”

Del Paso Heights

Located north of Arcade Creek between the Western Pacific Railroad tracks on the west and Southern Pacific Railroad tracks on the east, Del Paso Heights (DPH) is one of the oldest residential districts in the region. On the site of the former Rancho Del Paso, DPH joined several new subdivisions that developed north of the American River in the 1940s and 1950s, and includes the neighborhoods of Hagginwood, North Sacramento, Arden Park, Town and Country, and Country Club Center.

Despite its rural character, DPH’s population grew steadily throughout the 1930s. During this time, DPH real estate developers began advertising and selling one-acre lots for \$30 apiece. Such cheap land prices drew immediate attention, mostly from whites of modest means. By then, DPH boasted a small business district at the intersection of Grand Avenue, Rio Linda, and Palmetto Street. As the main thoroughfare, Rio Linda Boulevard connected North Sacramento and DPH before reaching Robla, Rio Linda, and Elverta further north. By 1934, DPH had the first high school, Grant Union, in the entire North Sacramento area.

Housing discrimination, combined with the availability of cheap land, attracted many African Americans to DPH. Several DPH residents worked as civilian employees at McClellan Field, located directly northeast of the district. Black migrants purchased lots and constructed their own homes in DPH. Due to war rationing, residents had limited

access to raw materials such as wood, brick, and mortar. Forced to rely upon their ingenuity and resourcefulness, some managed to build homes using wooden crates that had been used to transport airplane and other war material and discarded in McClellan’s waste dumps. Shipping crates typically ranged from “eight to ten feet long and made of good, strong wood, just perfect for a small cabin.”⁴⁶ These small, wartime bungalows became commonplace throughout sections of DPH. Most of these houses lacked sanitation facilities but nonetheless provided asylum for black migrants who would have otherwise had a very difficult time locating available housing.

A distinct pattern of black settlement began to take shape by the dawn of the 1950s. Although the West End continued to take in a majority of black migrants, neighborhoods such as Del Paso Heights (and, to a lesser extent, Oak Park) became secondary sites for black settlement. As in prewar times, realtors continued to play a major role in shaping black residential patterns, and as more and more African Americans entered the city, racial steering intensified. In 1944, Freddie Martin had little choice but to buy a home in Oak Park. “The [white] realtor would take you to Del Paso Heights,” said Martin, “if that didn’t suit you, he would take you to Oak Park, and if that didn’t suit you, they had to see you later.” One of Martin’s friends had a similar experience. After showing a white realtor the house he wanted to buy, the realtor advised him to “pick a block that had colored [people] living on it.”⁴⁷

The growing concentration of African Americans in DPH accelerated during the postwar period, which was a time of explosive suburban growth in Sacramento. Much of this growth took place beyond traditional city boundaries north of the American River. Arden-Arcade became the most prominent of these new postwar communities. Typical of other postwar suburbs, Arden-Arcade featured thousands of new single-family homes in proximity to modern shopping centers. Residents had the added advantage of sending their children to new schools in school districts flush with revenue from an ever-expanding tax base, a scenario that repeated itself in other areas such as North

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

Highlands, Carmichael, Citrus Heights, Rancho Cordova, and South Sacramento.

This explosive residential growth in Sacramento owed much of its thrust and momentum to federal housing policies. Beginning in the 1930s, the federal government enacted legislation to make home ownership more widely accessible to greater numbers of Americans. Implementation of this vision was assigned to federal agencies such as the Home Owners' Loan Corporation and Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Enacted by Congress in 1933, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation was designed to stem foreclosures, which had spiked during the Great Depression. Created out of the National Housing Act of 1934, the FHA revolutionized home financing through an innovative mortgage insurance program that emboldened banks and other financial institutions to issue liberal loans to home seekers without hesitation. FHA-insured loans typically offered reduced down payments, lower interest rates, and lengthy terms of up to 30 years. Under these circumstances, millions of Americans found it easier and more advantageous to, in the words of one real estate official, "own his own home, a new one, located in one of the new suburbs."⁴⁸

Despite this rosy picture, the overwhelming majority of FHA mortgage insurance underwrote all-white suburbs with race restrictive covenants. Until 1950, the FHA strongly encouraged real estate developers, realtors, banks, savings and loan associations, and other lending institutions to prevent neighborhood "invasion by incompatible racial and social groups" and promoted residential segregation as a way to maintain property value. The FHA, in the words of one housing official, "set itself up as the protector of the all-white neighborhood" and the "vanguard of white supremacy and racial purity—in the North and the South."⁴⁹

Even in Sacramento, with its mythical reputation as a city free of racism and segregation, newer suburbs remained practically impenetrable to African Americans and other non-Caucasians. Black middle-class aspirations differed from the goals of the local real estate industry and white homeowners in the city, as occurred elsewhere. Nationwide,

African Americans who dared to cross the racial divide into all-white communities became frequent targets of violence, vandalism, cross burnings, bombings, and death threats. Though Sacramento largely avoided the level of violence that took place in other cities, institutional mechanisms were actively used to exclude African Americans from certain communities.

West End redevelopment further undermined diverse community dynamics by forcing African Americans into a restricted housing market that by 1960 had been confined primarily to three districts: Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, and Glen Elder. Though African Americans had been found in each of these areas since the 1930s, none previously had the level of black concentration that would exist by the end of the 1950s. Such patterns began with Sacramento's real estate industry, which followed unstated FHA and Veterans Administration (VA) policies of keeping African Americans out of new postwar subdivisions, actively steering African Americans, especially those who were recent migrants, into Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, and Glen Elder throughout the 1950s. As the West End was redeveloped, the relocation of black West Enders simply followed this well-established trajectory of black movement within the city.

As more investment and resources shifted toward developing Sacramento suburbs, DPH suffered from divestment and neglect. In early 1959, Sacramento annexed approximately 30 square miles of territory north of the American River, including DPH, representing a total population of around 43,000. In annexing DPH, the city inherited one of the most severely underdeveloped areas in the Sacramento Metropolitan Area. When the Sacramento City Planning Commission conducted its study of the area in 1964, it found several major problems, including the fact that Del Paso Heights had no public parks or recreation facilities. This problem was even more acute due to the large percentage of residents (39 percent) under the age of fourteen, compared to just 27 percent for the city overall.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Sacramento City Planning Commission, A Community Plan for Del Paso Heights* (Sacramento, CA, 1964).

By the mid-1960s, Sacramento City Planning Commission reports show that the DPH business district, which ran along Rio Linda Boulevard from Grand Avenue, consisted of “dilapidated commercial buildings and some reasonably maintained retail stores.” Even the commercial district along Marysville Boulevard, which had newer buildings, lacked “adequate site development, parking, and street improvements.” Meanwhile, roughly one-third of all housing units in DPH were considered substandard due to inadequate construction, lack of maintenance, and a high degree of absentee ownership. Approximately 37 percent of all occupied housing units in DPH were renter-occupied. Making matters worse, the district was completely devoid of modern storm drainage systems. From the time DPH was first subdivided in 1910, the communities therein relied mainly on surface drainage ditches for storm water run-off. Consequently, the area had experienced frequent flooding and standing “pools of storm water in local streets, even after normal rainfall.” DPH streets had also not been built up to modern-day standards and lacked curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, problems the city claimed could not be fixed until completion of storm drainage facilities.⁵¹

“This place was so bad,” recalled one African American DPH resident, Johnnie Ruth Luster. “We got the city officials and brought them out here in the ‘60s and showed them the slums. [City officials] surveyed the area for five hours and they promised to give us some help [and] they went back to their office and sat down.”⁵² DPH residents harangued city council members and redevelopment authorities for their nonchalance regarding blighted conditions in the community. In the 1964 general election, the city passed a \$15 million bond measure to provide storm drainage and flood protection. In the late 1960s, when the city finally made minor improvements, including upgrades to the district’s sewer and drainage systems and widening Marysville Boulevard, the area still did not have curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. Unable to install street lights, as a result, the city instead put in 427 temporary light fixtures to “do the best possible interim job.”⁵³

Fair housing laws, meanwhile, failed to reverse the tide of disinvestment that continued in Del Paso Heights and Oak Park. In 1977, the Savings and Loan Department published a *Fair Lending Report* that analyzed historical lending patterns by savings and loan associations in selected counties throughout California, including Sacramento. The report identified Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, central Sacramento, and North Highlands as “Mortgage Deficient Areas” that, by 1971, had received less than 10 percent of the county average loan volume.⁵⁴ A similar study in 1976 confirmed “high correlations ... between mortgage lending and ethnicity characteristics.” The level of mortgage lending had been low “near the centers of black concentrations in the southeastern and northern sectors [and] near the Chicano neighborhoods of the west and northwest.” In general, lending increased with distance from the “tracts with minority populations.”⁵⁵

Redevelopment efforts in Del Paso Heights during the late 1960s and 1970s failed to deliver on a promise to revitalize the area. “Half of this community is vacant land,” declared the Sacramento Union in 1982, “[and] the other half consists of a good many well-worn buildings.” Real estate brokers often complained of being unable to sell two-bedroom homes at \$40,000. The Del Paso Heights PAC tried desperately to convince the state and city to decentralize state buildings from downtown and locate more offices in the district to increase the tax base. “They can only develop so many more buildings downtown before they have to begin looking elsewhere,” said Evelyn Dooley, executive director of the committee. At the time, plans for the 57-acre Norwood Industrial Park in DPH had yet to fully materialize.⁵⁶

51 Ibid.

52 “Thirty Years of Community Involvement: An Interview with Johnnie Ruth Luster,” in *A Long Look Back: A Special Look at the History of Sacramento and the Black Citizens Who Played a Major Role in That History*, ed. Terris McMahon (Sacramento, California: William H. Lee, 1973), 20.

53 Sacramento City Planning Commission, “Public Works Improvements in the North Area” (Sacramento, CA: August 3, 1967).

54 *Fair Lending Report No. 1, Volume 2* (Sacramento, CA: Department of Savings and Loan, 1977), 5.

55 Dennis Dingemans, “Redlining and Mortgage Lending in Sacramento,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69, no. 2 (1979): 229–30.

56 Kim Huggett, “Del Paso Heights Working to Change Its Image,” *Sacramento Union*, November 7, 1982.

By the 1980s, Del Paso Heights reflected the limitations of the civil rights struggle in addressing structural inequalities. Inadequate housing, high unemployment, and dilapidated infrastructure had all contributed to the growth of an entrenched black underclass in neighborhoods like DPH and Oak Park. Among California counties of more than 30,000 residents, Sacramento ranked at the bottom (with Riverside County) with respect to the number of blacks living below the federal poverty standard of \$4,000 in annual income. One of every four blacks in Sacramento lived on less than \$4,000, a rate just ahead of Alameda and Los Angeles counties; less than 10 percent of Sacramento's white population lived at that income level. The situation was even more acute in Oak Park and Del Paso Heights. In Oak Park, more than 65 percent of African Americans in the district made less than \$6,000 a year, and half the black children attending elementary schools in that area received welfare from Aid to Families with Dependent Children. In DPH, one of three blacks lived under the federal poverty level of \$4,000 a year, and 76 percent of the children attending school received Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

None of these areas had developed into the sprawling all-black reservations that characterized cities such as Chicago and Philadelphia, a fact often underscored by city officials attempting to misrepresent by downplaying the extent of urban problems in Sacramento. What these cities had in common, however, were sections with high concentrations of poor, uneducated, unemployed or underemployed blacks who remained largely unaffected by the gains of the Civil Rights Movement. Without jobs, education, and skills, many younger African Americans succumbed to the vicious crack cocaine trade that in the late 1980s and early 1990s swept through Meadowview, Oak Park, and Del Paso Heights. Struggle over the control of the local crack trade often pitted largely African American neighborhood street gangs armed with assault rifles against each other, with devastating consequences for the post-Civil Rights generation of African Americans in Sacramento. Sadly, the crack explosion left few families unscathed and the drug trade fueled the growth of the prison-industrial complex in

California, a fact known all too well by the significant portion of African American men in Sacramento who either have been or are currently incarcerated because of drug-related crimes.

Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard

The Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard district is roughly located between 14th Street to the north and 47th Street to the south, and between Highway 99 to the West and Stockton Boulevard to East. A large section of this area, known as the "Fruitridge Pocket," is unincorporated. Sometimes referred to as the "Finger" due to its slight resemblance to a human finger shape on a map. The "Finger" has been described by the *Sacramento News and Review* as "a convergence of two supervisorial districts and two City Council districts, all woven into a bizarre patchwork of county sheriff's territory butting against Sacramento police beats." Indeed, the Fruitridge Pocket has been involved in a political tug-of-war between the county and city going back decades. As an unincorporated area, it had a low tax base and suffered from inadequate services. By 1980, the Fruitridge Pocket already had one of the highest poverty rates in the county; it remains so to this day. Despite this, the area is home to many community-based organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Fruitridge residents.

The Fruitridge-Stockton district first developed during Sacramento's post-World War Two housing boom. Originally, much of the area was farmland that produced mostly wheat. With the demand for more housing, however, Sacramento-area real estate developers such as John H. McMahon and Paul B. Ford saw an opportunity to capitalize. McMahon and Ford developed what became known as the "Fruitridge Shopping Center" at the corner of Stockton Boulevard and Fruitridge Road in the late 1950s. This popular shopping center served a growing population in South Sacramento.

With the aftermath of World War II and a robust postwar economy, the homebuilding industry stood ready to meet rising consumer demand for new homes. Federal incentives for the private wartime housing, for defense workers and later for returning veterans, inspired new approaches to home

construction. Home builders like Fritz B. Burns, Fred W. Marlow, Henry J. Kaiser, and D.D. Bohannon of California designed and constructed large-scale subdivisions comprised of thousands of homes. During the war, these builders and others developed mass-producing techniques that became mainstream among builders in the late 1940s and 1950s. Fruitridge Manor, a subdivision in the Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard district, for example, was built by Bay Area builder, William Blackfield. A 1949 advertisement in the *Bee* for the Fruitridge Manor Addition states that Blackfield “won first prize for design and construction of an ‘Economy Home’”. The Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard district did afford many returning Veterans and working-class residents the opportunity to own their own home.

Although the FHA helped subsidize the expansion of the suburbs, it also contributed to the residential segregation of African Americans. The FHA required real estate developers to use race restrictive covenants to keep out all African Americans. Taking its cue from the real estate industry, the FHA considered any neighborhood with African Americans as high risk and refused to provide mortgage insurance in these areas. Thus, many builders like McMahon and Ford made sure to keep their developments all-white. As a result, the Fruitridge-Stockton Boulevard district remained overwhelmingly white from 1950 to 1970. White flight during the 1970s finally opened up homes in this area to blacks.

By 1980, the Fruitridge area had one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the county. Census data revealed that the Fruitridge Pocket had the lowest average income—\$14,397, the highest percentage—34 percent—of households earning less than \$7,500 annually, the lowest number of high school graduates for residents 25 years-old or older, the highest percentage of single women as heads of households, and the highest unemployment among all Sacramento suburbs. “The Fruitridge Pocket is in relatively dire economic straits overall,” the *Bee* reported.⁵⁷

Despite its grim statistics, residents in Fruitridge Pocket worked hard to improve the community. In response to

residents’ demands for improvements to the neighborhood’s infrastructure, the Fruitridge Pocket received a Sacramento County Community Development Block Grant, a federally subsidized grant/loan program designed to rebuild neighborhoods through capital improvements and grants to businesses and residences. The Fruitridge Pocket received sidewalks, street lamps, a \$900,000 community center and a mini-park. By 1981, \$2.8 million had been spent in improving the sidewalks, curbs and gutters.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, efforts to improve the neighborhood were often stymied by lack of resources and fiscal mismanagement. For example, in 1984 the Fruitridge Neighborhood Center, which provided job training and placement for young residents in the community and emergency home repair programs for the elderly and a child care center, shut down after it could no longer pay its bills.⁵⁹

The Fruitridge Pocket’s unincorporated status contributed to the area’s woes. Since 1968, Fruitridge residents refused annexation to the city of Sacramento. “People in the Fruitridge area have a very strong sense of identity,” said Sacramento County Supervisor Illa Collin, “They don’t want to be part of the city.” The main reason, however, why so many residents opposed annexation to the city was because they did not want to pay higher property taxes. Much of this opposition came from older residents, including absentee Mac Mailes, city director of planning and development, believed that some residents did not welcome the presence of city building inspectors who might find some homes in violation of building codes. “There were lots of absentee owners who wanted to keep the status quo,” said Mailes.⁶⁰

Since the 1970s, the Fruitridge Pocket has had the distinction of being one of the most troubled neighborhoods in Sacramento. Addressing the many pressing problems in the area has been made all the more difficult by its confusing jurisdictional situation and the political tug-of-war between the county and city. Nevertheless, the residents of Fruitridge are resilient and continue to fight to change conditions in their

57 “Suburbs: Rich, Poor, In Between,” *Sacramento Bee*, December 9, 1983.

58 “Fruitridge Program’s 2nd Stage,” *Sacramento Bee*, June 11, 1981.

59 “Fiscal Woes Close Fruitridge Aid Center,” *Sacramento Bee*, June 16, 1994.

60 “Fruitridge ‘Won’t Surrender,’” *Sacramento Bee*, August 22, 1985.

neighborhood. After Fruitridge Elementary School shut down, the building was converted into a community center. Today, the Fruitridge Community Collaborative occupies space in the building, offering a wide variety of programs in service of area residents. Support for these community-based organizations, stronger political representation, and greater investment overall is desperately needed to change the neighborhood's fortunes.

North Highlands

North Highlands can be traced back to the establishment of McClellan Air Force Base in 1936. The base and other defense-related industries drew thousands of migrants to Sacramento during and after World War II. Between 1950 and 1959, Sacramento County's population nearly doubled from 277,100 to 502,800, an increase of over 80 percent.⁶¹ Beginning in the late 1940s, Sacramento developers such as Wright and Kimbrough began laying the foundation for what eventually became the focus of Sacramento's postwar suburban growth north and east of the American River. Two years earlier, contractor Jere Strezik had built his groundbreaking shopping mall at the corner of Fulton and Marconi. Named "Town and Country Village," the mall became the first postwar modern-style shopping center in Northern California and one of the first retail establishments outside Sacramento city limits. Building on his success, Strezik continued developing residential communities around the mall, including several apartment buildings, a theater, and more than 4,000 single-family houses. Inspired by Strezik's example, other developers entered the area.⁶²

Eager to repeat his enormous success with Town and Country, Jere Strezik purchased a 2,000-acre grain field near McClellan Air Force Base. Due to vast amounts of open space and proximity to a major military installation, Strezik imagined a community population that would reach 30,000 residents by 1960. The following year, his North Haven subdivision touched off furious development activity and other subdivisions soon followed: Aero Haven, Arcade Oaks Vista, Austin Manor, Chevoit Hills, Highlands, Highland Terrace, Larchmont Village, McClellan Meadows, Mission

Ranch, and Oakdale. Collectively, these subdivisions became known as "North Highlands" and had become "Sacramento County's fastest-growing suburban area," reaching 10,000 residents by 1955.⁶³

Typical of other postwar suburban communities, North Highlands featured several amenities: modern homes, new schools, recreational sites, shopping districts, and a host of service and civic organizations. North Highlands Shopping Center, located on the corner of Watt Avenue and A Street, had been aptly described as "a small city in itself," totaling 36,000 square feet and featuring (at the time) one of the largest grocery stores in the Sacramento area, Cardinal-Inks.⁶⁴

By 1955, North Highlands had outpaced "in size and population every other municipality in Sacramento County with the exception of the City of Sacramento itself."⁶⁵ Though many residents worked at nearby McClellan Air Force Base, the new community attracted people from across the county. North Highlands fire chief Cecil Dye stated unapologetically the area's advantages over the city: "We have no slums, no undesirable element [emphasis mine] and the protection afforded by the Sacramento County sheriff's office seems quite adequate."⁶⁶ The Fire Chief's reference to "no undesirable element" likely referred to the absence of African Americans from North Highlands.

Despite the significant presence of African American servicemen who worked at McClellan, the neighborhoods that made up North Highlands remained virtually all-white. This pattern was not accidental. Like most new postwar suburbs

61 B.E. and Robert K. Coe Tsagris, *Changing Pattern of Industrialization, Land Use, and Values: Sacramento Metropolitan Area, 1950-1961* (Sacramento, CA: Sacramento State College, 1962), 62–89.

62 "Land and Development of Land Still Big Factor in Sacramento," *Sacramento Union*, April 26, 1947; Daniel D. Gage and Real Estate Research Group, *Emerging Pattern of Commercial Sites: A Case Study of a Directional Growth Problem in the Metropolitan Sacramento Area* (Sacramento, CA: Sacramento State College, 1961), 41.

63 "Tremendous Growth of Post Office Reflects Rapid Expansion of North Highlands Area," *Sacramento Bee*, November 30, 1955; "City of 10,000 Has Sprung out of Fields of Wheat," *Sacramento Bee*, January 30, 1955.

64 "Community Mushrooms from Open Fields in Three Years," *Sacramento Bee*, June 3, 1953; "City of 10,000 Has Sprung out of Fields of Wheat," *Sacramento Bee*.

65 "City of 10,000"

66 *Ibid.*

in Sacramento, the neighborhoods that comprised North Highlands excluded Black families. This was especially frustrating for Black McClellan employees who were forced to live in areas such as Del Paso Heights, further from their work site.

North Highlands, in fact, became a site for one of the most important civil rights cases involving housing discrimination in the nation, *Ming v. Horgan*. On May 10, 1954, the legal committee, led by Nathaniel Colley, filed suit on behalf of Oliver A. Ming, a Black World War II veteran and McClellan Air Force Base employee, and nine other African Americans against several of the largest real estate and construction firms operating in Sacramento County. The list of defendants included the Sacramento Real Estate Board, McBride Realty Company, Hackes & Hurst Real Estate, Heraty & Gannon Equipment Company, Milton G. Horgan, and over a dozen other individuals. Ming had attempted to purchase a home in McClellan Meadows, the Heraty and Gannon subdivision located in North Highlands; however, Milton G. Horgan, the real estate broker who had been contracted to sell Heraty and Gannon homes, had an explicit policy “not to sell to Negroes [and] that if any Negro applied [for a house] the matter should be discussed with him in a diplomatic way so as not to antagonize anyone.”⁶⁷

On June 23, 1958, four years after the NAACP initially filed suit, Superior Court Judge James Oakley issued a ruling in favor of the plaintiffs. In his memorandum, Judge Oakley confirmed that African Americans had been excluded from homes in newer suburban tracts with FHA/VA financing, based not on their personal income but “on the basis of race.”⁶⁸ The case of *Ming v. Horgan* received national attention. On June 29, 1958, *The New York Times* announced that African Americans “scored a legal victory with far-reaching implications in California.”⁶⁹ Indeed, this decision, among other factors, played a role in opening up suburbs such as North Highlands to African American families in the 1960s and 1970s.

Just when North Highlands became more accessible to Black families, though, it also began to show ominous signs

of decline. Despite high population density, North Highlands lacked adequate amenities and services. One major cause was a lack of sufficient tax revenue. The area’s largest employer, McClellan Air Force Base, was tax-exempt because it was a military installation. This made it difficult for North Highlands to sustain its parks and recreation district and fire services. In 1970, a report by the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission described the North Highlands Parks and Recreation district as a seriously “impacted” community. “Serving as a bedroom area for a major tax-exempt federal installation,” the report stated, “this community has one of the lowest per capita assessed valuations of any park and recreation district in the county.”⁷⁰

Another factor that contributed to the area’s decline was redlining, the practice by some lenders of refusing mortgage or home improvement loans even to qualified borrowers in high-risk, typically declining neighborhoods. This form of divestment is, in fact, believed to hasten neighborhood decline by depriving residents of needed capital. In 1977, the Department of Savings and Loan published the *Fair Lending Report*, analyzing historical lending patterns by savings and loan associations in selected counties throughout California, including Sacramento. The report identified Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, central Sacramento, and North Highlands as “Mortgage Deficient Areas” that had received less than 10 percent of the county average loan volume by 1971. A University of California study confirmed “high correlations ... between mortgage lending and ethnicity characteristics.” The level of mortgage lending had been low “near the centers of black concentrations in the southeastern and northern sectors [and] near the Chicano neighborhoods of the west and northwest.” In general, lending increased with distance from the “tracts with minority populations.”⁷¹ The study also found discrepancies in lending patterns between North Highlands and

67 “Suit Charges Race Bias in Area Housing,” *Sacramento Bee*, May 10, 1954.

68 *Memorandum Opinion*, No. 97130, Superior Court in the State of California, County of Sacramento, 8.

69 “Negroes on Coast Win Housing Case,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1958.

70 Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission, Staff Report on the Park Agency Reorganization Proposals (Sacramento, CA: 1970), 7–8.

71 Dennis Dingemans, “Redlining and Mortgage Lending in Sacramento,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69, no. 2 (1979): 229–30.

Country Club, which it described as “two once-similar but now greatly different subdivided areas.” It revealed that the more affluent Country Club received three and one-half times its “fair share” of loans, compared to North Highlands.⁷² As the Black population of North Highlands increased, so too did the level of divestment from the area.

The 1980 Census showed North Highlands to have one of the lowest average incomes among county neighborhoods,⁷³ and also one of the highest rates of occupied units being rented and lowest median home values in the Sacramento Metropolitan Area.⁷⁴ By the late 1980s, North Highlands, along with Del Paso Heights, south Sacramento, Oak Park, and Meadowview, had the highest concentration of families on rent subsidy programs such as Section 8. The federal Section 8 housing certificate program provided rental subsidies to qualified low-income families whose rent consumed more than 30 percent of the family’s income.⁷⁵

A major blow to North Highlands came in 1995 when the federal government announced the closure of McClellan Air Force Base, along with 350 other bases throughout the nation. When the base officially shut down in 2001, it resulted in the loss of over 11,000 jobs accounting for over \$500 million in payroll. Though McClellan’s closure had major repercussions for the entire region, North Highlands was hit especially hard. Many local businesses depended on trade from McClellan and many base employees lived in the area.⁷⁶ Despite this setback, the former base converted into a business park that is today home to 230 businesses, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Cal Fire, U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Transportation, AT&T, Siemens, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire, Mikuni, Gateway Charter School, and the Twin Rivers Unified School District administration. The park is 85 to 90 percent filled and employs approximately 18,000 people. By all accounts, McClellan Park has been one of the most successful reconversion projects in the nation.⁷⁷

Many African Americans and other working-class residents of North Highlands, however, did not benefit from McClellan’s renaissance. Making matters worse, the Great Recession of 2008 had an especially devastating impact on the

community. North Highlands joined several distressed neighborhoods in Sacramento with a significant Black concentration in experiencing a disproportionate number of home foreclosures. Many homes in North Highlands were abandoned and remained vacant for years. During the height of the recession, the vacancy rate in North Highlands climbed to 9.6 percent.⁷⁸ Census data between 2007 and 2014 show that over half of North Highlands residents earned less than \$50,000 a year and 24 percent earned less than \$20,000.⁷⁹

Meadowview

Like North Highlands, Meadowview became one of the many new postwar suburbs in Sacramento County. During the early 1950s, new suburbs pushed Sacramento’s boundaries southward to Florin Road. In 1955, the area that became known as Meadowview began to take shape, extending from Freeport Boulevard to 24th Street and from Florin Road to an area south of Meadowview Road. Meadowview offered middle-class Sacramentans affordable single-family homes. In 1957, a three-bedroom home in the Meadowview Terrace subdivision cost only \$13,000.00. The Carella Gardens subdivision advertised three-bedroom homes for only \$98 move-in cost and payments “less than rent.” In addition to affordable homes, Meadowview offered new amenities that attracted homebuyers such as new schools, recreation, and a shopping district on the corner of 24th Street and Meadowview Road. A community study of Meadowview from 1965 stated that Meadowview lacked any “deficiencies.”⁸⁰

Until the 1960s, the area of south Sacramento remained overwhelmingly white. The growing Black presence in the area

72 “Capital Area: Study Finds Redlining-Type Lending Patterns,” *Sacramento Bee*, July 30, 1978.

73 “Suburbs: Rich, Poor, and In-Between,” *Sacramento Bee*, December 9, 1983.

74 “Capital Low on Income Rankings,” *Sacramento Bee*, November 24, 1983.

75 “Poor Stuck in Pockets of Poverty,” *Sacramento Bee*, March 13, 1988.

76 Steve Gibson, “Area Firms Fear Loss of McClellan Blood Donations, School Tutoring Programs Also Would Be Hit,” *Sacramento Bee*, June 30, 1995.

77 “Former Base is Booming,” *Comstock’s Magazine*, July 2019.

78 “Housing Bust Leaves Glut of Vacant Homes,” *Sacramento Bee*, March 28, 2011.

79 “Income Inequality Still Grows in Sacramento Area,” *Sacramento Bee*, January 2, 2019.

80 Sacramento City Planning Commission, “A Community Plan for Meadowview,” November 1985.

often touched off a wave of panic and “white flight.” Some Black families also experienced racial violence as they moved into all-white blocks. In 1962, the Herndons, an African American family, moved into the Fruitridge district on 4813 Baker Avenue. Almost immediately, their home and vehicle were vandalized. The words “Black Man Go Home” and “Get Out Or We Will Burn You Out” had been scrawled with paint on their car and the front of their house had the words, “Black Man Lived Here.”⁸¹ Three days later, vandals struck the Herndon’s home a second time.⁸² What happened to the Herndons was not an isolated incident. Many whites did not welcome Black newcomers to their neighborhoods, subscribed to the myth that integrated neighborhoods lowered property values, and blamed African Americans for creating slums and bringing crime into various areas.

Still, for a brief period in the 1960s Meadowview appeared to some observers as a model for racial integration in the city. In 1968, the *Sacramento Observer*, a Black-owned newspaper, included Meadowview as part of the “Successfully Integrated South Area.” “If one were to drive down a street in the [South Area] ... he would experience a scene of black and white children playing together in the streets, and black and white adults talking with each other in the yard or doorway,” the article stated. The article explained that for the “past four or five years a substantial number of black citizens” moved to the area due primarily to two factors: many of these newcomers were educated and working professionals who could afford to purchase homes, and Meadowview, unlike many other postwar suburbs in Sacramento, did not restrict Blacks from buying homes in the area. In addition, Meadowview had a surplus of “FHA and VA resales” available to anyone who could afford them, regardless of race. The combination of civil rights laws and evolution of the South Area housing market opened previously all-white neighborhoods in and around Meadowview to African Americans. “Consequently,” the article continued, “when black citizens relocated in Sacramento, or moved into Sacramento from some other area, they, or many of them selected the South Area. They have located in areas which have been traditionally closed to them solely because of the

color of their skin.”⁸³ For African Americans who had been systematically excluded from much of Sacramento’s housing market, Meadowview offered their piece of the American Dream.

Unfortunately, any degree of optimism surrounding Meadowview began to wane by the early 1970s, as the area began to deteriorate. Several factors explain this transition. Meadowview suffered from overdevelopment and competition from other suburbs. Developers built more homes in the area than they could sell. The availability of homes attracted a lot of renters eager to gain access to comfortable, single-family homes. Other developers sought to take advantage of Meadowview’s burgeoning rental market by building apartment complexes.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, fair housing legislation designed to stem divestment in urban communities such as Meadowview in fact had the opposite effect. For example, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 made federal programs, particularly FHA/VA financing, more accessible to inner-city communities such as Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, Glen Elder, and Meadowview. The rationale behind the legislation was to remove barriers to these federal programs and increase homeownership among low-income communities. But what was presented as a positive development in the fight against poverty ultimately made the situation in urban communities worse in numerous ways. First, unscrupulous mortgage companies and real estate speculators took advantage of loopholes in the legislation to profit from poor communities that now qualified for FHA-insured and VA-guaranteed loans. Because there was essentially no risk involved, mortgage companies frequently issued loans to low-income families that could not afford them, resulting in subsequent foreclosure. Speculators often purchased properties that had been foreclosed or on the verge of foreclosure. Such properties were given “cosmetic” repairs to meet FHA standards, and then sold at a higher price to prospective homebuyers. In historically redlined communities like Oak Park

81 “Negro Couple’s Car and Home are Defaced,” *Sacramento Bee*, October 10, 1962.

82 “Vandals Attack Negro’s Home Second Time,” *Sacramento Bee*, October 13, 1962.

83 “The Successfully Integrated South Area,” *Sacramento Observer*, November 14, 1968.

84 William E. Mahan, “Rebirth of a Community: Meadowview,” September 2006, 9.

and Del Paso Heights, this cycle resulted in high numbers of foreclosures and abandoned properties during the 1970s.⁸⁵

Another policy that exacerbated conditions in Meadowview was Section 235 of the Federal Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. This law sought to encourage homeownership among low-income Americans by subsidizing down payments and monthly mortgage payments. However, many of the homes sold to Section 235 eligible buyers were FHA repossessions that had been vacant and in disrepair. Many of these new homeowners did not possess the financial resources to make necessary repairs or improvements to their properties. By 1974, more than half of the housing sold under Section 235 in Meadowview had been foreclosed.⁸⁶

The combination of Black in-migration and the problems created by overdevelopment and speculation only hastened the departure of white residents from the area. One Meadowview resident, Deborah Gibson, moved to a street in Meadowview in 1976 that only had three Black families. Shortly thereafter, she recalled white neighbors moving out in droves. “Now we can’t sell our house for what it’s worth,” she lamented. This pattern of “white flight” further drained Meadowview of resources and capital, contributing to what one *Sacramento Bee* reporter described as a “bleak vision of urban despair.” Many properties in Meadowview fell into the hands of absentee landlords eager to take advantage of cheap properties that they, in turn, rented to low-income residents.⁸⁷

White flight and the influx of low-income residents into Meadowview crippled the district’s economic base. By 1990, many businesses operating in the area had left and had been replaced by smaller businesses that employed fewer people and generated little revenue. In 1980, Safeway had closed its doors, followed by the Farmers Market at the corner of Meadowview Road and 24th Street. All three gas stations located on that corner had also closed. In the absence of economic resources, Meadowview soon developed its own underground economy. Drug traffickers found a ready market in Meadowview. By 1990, the corner of Meadowview

and 24th Street had become widely known as a haven for drug-related activity. A community plan drafted by consultant Jim Harnish emphasized the twin evils of poverty and unemployment as major obstacles to Meadowview’s renaissance. Harnish concluded that the “community’s only real hope lies in its burgeoning grass-roots efforts which must grow strong enough to clean up the neighborhoods and to lobby City Hall for educational and job training programs.”⁸⁸

In 1989, the *Sacramento Bee* published a scathing article about the situation in Meadowview. According to the article, Meadowview had an unemployment rate 50 percent higher than the rest of the county; absentee landlords owned 24 percent of the area’s 5,049 single-family homes; more than 10 percent of all housing units in Meadowview received federal subsidies, compared to only 3.1 percent of housing in the county; and roughly 39 percent of the county’s 532 halfway houses and community care facilities. The article also described Los Angeles-style street gangs battling each other for turf and control over crack cocaine sales.⁸⁹ Articles such as this were very typical in the late 1980s and 1990s, and followed what had become a standard approach to reporting on or referencing Meadowview and other distressed communities in Sacramento with large Black populations. Such coverage always emphasized the negative aspects of these communities and deemphasized the vibrant grassroots movements taking place therein.

Despite its problems, many Meadowview residents proved resilient throughout this period of transition and fought hard to bring needed resources to the area and enhance the area’s image. Meadowview has always had a proud history of civic engagement. Residents such as Alice Huffman, for instance, organized a group of neighbors to oppose the \$500 million development of land south of Meadowview Road called “Delta Shores.” Huffman and others argued that this development

85 D.W. Urquidi, Daniel Leighton, and Burt Hubbard, *Speculation in Redlined Areas: Investigation into Relationship between Redlining and Housing Speculation* (Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles, 1977).

86 Mahan, “Rebirth of a Community,” 9–10.

87 Ibid., 11.

88 “Woes Detailed, But No Solutions,” *Sacramento Bee*, November 8, 1983.

89 “Decaying into a Ghetto? Meadowview Residents Fear,” *Sacramento Bee*, April 16, 1989.

would do nothing to revive Meadowview's existing commercial area. Eventually, this group managed to extract several concessions from the developer, Moss Land Company, including creation of an economic development corporation designed to attract business to Meadowview Road.⁹⁰ An organization called "Concerned Citizens of the Meadowview Area," led by Tommie Parker, pressured city officials to remove garbage and abandoned cars. It also filed suit to prevent another liquor store from moving into the neighborhood.⁹¹

After years of having almost no true political representation at the municipal level, Meadowview acquired its own council seat in 1991 after the City Council voted to redistrict itself. The following year, Sam Pannell was elected to represent the district. Pannell and later his wife, Bonnie Pannell, represented the district for over 20 years. During Sam's first term in office, the Sacramento City Council approved plans to build a community center. In 1995, the Meadowview Community Center opened. It featured a multi-purpose room, restrooms, classrooms, a youth activity room, a kitchen, outdoor basketball courts, and baseball fields. In 2001, a swimming pool and dressing room were added. Meadowview Community Center helped instill a sense of pride among residents. It offered one of the few spaces available in Meadowview for cultural events, workshops, and political forums.⁹²

As with the case of other neighborhoods with a high concentration of African Americans, Meadowview was disproportionately impacted by the Great Recession. A major cause of the recession was the collapse of the housing market due to massive foreclosures across the nation. The Sacramento region was hit especially hard. By 2009, the number of foreclosures in the region had reached a high of 41,903.⁹³ According to a 2008 report by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, Sacramento County's poorest neighborhoods, including Meadowview and Parkway, North Highlands and Foothill Farms, had the highest concentration of foreclosures. Community and housing rights advocates accused lenders like the Bank of New York, U.S. Bank, Deutsche Bank, and Washington Mutual (now a part

of JPMorganChase) of pushing risky adjustable-rate mortgages onto borrowers, including some who qualified for conventional loans. Lenders convinced borrowers they could refinance their homes in a couple years when the value of their homes rose; however, as property values declined, they had no way to offset the higher monthly payments. As homeowners found themselves owing more money than what their house was worth, many walked away from their homes. The vacancy rate in neighborhoods like Meadowview rose sharply during the height of the recession in 2009 and 2010. Such conditions created opportunities for investors to swoop in to purchase cheap homes to use as rental property.⁹⁴ In 2014, according to the *Sacramento Bee*, home ownership in Sacramento County declined to its lowest level in 40 years "after last decade's catastrophic housing crash and the mass purchase of foreclosed homes by real estate investors."⁹⁵

Despite its challenges, Meadowview residents remain hopeful that the area will not only recover from the devastating effects of the Great Recession but that it will also see real transformation. The 2018 police shooting of Stephon Clark drew renewed focus toward the need to address the legacies of housing discrimination and community disinvestment in Meadowview and other south Sacramento neighborhoods.

Valley Hi

To the east of Meadowview lies the community of Valley Hi. Located west of Highway 99 and south of Mack Road, Valley Hi developed in the 1960s. Beginning in 1964, developers Weldon Mansfield and Fremont B. Hitchcock, who had recently completed the Parkway Estates, began laying out the first subdivision in the area, which opened the following year. Valley Hi's development, however, took place very gradually due to a downturn in the economy; by 1969, it had only 500 homes,

90 "Suburbia Gone to Seed: A Portrait of Meadowview," *Sacramento Bee*, December 13, 1983.

91 "Suburbia Gone to Seed," 1983.

92 Mahan, "Rebirth," 18-19.

93 "Region's Foreclosure Toll Near 42,000 in 2 1/2 Years," *Sacramento Bee*, July 23, 2009.

94 "Prices Nearly Halved in Some Places: Foreclosures Hit Poorest Areas Hardest, Report Says," *Sacramento Bee*, November 15, 2008.

95 "Homeownership in Sacramento Plummets to Lowest Level in 40 Years," *Sacramento Bee*, May 12, 2014.

no schools, and no shopping district. In an interview with the *Sacramento Bee* in 1969, Mansfield said that the number of homes in Valley Hi should have been around 1,000 but layoffs in the aerospace industry and a credit crunch slowed the area's development. Nonetheless, he anticipated as many as 3,000 new homes, condominiums, and a shopping center built in Valley Hi over the next few years.⁹⁶

Over the next decade, Mansfield's projection proved mostly accurate. In 1969, the Los Rios Junior College District approved construction of a third Junior College, Cosumnes River. Located on 150 acres just south of the Valley Hi Estates, Cosumnes River College emerged as a critically important institution for south Sacramento.⁹⁷ Another sign of Valley Hi's growth came with the relocation of Sacramento's largest furniture retailer, Breuners, to Mack Road. The original Breuners, which was located downtown on K Street, closed its doors in 1971 due to declining profits and the lure of suburbs in the South Area. The new Mack Road location offered more space and proximity to new subdivisions.⁹⁸

Beginning in the 1980s, however, white flight gradually changed the face of the community. Some white residents claimed the neighborhood was being overrun by low-income people and was no longer safe. "It was pretty mellow at first," said one resident in 1979, "I could walk around and not worry. Now it's gotten radical. They started building that low-income crap and that's started bring in people on welfare." This resident mentioned her desire to relocate to all-white communities like Fair Oaks and Carmichael.⁹⁹ During this post-civil rights era, many whites adopted the language of "crime" and "welfare" as stand-ins for race.

Despite this demographic shift, Valley Hi, like much of south Sacramento, remained mostly white and middle-class. Over half of all homes remained owner-occupied.¹⁰⁰ Both the Kaiser and Methodist hospitals served the area and employed hundreds of people; Cosumnes River College served over 10,000 students; and the neighborhood featured several quality schools and recreational programs.¹⁰¹ However, the narrative that predominated in the local media cast neighborhoods like Valley Hi and Meadowview as

Sacramento's version of South Central Los Angeles. The Rodney King uprising in 1992 only heightened fear and anxiety about South Sacramento. Media coverage of Valley Hi during this period tended to present a rather simplistic view of a neighborhood in crisis, beset by high rates of crime, unemployment, and despair.¹⁰² While Valley Hi did experience these problems, it also had a small thriving Black middle class. As was the case in Meadowview, many African Americans were drawn to the suburb because it offered relatively affordable housing and decent amenities.

Valley Hi, like many South Sacramento neighborhoods, took a serious hit during the Great Recession. Many Black residents took out subprime loans during the height of the housing boom only to see their monthly payments skyrocket beyond what they could afford to pay. In 2011, the *Bee* described Valley Hi as one of the epicenters of the foreclosure crisis, "converting scores of owners to tenants." This crisis had a devastating impact on Black homeownership and resulted in a major loss of wealth for African American families.¹⁰³

The areas of North Highlands, Meadowview, and Valley Hi share similar stories of divestment and neglect. Each area started off as a typical postwar suburb that was predominately white and middle class. By the 1990s, however, these communities had become symbols of Sacramento's urban crisis and synonymous with high crime, unemployment, and poverty. This shift was no accident. All three neighborhoods experienced white flight, loss of businesses, and a decline in homeownership. Another common pattern was the disproportionate impact of the foreclosure crisis of the

96 "Valley High Community is Poised for Growth," *Sacramento Bee*, October 19, 1969.

97 "Los Rios Board Calls for Bids to Construct 3rd Junior College," *Sacramento Bee*, March 13, 1969.

98 "Breuners Will Close Downtown, Build New Store on Mack Road," *Sacramento Bee*, June 11, 1971.

99 "Valley Hi: Where the City Has Come to the Country," *Sacramento Bee*, April 1, 1979.

100 "Report Challenges Views of South Area, It Says," *Sacramento Bee*, February 20, 1994.

101 "Letters," *Sacramento Bee*, December 22, 1992.

102 "Targeting a Troubled Neighborhood: Pilot Program," *Sacramento Bee*, November 23, 1992; "Natomas Leaders Say Study's a Real Crime," December 17, 1992.

103 "Housing Bust Hits Blacks, Latinos," *Sacramento Bee*, September 11, 2011.

2000s. And yet, residents of these areas remain steadfast and determined to fight for better futures for their families.

Arden-Arcade

Arden-Arcade is a census-designated place in Sacramento County northeast of downtown Sacramento. Its boundaries include Auburn Boulevard and Arcade Creek to the north, the American River (primarily) to the south, Ethan Way to the west, and Fair Oaks Boulevard to the east. Covering nearly 19 square miles, Arden-Arcade is comprised of dozens of neighborhoods of starkly different socioeconomic character. Neighborhoods such as Arden Oaks and Arden Park Vista, Arden Park Estates, and Arden Hills Country Estates feature million-dollar homes and represent some of the most exclusive real estate in the Sacramento region. Other Arden-Arcade neighborhoods, meanwhile, include a disproportionately high number of apartment buildings relative to other parts of the county. In the last 10 years, Arden-Arcade has seen a rapid rise in residents living below the official poverty line. A 2017 census report estimated the median income per household in Arden-Arcade at \$48,812, far below the statewide median household income of \$71,805.¹⁰⁴ The sheer volume of apartment units combined with one of the lowest rental rates in the area has attracted many immigrants and poor residents, especially African Americans, to Arden Arcade who found themselves priced out of other neighborhoods due to Sacramento's ongoing housing crisis.

The collection of neighborhoods that became known as Arden-Arcade had its origins during Sacramento's housing boom, which began in the late 1940s. By 1960, Arden-Arcade featured thousands of new single-family homes and bustling new shopping centers. Residents had the added advantage of sending their children to new schools in school districts flush with revenue from an ever-expanding tax base.¹⁰⁵

This explosive residential growth in Sacramento owed much of its thrust and momentum to federal housing polices. Beginning in the 1930s, the federal government enacted legislation designed to make home ownership more widely

accessible to greater numbers of Americans. Implementation of this vision had been assigned to federal agencies such as the Home Owners' Loan Corporation and Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Enacted by Congress in 1933, the former entity was designed to stem foreclosures, which had spiked during the Great Depression. Created out of the National Housing Act of 1934, the FHA revolutionized home financing through an innovative mortgage insurance program that emboldened banks and other financial institutions to issue liberal loans to home seekers without hesitation. FHA-insured loans typically offered reduced down payments, lower interest rates, and longer term periods of up to 30 years. Under these circumstances, millions of Americans found it easier and more advantageous to purchase a home in the suburbs.¹⁰⁶

Problematically, however, the overwhelming majority of FHA mortgage insurance was underwritten to benefit owners in all-white suburbs with race restrictive covenants or "racial occupancy" clauses. Until 1950, the FHA strongly encouraged real estate developers, realtors, banks, savings and loan associations, and other lending institutions to prevent neighborhood "invasion by incompatible racial and social groups," while promoting residential segregation as a way to maintain property value.¹⁰⁷

In compliance with FHA guidelines, many developers of Arden-Arcade neighborhoods refused to sell homes to non-Caucasians. It was common practice among developers to adopt the use of "racial occupancy" clauses that explicitly barred African Americans, Jews, and other racial groups from their subdivisions. For example, one 1950s-era home in the Arden Park subdivision included clauses in its property documents that stated:

104 <http://www.city-data.com/city/Arden-Arcade-California.html>

105 "Land and Development of Land Still Big Factor in Sacramento," *Sacramento Union*, April 26, 1947; "Arden District: It's No Boom Town but You Can See its Boundaries Move," *Sacramento Union*, February 27, 1955.

106 Preston Martin, *Real Estate Principles and Practices* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 32.

107 Raymond A. Mohl, "The Second Ghetto and the 'Infiltration Theory' in *Urban Real Estate, 1940-1960*," in *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows*, eds., June Manning and Marsha Ritzdorf Thomas (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 66.

Clause 2. No persons except those of the White Caucasian Race shall use, occupy or reside upon any residential lot or plot in this subdivision, except when employed as a servant or domestic in the household of a white Caucasian tenant or owner.... Clause 2a. It is the express and stated intention of the owners, the Declarants herein, not to give any person or persons not of the Caucasian Race the physical possession or occupancy of any residential property in this subdivision or future units thereof, for the sole reason that they believe possession and occupancy by such persons would have a prejudicial effect upon the value of other properties in said subdivision and in future units therein.¹⁰⁸

Not surprisingly, Arden-Arcade and most of its surrounding districts thus began its existence as a lily-white suburb. Many of its neighborhoods, including Arden Park, have, for the most part, retained this identity up to the present time. In his study on residential segregation in Sacramento, Dr. Leonard Cain, a sociology instructor at Sacramento State, concluded that based on the 1960 census only 116 people of Arden-Arcade's total population of 73,352 people were Black. Given the total number of African Americans living in Sacramento in 1960 and the increasing number of Black professionals in the area, Cain concluded that the racial imbalance throughout much of the city and county could only have occurred as a result of systematic discrimination in Sacramento's housing market. As was the case nationwide, fair housing legislation in the 1960s came far too late to reverse the damage caused by two decades of housing discrimination in Sacramento.¹⁰⁹

What began as a bastion for middle-class, single-family homes in the 1940s and 1950s soon evolved into an odd mix of affluence and poverty by the turn of the century. Responding to the need for more affordable housing, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency proposed several new elderly and low-income housing developments in Arden-Arcade in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1981, Agency Director Will Edgar acknowledged that Arden-Arcade had "more than its fair share of low-income housing" and

promised that the Agency would build fewer units there in the future.¹¹⁰ Some observers blamed favorable zoning policies that allowed opportunistic developers to build apartment complexes for college students and low-income families. Over time, many of these apartment complexes began to show signs of neglect. By 1987, Arden-Arcade had the third largest number of rental housing units in the county; by 2017, the *Sacramento Bee* reported that Arden-Arcade had 38 of the 180 rental buildings on the county's problem property registry.¹¹¹

Not coincidentally, Arden-Arcade has seen a sharp rise in poverty, particularly in the last 10 years. In 2017, census data reported that Arden-Arcade experienced a higher increase in poverty than any other area in California. According to the report, one in four residents in Arden-Arcade qualified as poor, an increase of almost 8 percent between 2015 and 2016. Between 2015 and 2016 alone, the poverty rate rose from 19.9 to 27.7 percent, representing the largest increase of any of the nearly 140 California cities and census-designated places included in the U.S. Census's 2016 *American Community Survey 1-Year Report*. The report also revealed that roughly 56 percent of the housing units in Arden-Arcade were renter-occupied in 2016—the highest in the Sacramento region. Some observers attributed this increase to the influx of immigrants into the area and rising rental prices that may have pushed more low-income renters into Arden-Arcade. Indeed, median gross rent in 2016 in Arden-Arcade was \$897, compared to \$1,118 in Sacramento County.¹¹²

Fortunately, Arden-Arcade has several reputable community-based organizations working to make positive changes in the lives of area residents. One such organization is the Mutual Assistance Network, which has served communities of the Del Paso Heights, North Sacramento, and Arden-Arcade areas since the 1990s. *Operation Graduation*, an after-school

108 "Reminders of Racism, Old Covenants Linger in Records," *Sacramento Bee*, January 17, 2005.

109 Ibid.

110 "Plan Gives Arden-Arcade Bulk of Low-Income Homes," *Sacramento Bee*, December 10, 1981.

111 "State's Fastest Poverty Increase in a Year was in Arden-Arcade," *Sacramento Bee*, September 14, 2017.

112 Ibid.

mentoring program to promote graduation for junior high and high school students launched in 1998, and *Birth @ Beyond*, a 1999 initiative to assist families and prevent long-term health problems for children, are among the impactful programs that have been established by Mutual Assistance Network over the years. In 2015, Mutual Assistance Network's Arcade Community Center location became the Community Incubator Lead for BCLC's efforts in Arden-Arcade.¹¹³ Another critical organization in the area is Elica Health Centers. Launched in 1979 as a small group practice to serve the primary care needs of the region's emerging immigrant communities, the organization has evolved into a community-based clinic with centers across Sacramento and West Sacramento, including one in Arden-Arcade. Elica Health Centers provide affordable healthcare for underserved populations confronted with care access barriers.¹¹⁴

113 <https://www.mutualassistance.org/our-approach/>

114 <https://www.elicahealth.org/>

Appendix B: The Methodology of Portraiture

To humanize the people within this study, we turned to Portraiture. Portraiture is a unique qualitative methodology rooted in a style of vivid storytelling that allows the reader into the moment. This kind of account permits a multifaceted reality to unfold that feels alive and authentic. The depth of writing is meant to show, rather than tell, the process of transformation and empowerment. Before delving into the intricacies of Portraiture, it is worth mentioning that the ways we sought to answer our research questions are important and significant.

Portraiture is a practice of emancipation, unfolding in the form of human archeology.¹¹⁵

As a qualitative tool, portraiture shares commonalities with ethnography, but is distinct in five particular ways:

1. The portraitist does not simply listen to the story; she/he listens for the story.
2. The portraitist utilizes the entirety of her/his being to unearth answers to complex questions told through the lives of individuals who embody some semblance of the answers.
3. The portraitist explicitly guards against fatalistic, pessimistic inquiries into problems but searches for solutions by examining nuances of goodness.
4. The portraitist does not make participants anonymous, nameless factors but seeks to acknowledge, honor, and validate their stories by using the real names of people and places.
5. The portraitist is committed to sharing findings that are accessible to audiences beyond the academy as an explicit act of community building.

Guided by these pillars, Portraiture allows a soulful narrative to emerge, but this does not imply subjectivism. Drawing mainly from grounded theory, we used various tools to systematically analyze the data. *First*, to ensure descriptive validity, we tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews

verbatim, including words like “um...” and “you know.” We processed field notes within one day of observation and conducted initial open-coding. *Second*, we wrote reflexive memos and kept a journal. Furthermore, we approached the interview data aware that it is a process of co-construction where teller and listener create meaning collaboratively. In this way, we kept strict notes of personal impressions and thoughts as we gathered information. *Third*, to ensure interpretive validity, we systematically emphasized evidence in analytic memos and narrative summaries by citing participants’ own words and documenting transcript page numbers to connect our interpretations back to the data. We examined discrepant data against working observations to assess whether or not we should consider alternative explanations. *Fourth*, we conducted member checks by having participants review their interview transcripts and clarify or expand on any issue raised. These strategies are important tools for developing validity and for guarding against researcher bias. *Fifth*, we triangulated across several data sources (e.g., participant observation, questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and supplemental documentation) to reduce the risk of chance associations and biases due to data collection methods. *Sixth*, we solicited feedback regularly from colleagues: skilled researchers not intimately connected to the data. We shared transcripts, memos, and matrices with these colleagues to identify discrepant data and to strengthen coding strategies and analytic tools. Such alternative interpretations are necessary to forge accurate findings and proper conclusions. *Seventh*, we mined the data for seeds of the solution that could be replicated and sustained. This final process insures that the answers to our questions inform a greater good.

115 Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 139

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Interview Participants

A total of 17 individuals participated in 60-minute to 90-minute interviews. In addition, we conducted multiple site visits in accordance with the qualitative methods of participant observation. Altogether, the voices of these individuals and many others informed our findings.

Stakeholder Name	Organization	Role in BCLC
Phil Serna	County of Sacramento Board of Sup.	Advocate
Natalie Woods Andrews	RAACD	Committee Chair
Tracey Held	IPC (Research and Evaluation)	Data
Stephanie Hopkins	Department of Human Assistance	County
Danielle Lawrence	Arden Arcade	CIL
Kim Williams	Fruitridge (The Hub)	CIL
Ray Lozada	Sacramento Probation Department	County
Ray Green	Del Paso Heights (RFFC)	CIL
Paris Dye	Foothill Farms (Liberty Towers Church)	CIL
Crystal Harding	Foothill Farms (Liberty Towers Church)	CIL
Jackie Rose	Meadowview (Focus on Family)	CIL
David Carney	Crisis Response (Oak Park)	Cultural Navigator
Captain Charles Husted	Sacramento Police Department	CIL
Shyria Lewis	Department of Human Assistance	County
Chet Hewitt	Sierra Health Foundation	RAACD
Kindra Montgomery-Block	Sierra Health Foundation	BCLC Lead
Madeline Sabatoni	Sierra Health Foundation	BCLC Support

Author Biographies

Vajra M. Watson is a scholar activist and professor of educational leadership and racial justice in the College of Education at Sacramento State University, Sacramento. Dr. Watson has more than 20 years of experience as a teacher, community organizer, and researcher. She is the founder of Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS), an award-winning program that pairs community-based poet-mentor educators and teachers together to develop grassroots pedagogies that reclaim and reimagine schooling. She is the solo-author of two books, *Learning to Liberate: Community-Based Solutions to the Crisis in Urban Education* (2012) and *Transformative Schooling: Towards Racial Equity in Education* (2018), and has published dozens of peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. Watson is originally from Berkeley, California, and was deeply impacted by the courses she took in the Black and Xicanx Studies Departments at Berkeley High School in the mid-1990s. In 10th grade her final exam question was: “What are you doing to stop and/or curtail the spread of white supremacy in yourself, community, and this world?” This question still shapes her path and purpose. Dr. Watson received her B.A. from UC Berkeley and her Doctorate in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. *Dr. Watson identifies as a white, cisgender female.*

Lawrence “Torry” Winn is an Assistant Professor of Teaching in Education in the School of Education at the University of California, Davis and the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Transformative Justice in Education (TJE) Center. His program of research examines race, critical consciousness and social capital in out-of-school learning spaces and transformative justice pedagogy and practice within schools. A trained ethnographer, Dr. Winn is interested in the relationship and dynamics between historically marginalized communities of color and schools, nonprofits, and government entities such

as police, elected officials, etc. With more than two decades of experience in the nonprofit sector, including work with Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Dr. Winn was a member of the Race to Equity Team (R2E), which published the *Race to Equity Report*, a comprehensive study on racial disparities in education, criminal justice, workforce, and healthcare for Black and White families in Dane County, Wisconsin. He is the co-author of articles that have appeared in *Theory into Practice*, *Race and Social Problems* and *Adolescent Research Review*. *Dr. Winn identifies as a Black, cisgender male.*

Maisha T. Winn is the Associate Dean and Chancellor’s Leadership Professor in the School of Education at the University of California, Davis, where she co-founded and co-directs (with Dr. Lawrence “Torry” Winn) the Transformative Justice in Education (TJE) Center. Much of Professor Winn’s early scholarship examines how young people create literate identities through performing literacy and how teachers who are “practitioners of the craft” serve as “soul models” to emerging writers. Most recently, she has examined how restorative justice theory can be leveraged to teach across disciplines using a Transformative Justice Teacher Education Framework. Professor Winn was named an American Educational Research Association Fellow (Spring 2016). In 2014 she received the William T. Grant Foundation Distinguished Fellowship and was named the American Educational Research Association Early Career Award recipient in 2012. Professor Winn served as the Jeannette K. Watson Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities at Syracuse University for the 2019/2020 academic year. She is the author of several books including *Writing in Rhythm: Spoken word poetry in urban schools* (published under maiden name “Fisher”); *Black literate lives: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (published under maiden name “Fisher”); *Girl Time: Literacy, Justice, and the*

School-to-Prison Pipeline; and co-editor of *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Research* (with Django Paris). She has two new books, *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* (Harvard Education Press) and *Restorative Justice in the English Language Arts Classroom* (with Hannah Graham and Rita Alfred on National Council of Teachers of English Principles in Practice Series). She is also the author of numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals. *Professor Winn identifies as a Black, cisgender female.*

Photo: Vajra M. Watson, Maisha T. Winn and Lawrence “Torry” Winn



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COMPLETED BY UC DAVIS AND SACRAMENTO STATE UNIVERSITY