

BUILDING THE WE:

Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity in Salinas

Jamilah Bradshaw Dieng,
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Tenoch Ortiz for

race forward!
THE CENTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE INNOVATION

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Race Forward's mission is to build awareness, solutions and leadership for racial justice by generating transformative ideas, information and experiences. We define racial justice as the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. We work to advance racial justice through media, research, and leadership development.

“...real power
That which is real and lasting
That is the one which is
given through justice”

Chava Bustamante,
Mexican-American farm worker who participated in the 1970 UFW strike

“How we fail if we don't heal.”

Alisal [East Salinas] resident

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Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) Synopsis

In 2014 an innovative partnership between government, nonprofit, and philanthropy began in the city of Salinas, California—Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity. By combining racial healing with structural equity, proponents are determined to unlearn the scripted positions of city vs. community, us vs. them. It's a significant and risky undertaking with potential for high impact. Local leaders made this bold move towards racial justice in response to a series of racially inflaming events, most notably four police-involved shootings of Latino men within a span of six months.

Since 2010, The California Endowment (TCE) has strategically invested in training, advising and building up a network of local Salinas advocacy groups through their place-based initiative, Building Healthy Communities (BHC) East Salinas. In 2014 BHC East Salinas served as an integral catalyzer for Salinas' Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity process when BHC's Program Manager convened a meeting for government and non-profit leaders to proactively forge a citywide agenda toward racial equity and healing. In a time of heightened racial tension, the Director of Public Works, the Police Chief, and the City Manager met with vocal community advocates from the BHC East Salinas network to coalesce around the common goal of building a more healthy, fair, and united Salinas. Ensuing conversations led to the co-development of a weeklong Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity training for 100 city staff and community leaders.

The training was designed and led by Jerry Tello of the National Compadres Network and Rinku Sen of Race Forward, thought-leaders on racial healing and systemic equity, respectively. Following the training, Tello and Sen helped establish a joint city-community steering committee to strengthen relationships and operationalize racial equity throughout Salinas.

Recognizing that a partnership is a process and not a product, insights are still unfolding. Thus far, the work has lifted up four key lessons:

1. Support community organizing and collective healing.
2. Balance racial healing and systemic equity.
3. Engage government staff at every level.
4. Build the “we” with shared language and experience.

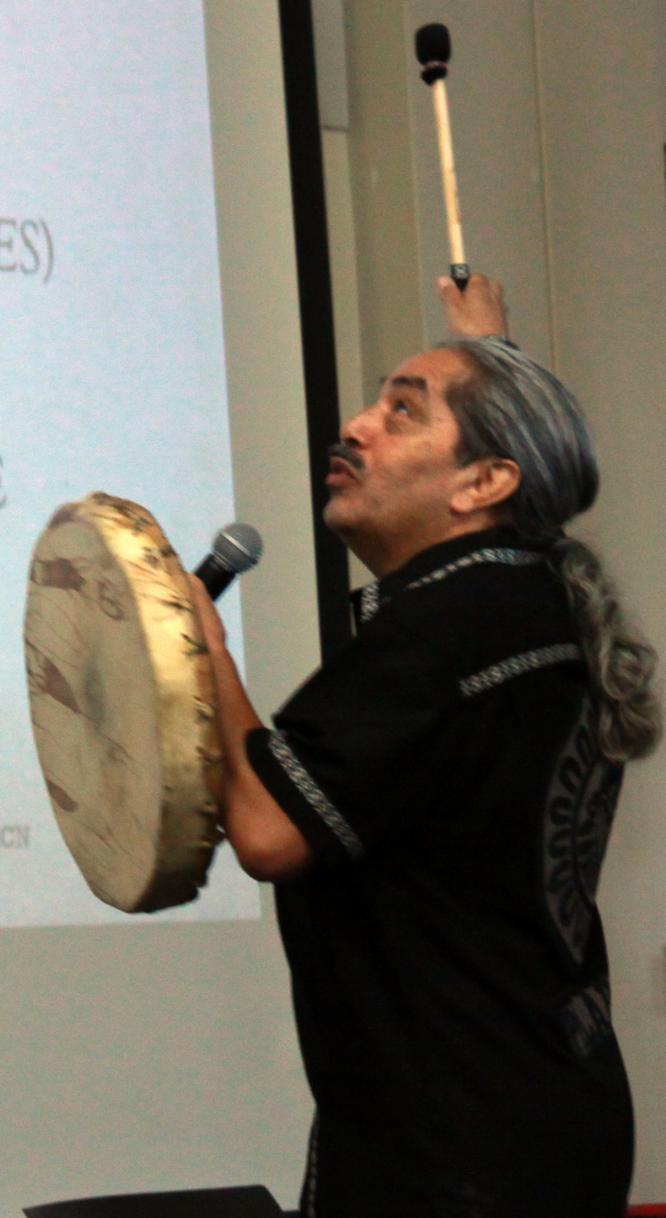
Positive outcomes of this endeavor have already emerged and will continue for years to come. The approach, however, is already spurring interest and replication. More role model than project model, Salinas' Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity initiative is inspiring grassroots and institutional leaders to transform complacency within status quo governance into a yearning for vibrant, healthy communities—a possibility that is ours for the making.

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NTED, Welcomed... You are SACRED
SACRED (Equitable) PURPOSE
TEACHINGS (CULTURAL VALUES)
HERS to guide you
ROTECTED - SAFE and SECURE



Cultura Cura/NCN



Jerry Tello of the National Compadres Network, invites training participants into La Cultura Cura (Culture Cures) philosophy.

Introduction

“I wanted to bring people to a point where both sides could see the other side as vulnerable...Even the police chief, I said to him you have to come as who you are, as a father, a son, not just in your uniform. I remember being told, ‘This better be good.’”

Carmen Gil

Seated around a conference table at The California Endowment’s Oakland office, July 15, 2014, community advocates and city staff from Salinas, California, met to bridge a troubling gap in understanding between residents and local government. The night before, Carmen Gil, Hub Manager of Building Healthy Communities (BHC) East Salinas, met with her partners to gauge their willingness to sit with city officials, given how testy relationships between city, police, and non-White residents had been in recent months. Building Healthy Communities is comprised of several local community-based organizations brought together as Endowment grantees. Gil said these community leaders were tense before a small meeting with city officials. “People in the office said the night before they didn’t want to go...‘I don’t know if I can go; I don’t know how I’m going to react with a police chief in the room.’” Gil admitted, “I was nervous.” But the well-being of their community was at stake, so Gil and the others drove from Salinas to Oakland for the dinner meeting.

The BHC East Salinas hub convenes local organizations and supports their efforts to develop the leadership capacity of community residents and institutional leaders to improve overall health in the city. The hub is staffed by Salinas community advocates and is funded by The California Endowment (TCE). The meeting was organized by Lauren Padilla-Valverde, East Salinas Program Manager at The California Endowment and the person who oversees its grantmaking strategy and supports the hub. Padilla-Valverde, who has a background as a primary care clinician, is a scholar and grass-roots organizer born and raised in Monterey County. Her intentions in setting up the meeting had both practical and personal implications: “Growing up in Monterey County, I remember being called the n-word and viscerally feeling ‘othered’. I saw how my parents were treated by employers and systems.” She remembers the overt, yet unspoken, racism that was embedded in city-led practices and policies. She knew that addressing structural racism was an important step to achieve lasting health equity.

Governing for Racial Equity Leaders



Ray Corpuz,
Salinas City Manager



Carmen Gil,
Management Analyst,
Monterey County Public Health
Department

Former Manager,
BHC East Salinas Hub



Andrea Manzo,
Manager,
BHC East Salinas Hub



Lauren Padilla-Valverde,
East Salinas Program Manager,
The California Endowment



Gary Petersen,
Director,
City of Salinas Public Works



Rinku Sen,
Executive Director,
Race Forward



Jerry Tello,
Co-Founder,
National Compadres Network

Earlier that day, Chief of Police Kelly McMillin, City Manager Ray Corpuz, and Director of Public Works Gary Petersen had attended an eight-hour Racial Justice Leadership Institute (RJLI) training, conducted by Race Forward and led by Executive Director Rinku Sen. The city officials attendance demonstrated good faith and willingness to build a relationship with BHC.

Initially, Padilla-Valverde extended a formal invitation to the Mayor, in addition to the City Manager and the Public Works Director. Corpuz decided that he wanted to invite Chief McMillin to the training. Corpuz remembers, “Gary said ‘they are offering this training, and Lauren asked if you could come.’ And I thought, I’m interested but I’m really busy, I have a city to run and this is an all-day training in Oakland. Then I had to get Kelly to come. I was wondering who is Race Forward?” He was impressed with Sen’s training, which struck him as being very practical. “My first exposure to Rinku was key. I learned a lot about race in a governing context. I thought, there is some application here, applicability to our city.”

This post-training meeting was an invitation to deep dialogue. City staffers had their own anxieties about coming to the table. “BHC had Gary and I in a vulnerable position to hear and be quite frank about police issues,” recounts Corpuz. A number of community leaders drove together from Salinas to Oakland with Padilla-Valverde and Gil: Tenoch Ortiz, Juan Gomez, and Raul Tapia -- members of the social change collective Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement (MILPA); Carissa Purnell, a librarian with the City of Salinas; and Luis “Xago” Juarez, co-founder of theatre arts group Baktun 12.

There were a number of important issues up for discussion stemming from a long history of conflict between city and community interests and a recent string of police-involved shootings (including one caught on video that went viral). Ultimately, the meeting was an invitation for the city to engage in a robust racial justice process. Before each person left for the three-hour drive back home, Padilla-Valverde asked what the city’s commitment to healing and racial justice would be moving forward. Corpuz agreed that embedding racial equity in government was a step in the right direction.



Rinku Sen, of Race Forward, presenting on the “4 Levels of Racism” at the November 2014 GRE training.

Over the next four months, a community came together to plan and host what became the City of Salinas—BHC Racial Healing & Racial Equity Training Week & Launch.

Why healing? For several years, Salinas advocates had been building healing-informed community power. The National Compadres Network (NCN), co-founded by Jerry Tello, brings a capacity to address trauma across systems and in community through culturally-based healing. The California Endowment started funding NCN in 2010 to lead healing work in Salinas and Monterey County, collaborating with groups such as Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement (MILPA), the Urban Arts Collaborative, Second Chance Family and Youth Services, and Colectiva de Mujeres.

NCN has trained over 140 Salinas practitioners in their healing-informed philosophy of La Cultura Cura (Culture Cures). This approach is rooted in the idea that communities possess the knowledge and skills they need to heal themselves from the impacts of institutional and systemic oppression, as well as transform the policies, procedures, and practices that have caused such harm. In Salinas, NCN has applied this framework to develop leaders, build relationships across Latino-led community organizations, and clarify a healing-centric advocacy agenda. And there have been great results. MILPA and BHC led a campaign under this framework to get the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to unanimously approve the reduction of a newly planned juvenile hall from 150 to 120 beds. Addition-

ally, partners of this initiative have embedded a healing-informed, culturally rooted curriculum into the Salinas City Elementary School District’s new Restorative Justice Program.

Building on this work, Salinas residents organized the city’s first ever Ciclovía, an open streets event led by youth involved with the BHC East Salinas hub and supported by City of Salinas staff. Andrea Manzo, community advocate and hub manager with East Salinas BHC, was one of the primary leaders, while Gary Petersen, Public Works Director, pioneered city support for the event by opening up public infrastructure to youth art projects. Ciclovía is intended primarily as a community health-promoting strategy, but it also seeks to close racial and social gaps caused by inequity between different parts of the city. Following the success of the first Ciclovía in 2013, Petersen asked “What more can we do?” Padilla-Valverde requested that Petersen and his colleagues attend the upcoming Racial Justice Leadership Institute training in Oakland.

At the Oakland training, Race Forward introduced participants to Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIA), systematic examinations of how different racial and ethnic groups may be affected by a proposed action or decision. Government agencies in the United Kingdom have used REIAs since 2000 to inform decision-making and promote racial justice. Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) is an emerging practice in the United States that originally took root in King County, Washington and Multnomah County, Oregon.



Two Ciclovía leaders enjoying their work during the inaugural event (2013) in Salinas that ushered in a new collaboration between city staff and BHC East Salinas.

In describing Race Forward’s approach Sen advised that the process of institutional change has to include defining racism in a different way than the mainstream does, in addition to finding the root causes of racial disparities.”

She explains:

Our goal is to help the entire city on a path to racial equity decision-making. The first step is to address race explicitly and bring it out of the realm of the unspoken. The second is to focus on the racial impact of the current arrangement, of how they do things. Third, is to give the tools and support that they need to implement the changes coming from the assessment of causes and impacts.

Corpuz reveals:

When the idea of training the whole city came up, it appealed to me. It was timely, an opportunity that I hadn’t seen before. At first it was the idea of getting the city staff trained, so people knew what racial equity was as

providers of key public services. It was clear that if we could do that, we would raise everyone up, a community-wide effort.

Soon thereafter, the City of Salinas and BHC decided to conduct a training for both city leaders and community advocates. Gil emphasizes that “if we had not taken the community-city joint approach, it wouldn’t have worked because community had felt marginalized before. The feeling would have been the same type of distrust of the city leading it.” Padilla-Valverde advocated incorporating a healing-informed lens into the training after seeing its previous success in the city. She saw the potential of bringing together two national leaders around racial equity – Rinku Sen – and healing – Jerry Tello – to develop a curriculum that would bring healing-informed GRE to Salinas.

Sen points to the need for taking this approach:

One thing we know is that people have a lot of anxiety about race discussions. You have to have emotional

intelligence to lead that work, emotional insight into the toll that racism has taken on communities historically and now. The trauma that communities experienced from government fifty years ago is still present in those communities, and it needs to be taken into account.

Sen further recognizes that “if [you] focus on systems, you can have change. But if you focus too much on the system, you can still have unhealed relationships...This can generate in the broader community a cynicism in dealing with race, and about that particular government’s commitment.”

Tello similarly recognizes the importance of pairing NCN’s racial healing approach with Race Forward’s systemic equity framework.

Community residents and people working within government institutions must recognize that racial healing is an integral part of transforming systems and the people they affect. NCN’s collaboration with Race Forward has brought a balance of both mind and heart capacity-building, in order that both groups can work collaboratively to release the toxic relationships of the past and build policies and procedures that truly move Salinas forward for the good of all.

Corpuz reflects, “It was risky. I didn’t go to the City Council to ask what they think; I just said this is what we are doing. I viewed this as an operational issue, about how do we provide services. I could imagine the debate at the Council, so I just said we were going to do it.”

The risks add up, as Gil explains:

If residents are being asked to partner with the police department, then friends are going to ask what you are doing. We needed to train all these community leaders and really make them key partners in the process. We need the community to understand what we are doing is moving toward systemic change. The city also said, we don’t want to do this work without the community being accountable as well.

Petersen expresses a similar attentiveness to the challenges involved:

You could see something like this die fifty different ways. There was a vision by Lauren that this could be a tool for transformation, and she was willing to fight for that. I told Ray I thought we needed to do this and I wanted to be part of it.

The City of Salinas agreed to participate in a weeklong training in November 2014. Between August and October 2014, Petersen and Corpuz worked to make sure that directors and staff from all fifteen city departments would attend. At the same time, Gil and Padilla-Valverde mapped out the BHC partners who would be invited. Each side was asked to assess their willingness to commit to the training. Participants said they had hopes that the training would help them “[t]o understand racial equity,” and with “[f]orging relationships with community,” as well as having “[y]outh being seen as assets and involved with local government.” The cross-sector appeal of the approach caught many people’s attention. One aspiration that captured the perspective of many participants was, “To bridge gaps: between Spanish speakers and non-Spanish speakers, between Whites and Latinos, and between long-time residents and staff who work in the area.” Gil’s intent articulated a broad vision, “To get the police department to realize that they weren’t gonna get attacked by the community, and that the community isn’t going to get harassed by police.”

Corpuz expanded:

This is an opportunity; this can help us. This is not about [an attack on] you personally and your belief and values. This is how the city can embrace racial equity, ‘cause this is for the public, and this is how we can build trust, and this is one of the areas we haven’t addressed.

Governing for Racial Equity Project Timeline

2009-2010

The California Endowment (TCE), a private health foundation, launches a 10- year, \$1 billion place-based community change initiative known as Building Healthy Communities (BHC) in 14 communities across the state. The initiative frames change-making through 5 specific drivers, key capacities needed to advance policy and systems change to achieve health equity: 1) building resident power, 2) fostering youth leadership, 3) enhancing collaborative efficacy, 4) leveraging partnerships, and 5) reframing a new narrative. TCE selects East Salinas as one of its 14 BHC sites.

2010

The California Endowment supports community plan to address trauma. Grantees affirm healing as a cornerstone and core capacity of their work.

Talks and trainings by John A. Powell and Dr. Jesse Mills within the city of Salinas get people thinking about race explicitly.

2010-2013

East Salinas BHC Hub events: Structural racism trainings, 5K Run/Walk, 1st annual Ciclovía.

March 2014

Local leaders Fernando Armenta, Monterey County Board Supervisor and Rosemary Soto, Monterey County Administrative Office attend the Governing for Racial Equity (GARE) conference in Seattle.

March-July 2014

Four officer-involved shootings of Latino residents; community members and city staff respond in different ways. Racial Justice Leadership Institute Training and meeting in Oakland.

August 2014

November 2014: BHC forms Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) general workgroup, tasked with developing first-of-its-kind training, preparing city leadership and BHC partners to attend training, and ongoing meetings. TCE introduces Rinku Sen to Jerry Tello, who then develop a combined curriculum for the proposed week.

November 2014

Weeklong BHC-City of Salinas Racial Healing and Racial Equity training and launch co-facilitated by Race Forward and the National Compadres Network.

January 2015

Salinas-BHC GRE Steering Committee formed.

Progress Outcomes

- Initial development of Alisal Vibrancy Plan
- MILPA and Salinas Chief of Police meet to discuss development of a community-based police orientation
- Needs-based neighborhood lighting repair protocol implemented
- CASP creates new HR protocol to expand qualification criteria for hiring
- Commitment to train entire Salinas Police Force in Fair and Impartial Policing

Past Challenges of Bridging Racial Divisions in Salinas

Salina's racial dynamics (see p. 16) stem from its long history as an agricultural center, and have been shaped by labor and community organizing for nearly a century. In the 1930s there were violent confrontations between White farm owners and farm workers of color, "when Filipino workers, organized as one of California's first farm labor unions, clashed with management in a major strike." Eventually, labor and management reconciled, yet "this strike, which pitted shed workers from the Alisal [East Salinas] against their Salinas employers, raised a formidable psychological barrier between the two communities." In the 1940s, Mexican farmworkers brought in under the Bracero program soon found themselves in a similar fight for healthcare, human rights, and dignity. Decades later the Cesar Chavez-led United Farm Workers organized Mexican and Mexican-American workers in the lettuce farms, leading to the largest farm worker strike in U.S. history in 1970.

Fast-forward to the present, racial divisions across the city are still very much a reality, especially between residents and city government. City of Salinas Police Commander Henry Gomez notes that one of the most prominent issues is a language barrier between city staff and East Salinas

residents, a large population of whom are monolingual Spanish speakers. Gomez, who is originally from San Jose, points out many similarities between the situation in East Salinas and his upbringing sixty miles away. "My first language is Spanish. My first year of school, I didn't speak English or know the culture. My dad worked in agriculture." He was drawn to Salinas, especially to Alisal, recognizing that "a lot of what I have to offer is useful here." Out of seven Police Commanders in Salinas, he is the only one who is Latino. He also asserts that persistent cultural differences contribute to the generations-long lack of trust experienced by residents.

Manzo calls attention to the way the city has engaged Alisal residents:

There's a real disconnect, even in how community meetings are posted. Often they're not in Spanish, and when they are, not enough Spanish meetings are offered based on the number of monolingual Spanish-speaking residents in the community. City council meetings are often held at inopportune times. And the notices for city council meetings aren't appealing, they resemble appliance instructions.

“Often, individuals working for institutions conflate their individual good intentions with the outcomes of the institution’s policies and practices. When participants realize the ways institutions and structures impact communities of color, even if unintentionally, they shift their sense of what it means to succeed in racial justice.”

Manzo asserts that more investment is needed in East Salinas. “A lot of BHC work is to get folks in the city to recognize the discrepancy” between the communities on the East Side and those downtown.

Starting in 2011, the Salinas Police Department initiated a “community-based policing experiment,” assigning two full-time bilingual officers to the Alisal neighborhood of Hebrón Heights to build relationships with youth and parents. The Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP), a coalition of organizations and leaders from Salinas and Monterey County developed this model as a part of their Comprehensive Strategy for Community-wide Violence Reduction. The officers “spend most of their day talking to residents,” often connecting young people to jobs and services as alternatives to arrests. In 2014, the officers stationed there reported a “marked decline in violence.”

Then came the 2014 police shootings, which stirred national attention and opened local wounds. While “Salinas police normally average only one officer-involved shooting out of 4,500 to 5,500 arrests by the department each year,” between March and May 2014, three Latino residents were killed by Salinas police officers. Each case was a response to 911 calls reporting threatening behavior. The shooting death of 44-year-old Carlos Mejia, the last of the three, sparked high community unrest. Mejia’s death was

especially unsettling as it occurred on the corner of Del Monte Avenue and North Sanborn Road, right outside Delicia’s Bakery, a very public city landmark. A video of the shooting recorded on a cell phone was shortly uploaded to YouTube. “The video, which has over 200,000 views on YouTube, shows two armed officers following Mejia down the sidewalk on May 20. As he turns toward them, at least five shots are fired.” The night following Mejia’s death, “a candlelight vigil grew into a protest with [hundreds of] people filling the busy intersection where Mejia was shot.” A 23-year old man who had recently moved to Salinas was shot dead by an unknown assailant while watching the protest. An officer who attempted to give the young man mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was knocked out after someone from the crowd threw a glass bottle, hitting the officer in the head.

In the weeks between late May and July¹, two meetings were held for community members to air their feelings about the shootings, and, most importantly, to heal from the trauma of violence. One of these meetings, facilitated by Jerry Tello, was also attended by government officials. This angered some residents, wondering aloud why government representatives were present. Advocates who invited government staffers had unintentionally

¹ In July of that year, Salinas experienced its fourth officer-involved shooting of an unarmed Latino resident.

“Yet questions of racial inequity within the Salinas government were not limited to the police department. Petersen, Director of Public Works, recalls not being aware of any conversations around race in the city when he came into his position in the early 2000s.”

neglected to inform community members that they would be participating. One resident left the meeting. A short time later, Raul Tapia, Health Equity Fellow at MILPA, led a large círculo led a large círculo (circle) at Alisal Center for the Fine Arts to promote further dialogue and restore community.

Yet questions of racial inequity within the Salinas government were not limited to the police department. Petersen, Director of Public Works, recalls not being aware of any conversations around race in the city when he came into his position in the early 2000s. Even recent initiatives to get the city to center a racial equity agenda failed to either take root or produce measurable results. Back when the BHC initiative kicked off in Salinas, Padilla-Valverde brought racial justice scholars to provide anti-systemic racism training. Leaders from the county, city, and community attended talks and trainings by Dr. Jesse Mills, Ethnic Studies Professor at University of San Diego who also works with BHC City Heights, and Professor John A. Powell. While these activities sparked interest among various community members, they involved either planning or self-selected leadership to advance or operationalize an explicit racial equity

framework. In hindsight, Padilla-Valverde said that local leaders needed to turn ideas into action. “While you can fund trainings and increase awareness, for this work to grow roots,” she said, “you need to have someone within government and within community that is willing to take it on and take it further.”

Meanwhile, across the country, the notion of applying a racial equity lens to the workings of local government had been gaining momentum through the building of the Governmental Alliance for Racial Equity. Leaders from Monterey County met peers in city governments that had begun to act on racial justice commitments. Rosemary Soto, from the Monterey County Health Department, and Monterey County Board of Supervisors Fernando Armenta attended the Governing for Racial Equity Network Conference in March 2014, a national convening for public sector employees to advance racial equity. Seeing other municipalities address race finally emboldened Salinas leaders to do the same.

Salinas: Brief History and Demographics

According to the 2010 census, Salinas' population is approximately 75 percent Latino (primarily Mexican/Mexican-American and Central American), 16 percent White, 2 percent African American, 1 percent Native American, and 7 percent Asian and Pacific Islander. The average income is 42K, with one-quarter earning less than 14K annually. Salinas Valley also hosts a booming prison industry, creating two distinct economic engines in agriculture and incarceration. The agricultural industry's needs for labor have made the Salinas Valley an immigrant magnet for much of the 20th century—attracting Dust Bowl migration from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas; Filipino field laborers; Japanese flower growers; Chinese and Korean merchants; Italian and Portuguese fishers; and Mexican farm workers—all pursuing Golden State dreams. Many of them settled in East Salinas or Alisal ("grove of sycamores"), a smaller parcel of land used as a housing development for farm workers.

Phillip Tabera, longtime Alisal resident, professor, and Salinas Union High School District board member, remembers the highly racialized separation between the land allotments: "in the 30's or 40's, there was a city ordinance that said if you were colored, that you couldn't cross the 101 bridge on Sundays. And if you were caught, you were brought back to the east side." Whereas the City of Salinas was incorporated in 1874, Alisal remained unincorporated until 1963.

Even after incorporation, improvements seldom arrived to the new east side of town. Political representation did not increase; neither did economic opportunity. Public Works

Director Petersen, who came into his position in 2005, describes: "When the East Side became incorporated in the 1960s, it hadn't really been planned. The city has never really had the resources to make all the necessary changes." Its oversight fell on Monterey County, whose codes generally weren't as strict as the city codes. Massive overcrowding occurred, the streets were not laid out properly, lighting was poor, and maintenance was neglected. The differences between Salinas and Alisal became strikingly obvious. "The entire Alisal area was a county area," says Petersen. "It was built separate from the city, so it never had the same requirements and oversight that the city had. This lack of oversight eventually produced the highest density of population and the lowest levels of income."

The growers families, who run an almost 8.1 billion dollar agricultural industry, have profited due to two co-occurring phenomena: the ongoing exploitation of laborers of color and a city unwilling to intervene in grower and organizer conflict.

Salinas population is approximately 75% Latino, primarily Mexican/Mexican-American and Central American.

Governing for Racial Equity and Healing Training Week

November 17-21, 2014, marked a historic week for the City of Salinas. As one of the few cities in the country committed to governing with a racial justice framework, City leaders and BHC East Salinas hosted a weeklong Governing for Racial Equity training. Yet this would be a week of many firsts. The champions of this endeavor also decided Salinas would initiate a novel approach to Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) by piloting two new innovations: 1) embedding a healing informed framework into the entire process and 2) committing as many resources to training community leaders as those dedicated to City staff.

One hundred participants were recruited to attend the week. Half were community advocates and half were city staffers, with a focus on department heads and organizational leadership. No media or elected officials were invited to attend, as the training specifically focused on city operations, and staff and residents were encouraged to speak freely. However organizers agreed that it was important to publicly communicate what GRE was. Select city and BHC leaders held a press event one week prior to the training to articulate the vision and purpose of the training. The press event was well attended and positively received by local media.

The lived experiences and perspectives expressed by each participant varied greatly, but the training curriculum would be almost identical for the two groups. The trainers decided both cohorts would undergo three days total of training: two days separately and the final day together.

The overall purpose of Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity is to unify community members and local government around how their city should operate to create the best possible conditions for its people. The three-day training was designed to enable residents and government agents to learn racially conscious decision-making and follow-through.

DAY ONE

With decades of combined experience Rinku Sen of Race Forward and Jerry Tello of the National Compadres Network solidified their dual approach for Salinas' inaugural training, laying out four main training outcomes.

1. Increase emotional capacity for healing around race and racism.

2. Expand the definition of racism and racial justice.
3. Shift the focus from individual intentions to systemic impacts.
4. Equip teams to pursue solutions that explicitly foreground equity.

Before diving into the curriculum, the training team asked both groups to set personal intentions for their time together.

The community cohort brought out powerful intentions, including: “Deconstruct criminality in East Salinas,” “Attempt to heal the bruises we all feel,” and “Learn the skills to take language of equity to new arenas.” One member, with an eye towards the final day, voiced a desire “to get better tools to speak with City of Salinas and communicate the reality to them.”

Among the city staff, participants revealed hope and anxiety. Some named their desire to heal the racial schism between government and residents: “I want to uncover challenges the city has with Latino families,” said one staffer. Another wanted “an opportunity for the police department to start growing in a way that serves and engages community.” One city staffer noted that this was an opportunity to create equitable systems, rather than training “for the sake of saying we do things well.”

Tello led an exercise called “Who We Are,” asking participants to define how they saw themselves going through successively deeper iterations. A master storyteller, Tello used his personal history to illuminate the trauma that racial bias can inflict on youth and families. The story rolled into an artful combination of psycho-social research and personal examples to highlight five levels of fear that are inflicted by social and historical trauma. This quickly established the tone for the day, indicating that the work would demand vulnerability, openness, and critical reflection.

Next, Sen grounded the group in core concepts around race and racism. What is the difference between equity and diversity? Why does a definition of racial justice



José Arreola, 37

Director of the Communities Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP)

CASP is a city initiative that collaborates with non-profit organizations on reducing youth violence. Arreola attended the GRE training as part of the city cohort.

In my work, I see CASP as a unique opportunity where the city is investing in violence prevention. In my past work as a Principal of a private school, I was constantly trying to get kids out of poverty through educational opportunities. Educational opportunities are part of the solution but nothing will change until we address the cycles of poverty and the systems that to perpetuate them. Nothing will change in Salinas unless we challenge poverty issues at their core. CASP offers real solutions to alleviate the violence that stems from poverty in Salinas. This is very difficult work because we are raised to get an education and a job to flee from poverty. Not to come back and to try and fix it.

We look at East Salinas, and we see a 22% on-time reading level by third-grade, versus Corral de Tierra, also a Salinas school, which has an 80% on-time reading level by third-grade. Yeah, there's a problem. Are East Salinas kids dumber? No. Not at all. Do they have the same opportunities? No. Not at all. Is there a fix? Absolutely. It's not an insurmountable problem: it's a systems-created issue.

The GRE conference started conversations. There are more conversations happening around the city that I don't know would have happened had there not been a catalyst, and GRE has certainly acted as a catalyst. Even with my own staff there were certain issues that were too hard to have a conversation about, and I think GRE set the stage to allow for those conversations.

need to include notions of systemic fair treatment and equal outcomes?

This next portion of the day explored different levels of racism and led participants through a systems analysis, using a fictional scenario to give people practice in identifying individual and collective racial dynamics.

Volunteers re-enacted the story of a student of color steered out of college prep classes due to under resourcing, racially biased testing and counseling decisions. After identifying the different levels of racism, from internalized to structural, groups generated systemic solutions. Participants imagined reformulating testing content and procedures, better funding for schools in the pipeline, training counselors in unbiased approaches, mobilizing young people and parents, developing holistic evaluations for student placement, and changing the school financing formula. Sen wrapped up, noting that racism expresses itself at multiple levels—internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural—and a comprehensive strategy includes tactics that matched each level.

These modules expanded people's definition of racism beyond instances of individual, overt, and intentional racial acts: a large shift for most people amidst a culture that reveres "color-blindness."

Trainers concluded the first day with one of the most important lessons for city staff and community members

wanting to implement a Healing-informed GRE process – how to shift the focus from individual intentions to racial impacts as a key strategy for challenging racism embedded within institutions.

"The question that we start with isn't, 'Who's a racist?'" said Sen. "The question that we start with is, 'What's causing racial inequity?'"



Philip Tabera, Board member of the Salinas Union High School District, attentively listens during the 2014 GRE training.

Often, individuals working for institutions conflate their individual good intentions with the outcomes of the institution's policies and practices. When participants realize the ways institutions and structures impact communities of color, even if unintentionally, they shift their sense of what it means to succeed in racial justice. A focus on systemic impacts contextualizes individual responsibility and sets a path towards practical solutions.

Next, participants explored implicit bias—what it is, how it operates within individuals and institutions, and how to counteract it through explicit equity practices. With manageable actions, called “choice points,” participants assessed ways that they could make conscious decisions to advance equity in their daily routines, appropriate to their institutional power.

DAY TWO

On the second day, the participants learned about the Four Stages to Transformational Healing: acknowledgment, acceptance, integration, and commitment. Jerry Tello led the group through what it means to heal collectively. He highlighted the importance of acknowledging the whole person, not just their role in this work. He asked the room: How do we learn to accept people's gifts as well as their baggage? What are the triggers we need to address? With compassion, he spoke about releasing judgment of others and ourselves in order to move toward collective responsibility. Finally, he talked about how, in a move toward commitment, we develop valued based agreements and relationships, based on respect, dignity, and trust.

Next, participants learned to examine public policies and institutional practices through a racial equity lens using Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIA). REIAs are tools to advance a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. REIAs are used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans, and budgetary decisions.



Anaís Aquino, 31

Salinas Deputy City Attorney

I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and did my undergrad work in L.A. My work brought me to this area in 2012. I had an opportunity to make a difference in this community. I think that the world needs more good prosecutors.

My biggest take away from the GRE conference, and the greatest responsibility I can take as a Deputy Attorney, even before we roll out larger programs like an office of social justice or racial equity, is to take each and every case and examine it to consider what outcome we really desire. There was a panel at the Seattle GRE conference that I attended with an attorney that has probably been doing this work for one or two more years than I have, and she said, “Look, I’m not a policy maker, I’m not a judge, I’m not a higher up in my organization. What can I do as a line-level prosecutor to further this social justice mission that our office has?” And the judges that were on that panel said that those of us who are line-level prosecutors have a level of discretion, and it is up to us to make that critical decision that re-enforces how this case ends up and will impact this person’s day-to-day life. Whether it is making the decision for a \$100 fine or a \$1,000 fine, that makes a huge impact.

These kinds of impacts occur within the decision-making process from start to finish. I think that this is a conversation we need to have with the city attorney and the police chief given the direction we are moving with GRE.

I think that the city’s approach in the GRE process is effective because it’s so multi-disciplinary and aims to be evidence-based. That’s the beauty of this project, it’s not just one department working on its own in a silo.

It seems GRE is going really well and that there are some obstacles ahead of us. I hope to bring a law perspective to the GRE group and an ability to search out grey areas to help guide the process. I really hope GRE will work.

Both groups went through a rigorous REIA activity; for the city staff, the exercise was a revelation. Each department explored the adverse impacts of their current policies and practices, as well as possible opportunities for improvement. The police department started by scrutinizing its hiring practices. As they tried to assess adverse impacts, the following question arose: “Do we lower our standards to try to get to a certain place? The potential for not getting this right is really big.” Assessing hiring procedures also revealed how the bureaucracy involved might prove inaccessible to low-income people and people of color:

Turns out, just to get your foot in the door, you have to go online, but you also have to go up to San Jose and take a test. This takes a half-day of your life. Takes over \$100 to take the test. That’s a lot of money.

Some proposed solutions included relocating the testing to Salinas and investing in scholarship money for people who couldn’t afford the test fee. Some participants talked about recruiting in non-traditional places, while others dismissed the idea. Similar discussions about the racial and class composition of the city’s workforce took place among representatives from other departments as they looked at the impact of seemingly race-neutral recruitment and retention practices.

Participants observed that job descriptions are so specific that they could rule out candidates who could potentially be really good. “We need to be flexible where we can.” They discussed reaching out to high schools and community colleges.

In response, a city leader shared, “These families are paying our salaries; it is our responsibility to meet them where they are at and provide services. This is really about the connection between the city and the community’s needs.”

Business as usual should not mean that the parameters for doing the work are inviolable. As the activity went on, a city leader commented that “evidence based practice is oftentimes rooted in fear.” As a city leader asserted:

Execution of our intentions is how we will be judged.

This is the delicate part here. That’s why everyone here is interested in the tools and what we need to make sure this is successful. We’re namely risk-averse and this is very risky. We have to go beyond our comfort zones.



Yohara Ayala, 20

Program Coordinator for La Colectiva de Mujeres and Xinachtli (a woman’s rites of passage curriculum)

I was born here in Salinas. My mom raised me. My mom was a single mom and a workaholic. She worked two jobs to support us and went to school full time. That really affected what I did and what I chose to do throughout my life.

I ended up being a fifth year [in high school] and got pregnant, and I went through all of these issues. Then I got an internship through Health Career Connections (HCC) in the program Academy College for Excellence (ACE) and met John Pineda. John was an ambassador there. About a year after high school he was like, “Oh you graduated from high school, you should do this internship.” I got the internship and really fell in love with the work.

We went through Xinachtli (a woman’s right of passage ceremony based on indigenous teachings), and half way through Xinachtli I broke down. We were doing the ‘shield’ [exercise], and I realized that I didn’t put anything on the inside; it was like there was no shield in the inside—only on the outside. So once I got through those barriers I felt completely breakable. After my internship finished Shi Cota of Colectiva de Mujeres told me that there was an opportunity for me to get hired with her collective.

At the GRE training I felt like I did a lot of networking and made connections. There were a lot of things brought up that I had not thought about. I remember that one of the goals of working with the city is to bring the community that lives in the east side to city meetings so that they can get involved. If they are not there and we [community advocates] disappear then what connection are they going to have?

I think GRE can work but we need to bring the people from the east side that are actually struggling and who have actually had their kids murdered and say ‘this is what I need’. Healing work is important to GRE because you need to heal. You can’t be all messed up inside and try to heal the community. You can front all day, but it is not going to work.

City leaders expressed their anxieties and said, “This is a stressed out workforce. We have so much on our plate; it feels like there’s too much. Does the community know that?” Another explained, “There’s always a binary: City vs. Community. Where can we bridge this gap?” “There has to be a realistic acceptance of what we may not be able to do. This has to be partnership: we can’t fix every problem.”

To this last point, one of the participants responded:

This has become our default. I don’t subscribe to this default. We have an \$80 million dollar budget. We’ll have more reasons why we can’t. What is it that we can do? This is a really different conversation for us.

Before leaving, many community advocates shared their closing reflections:

It’s been a lot of work over the years. As a resident who has suffered depression from the system, it’s mindboggling to see the opportunity in front of us. We have to continue driving this bus and see how far we can take it.

If you want to invite people in, you have to start together. One group cannot start the agenda and then reach out to everyone else. You have to craft the agenda together keeping the needs of the most vulnerable front and center.

COMING TOGETHER: LAST DAY OF TRAINING

Anticipation ran high as one hundred city staff and community advocates entered the room for their final day of training. As people arrived, each received a nametag with their seat assignment. Every table hosted a mix of professions, power, and relationships.

The days before, participants had asked about the blank Friday agenda in their manuals: “Why is there nothing on here?” “Does this mean we’re not sure about Friday yet?” These nervous questions were to be expected, as everyone prepared to hold an honest and open dialogue on applying a race conscious lens across city and power divides. The

training team assured them that the blank page represented an agenda that would be shaped by the preceding days, and thus couldn’t be predetermined.

Tello and Sen led the participants through a four-part agenda drawn from the framework of Four Stages to Transformational Healing. Immediately everyone dove into the first stage, “Acknowledgement.” In twos and threes, participants asked each other, “Who are you?” repeating the question successively until the answers started to get down to depths of meaning and vulnerability.

Afterwards, many reflected on the exercise:

- “It’s not our positions that are connecting us or will connect us, it’s our stories. That’s what I find most interesting.”
- “It’s funny how parameters are set that we begin to act out in certain ways. This experience came to humanize us—we are no longer just a community member or system personnel.”
- “We started from the role then to our passions. Good to see things viewed from the hearts rather than just our roles that bring us here.”

Participants then explored the second stage, “Understanding”: What do I need in order for us to move forward in a good collective way? Unlocking this question, the training team probed further, asking each participant to contemplate what specific thing they need to do, what they need from others, and what things might create resistance or make working together difficult. They discussed hearing and healing hurt, “We have to let some anger be expressed. Dialogue in a different way.” “In many cases we don’t know the hurt we’re causing. There’s no method in the system to hear that.” A participant grounded the conversation within the systemic equity frame for the training:

There’s been a lot of breakthrough on an interpersonal level. That’s beautiful. While we need to have these breakthroughs, we also need to understand the structural barriers that are facing this community. Inequitable policies and practices are impacting people differently.

Under the third stage of “Integration,” the group discovered what they might do together. They brought out solid and thoughtful ideas: changing the felony policy on graffiti, accessible communications, and creating a youth advisory group. The REIA tool was often mentioned. Someone made the suggestion to use the tool to ensure

that at least one person in every department of the

city is versed in racial equity analysis. The \$8 million COPS grant also came up. “There’s a concern that the outcome of the grant was pre-determined. We want more community involvement in this process, particularly how and where the money can be focused. We should use the REIA model to make determinations.”

During the day, Sen and Tello built in games that helped people learn about each other in non verbal ways and have fun. One game involved getting into pairs and having one person close their eyes while being led around by the other. In the other, the whole group went outdoors and played a ball throwing game. The games gave people a cross-sectorial teamwork experience. “Something about just letting myself fully surrender was beautiful.” “If we did it again, I might take bigger steps.” “When we first started he was going very slowly, as he started to trust me we were walking together as one.”

The day ended with participants pushing in their chairs and forming a large, standing circle, where each participant shared a reflection from the training to conclude the three-day session. They divulged what they had learned at a personal and professional level. Petersen was particularly moved:

None of us wanted to be like this, unfair, inequitable. I saw people deeply pained when they understood that

“Cultivating racially equitable governments require real community partnership, where residents can guide policy goals, share decision-making power and create measures for accountability.”

it wasn’t them, but they are part of something that has been historically inequitable and harmful and unfair. People know each other differently now from this. The web is being woven. I’m setting up a meeting between MILPA and the Mayor.

Many described the last day as the best day. “Both groups together. You can’t work with people until you get to know them.” Manzo details, “The most impactful day was meeting with city staff. It was revealed that we weren’t seeing people as whole people. Hard to realize because in BHC, that’s our work. I was making an exception in regards to city staff. That became apparent to me.”

Similarly, Kristan Lundquist, Community Services Manager, noted “the last day was the highlight of the training.” Petersen remarks on how participants were able to open up in unexpected ways. “I heard people that I work with open their hearts in ways I had never seen.”

In one week, Salinas had come closer to mending the division between residents of color and city government than most could remember in the city’s lengthy history of racial dissonance.

Building a Joint Steering Committee

The trainers emphasized that the multi-day training is meant to serve as a launch for a deeper citywide effort to implement GRE, not simply as a one-time exercise. As such, a steering committee was formed immediately following the November training. Five city staff and five community advocates were selected to craft and move forward with a work plan implementing the Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit. The California Endowment funded National Compadres Network and Race Forward to provide coaching to the steering committee. Gary Petersen and Carmen Gil were selected to lead the group. Shortly after the training, Gil accepted a position at the Monterey County Health Department, leading their Health in All Policies (HiAP) work. Andrea Manzo moved into the Hub Manager position and assumed the co-lead role in the committee. Meeting two times a month, their initial goal was to develop a plan by the end of March 2015.

Starting with a long list of priorities, the committee found it hard to narrow down a goal. Primarily, they wanted a 6-8 month work-plan and to set tangible benchmarks. “It initially felt like we weren’t getting much traction, spinning our wheels, until Rinku and Jerry got more involved,” remarked Kristin Lundquist, Salinas’ Community Services

Manager and member of the steering committee. While there was a lot of motivation, there was not a lot of practice in coming together as a multi-racial city-community collaborative. Many conflicts surfaced, with Manzo noting, “It’s tough for people to try to see from another perspective.” Logistical problems caused scheduling and other delays, and the group was often caught in a circular dynamic of leaving key decisions unmade or revisiting old decisions.

One issue that arose was with Gary Petersen, who is White, playing a lead role from the government. Manzo explains that some took issue with a White man leading the steering committee, but describes his assets. “Well, Gary understood what we were trying to do.” She said. “Also Gary had power, bringing relationships with the city manager, department heads. Whoever is leading the committee needs to have credibility with community and be engaged with community, someone who is always trying to find ways to work with community members.” She adds, “It would be great to have a person of color leading [who] also has power within the city. This is clearly something we need to work on.”

The polarized relationships between City staff and residents, which the training had eased greatly, resurfaced at the Steering Committee table. On the first anniversary of the police shootings, advocates and residents conducted new protests that included calling out the Police Chief and the Mayor. This generated a great deal of tension within the committee. Some committee members were part of organizations involved in these protests, although not individually present themselves, and there was a question of whether a city-owned space had been used to prepare for the protests.

Manzo clarifies:

There was a misunderstanding that [someone] was letting folks use a community art space to make posters. It is important to note that this space is city property and is leased out to the group. City staff, specifically those from the police department, were hurt that folks they were sitting across the table with at the GRE training were now protesting against police officers. They felt they were trying to work together with community members on advancing racial equity work but were offended that some were against them at that moment.

When Police Commander Gomez had originally joined the committee, he brought deliberate awareness around his position within the department. “I attended these meetings in plain clothes. It took time for people to see me as a person. The key had been to get to know people and have them get to know me.”

But as the conflict within the committee grew, Gomez felt increasingly disrespected and did not attend the committee meeting the day after the anniversary protests. Kristin Lundquist, Salinas’ Community Services Manager and member of the steering committee, remembered, “It was a tough meeting. Commander Gomez wasn’t there that day and community advocates were having a hard time deciding what to do.” Boycotting the meeting, Gomez recalls thinking “I don’t need to do this, if you are against me.” Still, he remained willing to talk.

BHC East Salinas received criticism from various community-based organizations for continuing to engage in this

“Police Commander Gomez recalls thinking ‘I don’t need to do this, if you are against me.’ Still, he remained willing to talk.”

process. “Now that we’re working with the city, does that mean we have no voice to commemorate what happened?” This was countered by various city staff, “I’m doing work for nothing when I see people picketing us while trying to work together.” As Manzo highlights, “there’s an assumption that once you go to a training and sit at the same table that we’re all on the same page. It takes more time. Continuing to be in relationship and work together.”

The steering committee held an intense conversation. City staff felt they were once again being seen as enemies. BHC members felt offended that the city would think that because they were working together that the community had to be silent. Tello mediated a conversation about expectations from each group and what they thought was being agreed to by coming to the table.

Tello then mediated and led a healthy discussion within the committee. Membership changed, and people who were willing to collaborate joined. Each member was required to commit to work together. “We reached a place where we were trying to understand that the city can’t expect people not to voice their concerns, and also not to expect the city to not feel anything.” Committee members’ willingness to sustain honest engagement, even if they sometimes had to take a break from the effort, the trust they had built throughout the process, and their ability to ask for help all enabled a successful outcome.

Implementation and Outcomes

After moving through some initial difficulties with Sen's and Tello's in-person guidance, the steering committee was reinvigorated. The committee developed a workplan that the city and community reviewed and approved by mid-2015. The work-plan is meant to be a roadmap, a) for how the city would communicate the content and purpose of the healing-informed GRE work, b) to continue to deepen leadership capacity within all departments, and c) to begin applying racial equity concepts into city policies and budgeting priorities. With an overarching goal spelled out, 'To have the city staff and community engage with each other,' this plan has five strategic focus areas:

1. Tell the Salinas story.
2. Develop ongoing city trainings.
3. Develop ongoing community trainings.
4. Expand community engagement .
5. Conduct or begin actual new projects, policies or practices.

An integral piece of the last strategic area is the approval of an Alisal Vibrancy Plan, which would work with local business owners and other community stakeholders to identify and implement improvements in an Economic Opportunity Area called Alisal Marketplace. BHC's

previous work with the Economic Development Element of the city's General Plan made this possible. Manzo speaks to the impact of the advancements made within economic development:

One person in a community-based organization got very emotional when one of the new economic development policies got passed. The city approved to set aside \$250,000 to create an Alisal vibrancy plan. They said, 'I have been doing this work for a long time; I have never seen this type of change move forward, and it was because of the work of BHC.' But for us at BHC, GRE is the work that we are doing. When that person said that, they're referring to BHC's ability to work with local government to advance policies using the racial equity lens.

Establishing an effective community-policing model is another goal of community engagement. Chief McMillin has taken this to heart, forging a new working relationship with MILPA, one of the main organizers of the police accountability movement, to provide a day-long community-informed police officer orientation. The goal of the training is for these community advocates to re-orient officers to perceive Salinas through a more holistic and humanizing lens. Chief McMillin explains how a typical

police-training day often involves describing the criminal aspects of the city where officers will need to patrol and how this can shape their worldview of the community they are working within:

In large part the Police Training Officer will drive new recruits around, and say ok here is this shopping plaza, this is where you will get shoplifters, burglars, vehicle accidents and that is how you start to look at Northridge mall.

In Acosta plaza, officers will see it as the most violent place in the city in Salinas, and while it does have the most violent crime incidents, I could choose to frame it solely as a site of gang members, or I could show that there are so many 20-year plus community members, who are incredible people, who have nothing to do with gangs.

So with MILPA I wanted a group that could give my officers a different tour of Salinas, I want them to see Salinas through their lens. This plaza, this market, a packing shed, and what it is like to live and work here day to day.

Ultimately Chief McMillin's goal is to shift the worldview of his officers, so that when his department goes to work they don't see a place of criminals, but a city with many good people who don't want to be affected by crime:

I want my guys to sit down with MILPA because I want them to see community as people who love, work, and play together. I think this is the first legit thing that came out of the GRE thing. A main thing about the GRE is if you don't get to know your community you're selling yourself short. Let's start valuing relationships and show progress.

He recognizes the significance of healing in his line of work, underscoring the suffering his staff experience and the baggage many bring with them to the job:

What I know needs to change is the view that cops have. This is not your laboratory; this is not the army. They are not the enemy; it's not us vs. them. Often, cops have come to me and said that they feel like they are in a low-level war, always going from bad guy to bad guy.



John Pineda of MILPA and Chief of Police Kelly McMillin at the November GRE training, seeding the possibility for future working conversations. (Jacki Cruz, Vice President, Hartnell College Foundation, center).

Other examples of racial equity in practice include Public Works making a commitment to repair sidewalks on Laurel Street in Alisal. There's also a new protocol on lighting, which takes a cue from a Seattle GRE-based strategy to move from a complaint-based system to a needs-based system. Jose Arreola, Community Safety Division Administrator and Director of CASP, mentioned within the steering committee that they've created a whole new job description with their HR department around qualifications for new hires. Previously, requirements included a college degree "and now it's around credits and experience."

Slowly but surely, people are feeling changes throughout Salinas. Gil observes, "I see people who couldn't even sit with law enforcement now working with them directly, helping to inform their hiring practices, and collaborating on projects." She reports that the same has happened with the police department, "moving from a place where they see community members as potential critics of their system, to seeing them as a people who can help them do their work." Manzo continues, "Through our GRE model, we have shifted the way relationships are forged. We are changing what's possible. This GRE process starts to diminish the us vs. them dynamic." Sen adds that key to unity is an agreement on what actually needs to get done, and a willingness to be accountable to each other.

Manzo knows that this is a step-by-step process. "Some have been so disillusioned with government in the past they are reluctant to forge relationships. These folks are in the process of digesting it and considering." She mentions that she's developed relationships across the city, from engineering to the police department. These relationships have significantly helped to advance community projects. One of these includes a working relationship with Commander Gomez. He reflects, "A couple of years ago, I never would have thought that this is how it would be now. I'm glad that we all, not just police, are going through this together to resolve these issues and do this healing."

City manager Corpuz shares that in a recent discussion with the Mayor, "he referred to it as diversity, and I said no, this is different. This is a new framework. We are making a shift."

The road ahead involves bringing more people into alignment around healing-informed GRE as an approach to systems-change. At the end of 2015 Corpuz shared that in a recent discussion with the Mayor, "he referred to it as diversity, and I said no, this is different. This is a new framework. We are making a shift." He goes on to say that, "We need to help community operationalize the equity lens." He emphasizes engaging community in ways that they can participate and be well-informed of pressing matters. "Many have never seen a budget. Do they know we have \$80 million to spend? They need to know what is available. We have a duty to get out there to them; we are a public agency."

Manzo talks about the shift she's seen in some of the community based organizations:

They now understand that GRE is a shared language they can use to achieve policy and systems change. In the beginning, groups had a hard time with the words GRE or saying I'm using this lens. They would say 'this is my reality, I live this every day.' But now they say that we need a shared language in order to do systemic change...Haven't been able to put a name to what they were actually doing until now.



Chief McMillin (left), Andrea Manzo (center), sitting on a panel at the Assembly Select Hearing on the Status of Boys & Men of Color in California, held in Salinas, on June 26, 2015

Changes are being felt at the county level as well. Ray Corpuz, Lauren Padilla-Valverde, Gary Petersen, and Carmen Gil presented at the GRE conference in Seattle June 11, 2015, sharing the process, challenges, and opportunities of the Healing Informed GRE work in Salinas. That same month, Monterey County announced the dismantling of the Monterey County Joint Gang Task Force, effective July 1. It was the second largest gang task force in California. This is part of a Salinas Police Department overhaul, where severe budget deficits during the recession led to the dismantling of all special assignment units. However, with the passing in November 2014 of general services tax Measure G, Chief McMillin took this personnel challenge as an opportunity -- design a new force that holds racial equity as a central principle:

We knew Measure G had passed and money was going to be coming in, so we took that as opportunity to say we need to fix the crisis in patrol, but also create the police department of the future. So we decided to tear the department down to the basics, but when we rebuild it we will build the department of the future because I'm

not convinced it's suitable. And this is where the GRE work comes in.

In response to the GRE process, Chief McMillin has also begun laboring to train his entire police force, including civilian staff, around racial equity and implicit bias through a specialized organization, Fair and Impartial Policing. He describes the reasoning behind employing a training outfit that is police specific:

If you don't approach it right you can shut cops out, it's such a sensitive conversation. A lot about our work people don't understand— so many misconceptions. So when it comes to training, if you throw police in a room, even with other city employees, who don't understand our world and what we experience, the cops will sit in the back, listen and leave. We know we need trainers who are specifically aware around the experiences of policing.

McMillin was concerned about perceptions that he might be shielding his officers from adequate racial equity

“McMillin was concerned of perceptions that he might be shielding his officers from adequate racial equity training. So he asked Sen and other partners to review the curricula to make sure it satisfied the standards upheld within the rest of the process.”

training. So he asked Sen and other partners to review the curricula to make sure it satisfied the standards upheld within the rest of the process. The department-wide training received approval and will commence in Fall 2016.

Indeed impacts resulting from the GRE process have reached beyond the city alone. Manzo affirms how GRE is changing the relationship between BHC and greater Monterey County:

BHC is starting to be seen as the anchor of the GRE work. The county sees that community and city staff are starting to do things together. Cities within the county are looking to Salinas to figure out how to bring it to their area.

Since 2013 a number of Monterey County representatives had been exposed to the potential of GRE through various convenings. In 2013 and 2014 different county officials attended the Local Government Commission conference, which held a GRE session, the Governing for Racial Equity Conference in Seattle and Race Forward's Facing Race National Conference, held in Dallas. Each time, county representatives came back home with expressed interest in furthering racial equity practices in their local government.

BHC was an integral partner in supporting some of these leaders to learn more about GRE's potential, all as part of a larger strategy to build leadership for GRE throughout the area. This sustained interest led to a dinner between Tello, Sen, Padilla-Valverde, a few community advocates and Monterey County government officials to discuss the healing-informed GRE work during the November 2014 week of training launch. It was always the intention of the BHC to support the County in developing their own champions for GRE and similar health and racial equity initiatives. During this meeting, the interest on the side of county officials was palpable. Afterwards, Assistant County Administrative Officer Manny González reached out to Gil and the City of Salinas to say they were interested in engaging in a conversation.

The county held an internal meeting on January 14, 2016, introducing healing-informed GRE to the Board of Supervisors, the District Attorney, Sherriff, and other department heads. Jerry Tello and Rinku Sen led this half-day meeting. “The county wants to make sure what they do is consistent. They know that there are many approaches to GRE and they want to make sure that they are using a consistent approach across the county,” adds Manzo, referring to the incorporation of racial equity concepts and transformational healing.

Gil, now staff at the Monterey County Public Health Department, describes three initiatives that the county has started during this GRE process that are using a racial equity lens:

1. Gang violence reduction
2. Early childhood development
3. Health and wellness policies

“In terms of GRE, we think this is an important part of our future, it contributes to realizing economic vibrancy. If we keep doing things the way we’ve been doing, we will keep having inequity, and we will not have a strong workforce,” explained Krista Hanni, Program Manager of the Planning, Evaluation and Policy unit of the Monterey County Health Department. Though the process is in its nascent stage, the county is exploring the development of an advisory committee with membership and leadership featuring those who have been involved in gang activity.

Padilla-Valverde continues to think strategically about building systems capacity for GRE and has been working with local philanthropy. In early December 2015, Tello and Sen, along with Lori Villarosa of Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE), conducted a training for eight local Monterey funders, including United Way and Monterey

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Peninsula Foundation to develop shared language on racial equity concepts and to incorporate racial equity in grant making for impact. Padilla-Valverde continues to work with the local philanthropic community and sees tremendous potential and leadership moving forward.

The work of fully operationalizing racial healing and racial equity in the city is far from over, yet positive outcomes have already begun to surface. Many people, both city staffers and community advocates, are proud to be part of this new movement to bring their city together for a more just and prosperous future.

Lessons Learned

1. SUPPORT COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND COLLECTIVE HEALING

Cultivating racially equitable governments requires real community partnership, where residents can guide policy goals, share decision-making power and create measures for accountability. Only a mature infrastructure of community-based organizations can provide the leadership and social network necessary for residents to partner in institutional transformation.

Community organizations develop local leaders with key skillsets such as policy analysis, direct action, negotiation, decision-making, policy assessment, work planning, and resident engagement – all needed to develop a racially equitable framework for governing. Community based organizations also build trust between residents, which helps expand participation beyond the principal organizers. Expecting to develop this type of community infrastructure at the same time that new government processes are developed will prove overwhelming. Foundations, city governments, and individuals should invest in community organizations early and often as part of the long view, whether or not the local government has moved toward racial equity.

In Salinas, the rich history of farmworker organizing paired with steady support from The California Endowment through the BHC network meant community-organizing infrastructure was already strong in Salinas. These community entities had been exposing residents to processes demanding structural change through healing circles before the trainings ever arrived in the city. The same BHC-connected leadership came together when the opportunity to meet with the City Manager, Chief of Police and head of Public Works presented itself. The leadership already in place in Salinas allowed the Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) initiative to get off the ground, and it is this network of engaged residents that lends momentum.

2. BALANCE RACIAL HEALING AND SYSTEMIC EQUITY

People often see racial healing and systems change as two distinct processes that run parallel or even compete with one another. In our experience, however, they are mutually reinforcing.

Most people have real fears around discussing race, let alone instituting entire new program goals around it.

“It is important for both city staff and residents to realize racial inequity accumulates in all types of government services whether it’s policing or budgeting.”

Emotionally healing spaces where people can face that fear or trauma and feel safe coming back is ground zero. City government representatives, who are often White, need support to differentiate between the systems driving negative racial impacts and the people who run them, so that they move beyond individual guilt and actually learn. Communities of color, who often hold historical trauma from decades of racially unjust government policies, need to have that truth recognized if we are going to move forward together.

Trainers must wield the emotional intelligence to provide healing spaces before people will be able to engage in thinking through systems change. Focusing too much on the system without any healing leads to scarred relationships between the actual people carrying out the work. Conflict will eventually arise and opportunities to derail the work will be infinite.

However, individual healing is not the only end goal, and healing individuals cannot stand in for improving the institutions that impact the material conditions of communities of color in our cities. Ensuring city staff and community residents understand how systemic racism functions and tangible ways to mitigate that harm or proactively create equity is how people will build real trust in democracy and government. Improvements in our schools, in interactions with police, in the quality of affordable housing are also forms of healing, and without tangible change, cynicism and further mistrust grow.

3. ENGAGE GOVERNMENT STAFF AT EVERY LEVEL

Identifying city leaders with institutional power and resources accelerates the uptake of racial equity in government and deepens its likelihood of success. City government leaders hold key relationships and decision-making power, so they can often move resources, reach across departments or organizations and eventually bring along other colleagues and people they supervise.

As City Manager, Ray Corpuz had the power to mandate that his staff attend the GRE training on grounds that racial equity is a basic operational issue, a question of how to provide good service. The power to make that decision meant the process did not get mired in electoral politics. Gary Petersen, as Director of Public Works, leveraged his position to recruit fellow directors into the process who otherwise might have been disengaged or wary.

However, individual leaders cannot themselves operationalize racial equity. It is the line staff who write tickets, draw up economic development plans or reach out to local residents and who will ultimately implement racial equity in everyday practice. Engaging programmatic staff of all levels with training, on going activities and opportunities for practice will ensure the promise of GRE actually materializes. The more staff who attend the training, discuss systemic racism in the office, and actually practice with racial equity tools, the less anxiety in government culture as a whole.

Finally, it is important to involve a diversity of departments. People may want to focus on the Police Department first, but the reality is that racial inequity also plays out in decisions such as which neighborhoods receive adequate street lighting or safe sidewalks. It is important for both city staff and residents to realize racial inequity accumulates in all types of government services, whether it’s policing or budgeting. Success depends on ensuring represen-

tation from all departments, and it is important that this demand come from within and outside the institution.

Part of the greatest challenge for working groups is right-sizing the various projects that make up their work plan. People need projects of different sizes that will have meaningful impact. Smaller projects lend knowledge, practice and comfort in relationships. Larger projects ensure that important aspects of the city government don't go unscrutinized. These are the kind of wins that will be critical to preserving hope and energy that real transformation in government is possible. Build from small to large and keeping looping back between achievable and aspirational.

4. BUILD THE "WE" WITH SHARED LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE

The "Us vs. Them" dynamic that often solidifies between government institutions, and communities of color is hard to overcome and takes time. The best first step in bridging disparate groups is sharing a positive experience around race, engaging in an on going interactive process and working towards a common goal. Part of developing that shared goal is to get on the same page about what the problem is and how to solve it. To do that you need common language and concepts.

All stakeholders need to agree on what racism is and how it operates. Understanding racism as largely systemic, implicit and unconscious instead of only individual, overt, and intentional, allows participants to focus on what really shapes the conditions of people's lives and avoids the paralysis of individual guilt. The trainings in Salinas are designed to humanize, not divide. They aim to be real about racism (the systemic kind) while providing immediate ways participants can practice enacting racial equity in their workplace.

Second, city staff and community leaders need on going, structured opportunities to continue developing relationships and taking action together. The Salinas Steering Committee provided a space for individuals from distinct institutional and cultural perspectives to practice honesty, respect and overcoming racial conflict amidst the pressure of getting real work done.

Doing the work of racial justice also means the basics – work planning, good project design, and deadlines. In a heightened emotional and political context, basic logistical problems can quickly escalate to inherent value judgments. It is useful to have a champion from both the city and community who will be responsible for keeping the group motivated and on track. Having an outside mediator who is as adept at emotional processing as thinking through systems change can be a crucial asset when inevitable conflict arises. Ultimately, steering committees or working groups are critical transitional bodies for the jump between training to a comprehensive strategy. They will be the people to maintain hope that the process is possible and that tangible impacts emerge.

It is paramount that working groups receive the support they need to keep the momentum going. It is best to budget for outside support, such as consultants, who can advise on goal setting, right-sizing, and work plans, in addition to providing accountability for deadlines.

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