

MONTEREY COUNTY: FROM DISENFRANCHISEMENT TO VOICE, POWER, AND PARTICIPATION



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Power

By Jesús Valenzuela,
Rosa González,
& Juell Stewart

This report was authored by Race Forward in collaboration
with our community partners.

Community Summary

A MOVEMENT IS GAINING MOMENTUM IN SALINAS, CALIFORNIA. In the midst of community trauma brought about by decades of institutional and structural racism, the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) East Salinas Collaborative—one of 14 sites participating in The California Endowment’s 10-year, \$1 billion initiative to address local health inequities across the state—took on the challenging yet essential work of redefining partnership and shifting the paradigm of what a true community-driven collaboration between government, community organizations and philanthropy looks like.

In 2017, Race Forward released [Building the We: Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity](#), which highlighted the ongoing work leaders from across different sectors were doing to address mounting racial and economic tensions in Salinas. With the foundation set in this initial phase, community leaders and government agencies were able to have discourse grounded in racial healing, setting the groundwork for the ongoing local racial equity movement. The city committed to implementing a joint decision-making process led by both community members and city government. Going through the collaborative decision-making process led to deeper racial justice considerations throughout some city agencies like Public Works and the Community Development department. However, residents knew this was only the beginning of the deep transformative work that needed to be done to address community needs.

In the two years following the release of *Building the We*, the BHC Collaborative learned that closing racial equity gaps will take an ecosystem approach that works across sectors for better alignment, trust-building and program implementation. This strategic shift was intentionally designed to elevate and center community power. Toward a Racially Equitable Monterey County (TREMCC), established an ecosystem of five distinct sectors: **Resident Leaders, Philanthropy, Community Organizers, Local Government, and Facilitative Leaders.** Each sector has their own role to play in advancing racial justice, and offers unique insight into building a strategy to close racial gaps and improve outcomes for everyone.

Through this process, collaborative partners have identified three essential elements of systems change:

- **Community Accountability**, which holds local institutions accountable for making progress with tools like Racial Equity Impact Assessments and processes like participatory budgeting to ensure that government leaders are held to a standard of progress instead of merely paying lip service to racial equity goals;
- **Culture Shift**, which calls for greater transparency and vulnerability from institutional partners, and which centers the values, needs and cultural diversity of the community, and;
- **Authentic Partnership for Real Solutions**, in which institutional partners are grounded in the root causes of the challenges that community members face, in order to authentically engage in the collaborative development of solutions.

Community organizers are investing in community power through training and support to Resident Leaders to go beyond participating in community meetings to being involved stakeholders with the opportunity to not only sit at the table with institutional leaders, but to truly engage in meaningful conversations that influence policy decisions while building enough community power to be taken seriously.

It should be noted that much of this work came as a result of four officer-involved shootings in 2014 that sparked major protests in Salinas. The shooting of Carlos Mejia on May 20th was caught on video and quickly circulated. It prompted protests where residents shut down an intersection and called for justice.

The history of Salinas and Monterey County is filled with examples of state sanctioned violence, however these four shootings were met with the community organizing strategies that allowed for negotiations to begin with the City of Salinas and Building Healthy Communities (for more information, see [Building the We](#)).

In 2015 the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) conducted a series of meetings with community members to gather the information that would later be published in a 2016 report detailing 116 recommendations for better policing practices. In the years that followed the COPS office was closed by the Trump administration and Salinas PD has self reported that they have completed the majority of the recommendations.

In 2016 the City of Salinas continued with racial equity training for its staff and have had particular resistance from the Salinas PD. The subsequent trainings did not have a mix of city staff and community, which was a gap. These trainings did not go well and there has not been any specific training for city staff since then. The City joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) cohort in 2017 instead.

Moreover, another resident of East Salinas was killed by police in 2019. Brenda Mendoza, 20 years old, was struggling with a mental health crisis and housing instability when she was

shot after a 4-hour episode with police. Her tragic death is a testament to the need for greater commitment and collaboration across multiple systems (city and county in this case) to rethink fundamental approaches to health and safety. While police accountability is not a major focus of the local work, the police department is the largest recipient of the city's budget.

Community organizing efforts have focused on implementing racial equity policies and practices in departments that serve youth and revitalize the community, prompting many to ask, "how are we defining public safety? Are community values reflected in how safety is being defined and resourced in our region?"

This report explores key questions that can be used to inform racial equity efforts in other communities across the country. What does it take to engage in authentic collaboration? How do government agencies repair the harms they've exacerbated in Black and Brown communities to build a new path towards the future? *Monterey County: From Disenfranchisement to Voice, Power and Participation* offers lessons from the ongoing process in Salinas, and shows one community's model for contending with historical disinvestment and inequities perpetuated by government systems and other institutional players.

M O N T E R E Y C O U N T Y : FROM DISENFRANCHISEMENT TO VOICE, POWER, AND PARTICIPATION

Building the We 2.0

AUTHORED BY RACE FORWARD IN COLLABORATION WITH OUR
COMMUNITY PARTNERS.



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THIS REPORT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROSITY OF
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“I choose this ‘work’ because of the love and respect I have for my family and community lived experiences of struggle, systemic oppression and resiliency. I refuse to accept that my daughter’s future is predetermined by her gender and color of her skin. I want to leave a legacy of love, dignity, respect and equity for all.”

—**Alma Cervantes**
BHC Educational Equity Organizer



“I do this work because I believe we all are responsible for the world around us and any changes we make around us no matter how small can make a big difference and create a better world. I have always felt the responsibility to leave a better world than the one I was handed. I want my life to matter, leave a legacy for my kids and grandkids, that someone knows I existed and have the satisfaction of knowing I did my best to change the world around me.”

—**María Elena Manzo**
Organizer of Mujeres en Acción and COPA organizer



“I will not let another generation experience racial injustices anymore. I believe the answers to developing solutions to improve the uneven development in the system should be made by those directly impacted!!!“

—**George Villa**
MILPA



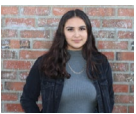
“I choose this work because it fulfills my life’s purpose. To address the social ills that are prevalent in my community, from a lived experience perspective that gets to the heart of root causes while grasping a full understanding that we are working towards the eradication of institutional and systemic racism, is a journey I am so honored to be on.”

—**Rosemary Soto**
Administrative Analyst at the County of Monterey



“Escogí este trabajo por la injusticia social que EXISTE en nuestra comunidad con la visión de tener equidad racial en todo aspecto del ser humano.”

—**Gabriela Silva**
Parent Leader of Padres Unidos



“Escogí este trabajo por la necesidad de la gente. Ser la voz de aquellos que no pueden y ser la próxima generación que haga el cambio.”

—**Gaby González**
Youth Leader of La Cosecha



“... white supremacy and systemic racism destroy our humanity and our planet; removing us from our natural state as human beings, from our interconnectedness to self, to one another and to the planet. I choose this work because it is our generation’s responsibility to cultivate consciousness, healing and restoration. To prepare the next generation to continue to realize that vision of a restorative and healing world for all of us.”

—**Lauren Padilla-Valverde**
Senior Program Manager at The California Endowment



“I am a descendant of slavery; this work chose me. I am committed to Black & Brown unity and building community power for a healthy education environment.”

—**Rosalyn C.**
BHC Parent & Youth Organizer

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CONTEXT: Generations of Racialized Exploitation and Oppression

“My generation can look to our own lived experience to help us understand that the Pete Wilson anti-immigrant legislation, anti-Affirmative Action, English Only legislation, and the tough on crime Clinton 90s were used to exacerbate disenfranchisement of the working class in a region with a median income that comes nowhere near cost of living.”

—Luis Juarez
Artistic Director, Baktun 12

The World’s Salad Bowl

LIVING IN CALIFORNIA’S SALINAS VALLEY, one of the nation’s largest engines for agricultural production, means communities of color enduring racial inequities in education, incarceration, health care, income and wealth, home ownership, land use policy, and access to decision-making power. With an economy that has long been dependent on labor from primarily migrant farmworkers,¹ communities of color and low-income families have been historically excluded and socially marginalized from the decisions that most impact them and their chances at economic and social mobility.

In response to extreme exploitation and marginalization, the Salinas Valley has a long history of farm labor organizing. In 1934, the country’s bloodiest labor dispute came to a head when Filipino lettuce workers sought improved working conditions and instead were met with brutal repression. In the 1960’s and 70’s the United Farmworkers Union was formed and carried out some of its most notable organizing efforts in the Salinas Valley to put an end to the use of the back-breaking short-handled hoe and to raise awareness of the plight of the Filipino and Mexican workers growing food for the nation and the world in inhumane conditions. Again, organizing efforts were met with violent state-sanctioned repression.

¹Chinese laborers, African-American farmers from the South, farmers from Oklahoma and Arkansas displaced by the Dust Bowl, and then primarily Mexican and Central American laborers

While unions are active to this day protecting workers within the agricultural and service industries in the region, the movement for the rights of farm laborers has never quite recovered. Moreover, community organizing is limited, leaving working families without a strong voice to combat low wages, high rents, and lack of sufficient investments in education and other services that promote economic mobility.

The disinvestment in education began during the 1970's when California's Proposition 13 placed a cap on allocating local property tax revenue to social services and took hold in the 1980s and 90's at the same time that the Salinas Valley was losing factory jobs that had served to provide some economic mobility for farmworkers, many of whom had been brought from Mexico to work in the fields through the Bracero program (see Appendix 1 for more history of the Bracero program) established during World War II. While education funding waned, a "get tough on crime" sentiment that dominated politics rapidly expanded the prison industry in California. This confluence of job loss and lack of educational opportunities combined with a push towards criminalization, particularly of Black and Brown men, had a devastating impact on the predominantly Mexican and Chican@ communities of the Salinas Valley. During the 1990's Salinas became infamous for high homicide rates and a gang culture that seemed to fill the void left by shrinking educational and economic opportunity, and by the violent repression against People of Color-led labor organizing and civil rights movement building. Notably, many of those at the forefront of current efforts to highlight and address racial inequity in Salinas and Monterey County are the children and grandchildren of farm laborers from the Bracero era and/or were impacted by the disproportionate criminalization of Black and Brown communities in the area.

Healing-Informed Approach to Organizing and Movement Building

"Healing often gets brought in as a topic without understanding that it entails deep social emotional work. It requires love, truth telling, and embracing an ever evolving framework and set of practices, that is then integrated into one's life. For us at MILPA healing has become a conduit for building organizational infrastructure, sharing somatic practices, and formulating a racial equity analysis that is about addressing community power through civic engagement while addressing structural racism..."

—Juan Gomez

Co-Founder and Executive Director of MILPA

The BHC Collaborative² in Salinas has grappled with the question of how to approach organizing in East Salinas and Monterey County. What models of organizing most resonate within local communities? What are the barriers to community voice and power that need

² Alisal Center for the Fine Arts • Building Healthy Communities • Baktun12 • CCA (Center for Community Advocacy) • Californians for Pesticide Reform • CHISPA • COPA • La Cosecha • Ciclovistas • CPTED • Facilitating Power • MILPA • Mujeres en Acción • Monterey Bay Central Labor Council • Padres Unidos • Resident Leadership Academy for Monterey County

to be acknowledged and addressed? With so many generations of disenfranchisement as well as criminalization of youth and undocumented families, residents of East Salinas often feel disillusioned with participation, hesitant to put their trust in the possibility of change, or just consumed with economic survival. Conventional organizing models are not always the best approach, and so the BHC hub and its Collaborative partners seek more culturally rooted, healing-informed approaches to resident and youth leadership. In reflecting on their approach to organizing, BHC organizers and partners pay attention to healing (addressing traumas and disconnections while cultivating trust and deepening relationships) as essential to their work with residents and youth, as well as to their work with potential champions within systems like education and local government.

BHC Collaborative partners carry significant strengths and assets when it comes to more culturally relevant approaches to building community voice and power. The Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) commits to organizing with residents for the long-haul and cultivates trust and participation over time through cultural traditions and values. In the densely populated Acosta Plaza neighborhood, CCA began organizing residents with the vision of taking ownership of an acre of underutilized land for the development of a community hub for education and health. The land itself was once the property of the Sanborn family, who owned thousands of acres in what is now East Salinas. Farmworker families organizing to reclaim this piece of land for community stability is in and of itself a step toward healing and reparations. And how CCA approached it also had to be done in a healing-informed way. They knew it would take time to acquire the land and to build the level of trust and alignment within the community to co-create a unified plan for how they wanted to develop it. They started by working with residents to organize events such as:

- *El Día de Niño* to celebrate children and families
- *Las Posadas* to honor Mexican tradition and build neighbor-to-neighbor connections
- *Community Clean-Up* days to take collective responsibility for the neighborhood
- *Zumba* classes in the parking lots to get exercise while raising awareness of the lack of recreational space.

These culturally relevant events have helped residents feel more comfortable being involved, honored the cultural wealth and expertise of the community, and created space for aligning around shared values and priorities. Once the acre of land was acquired and the planning process began, CCA partnered with groups like Baktun12 and First 5 Monterey County to organize creative planning activities including popular theater, folklorico dance, visual art, a mobile health clinic, early childhood development activities, and chances to tour the land and draw out their visions for the land. The Sanborn House project has also been a way to engage local funders as true philanthropic partners who feel accountable to community needs and values. CCA worked to ensure that residents made proposals directly to funders, and through facilitated process, funders have been around the table guided by the values and interests asserted by resident leaders, so as not to approach the project in paternalistic ways that can undermine community voice and power. This is part of the healing and trust-building needed to cultivate an ecosystem of racial equity and community accountability.

Those bearing the brunt of generations of racialized inequity and disenfranchisement in East Salinas and Monterey County are Black and Brown youth and adults targeted by the school-to-prison pipeline. MILPA (Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement) is a grassroots organization by and for previously incarcerated youth and adults. MILPA uses the metaphor of *las tres hermanas* to describe their approach to transformative leadership development, because their leadership framework is reflective of the three crops that are always planted together in a traditional corn field – corn, beans, and squash - they understand that growing leaders take three essential elements:

- Consciousness
- Culture
- Movement Building

These three elements work together in mutually reinforcing ways. Culture and cultural healing specifically is the process of building a relationship towards what's healthy and sacred while, also decolonizing the way we see the world and reclaiming indigenous healing practices that cultivate our interconnected resilience, brilliance and ancestral medicine. Consciousness means learning our true ethnic social histories and origins while also developing a critical analysis of white supremacy and challenging systems of oppression, that uphold the root causes of the injustices people of color continuously face. Movement-building is about creating the braid of intergenerational leadership needed to uplift and organize for strategies that divest funding from punitive carceral systems and instead re-invest those funds into building powerful alternatives to punishment, arrest, harsh sentencing, and incarceration. In this way, healing and sacredness is at the center of all MILPA does and becomes a way of life for MILPA staff, who consistently engage in:

- Political education
- Ceremony
- Healing Circles
- Consensus-building
- Alliance-building and healing with organizations and movements throughout the state and beyond

Focusing on justice reform with a vision of ending mass incarceration is not only essential to achieving racial equity in Monterey County and the state of California, it is a vital part of the healing journeys of men and women reclaiming wholeness in the face of systems designed to separate people from their humanity.

Baktun12, a political performing arts crew that has been telling East Salinas stories since the 1990's, sees healing-informed organizing as reclaiming your own narrative and projecting your voice to speak truth to power. In this way, they amplify the human stories of those often dehumanized in the media. Their play, *A XMAS CAROL, ¡Y QUE!* by Luis 'xago' Juárez, for example, tells the story of a young man seeking vengeance for the death of a friend on

Christmas eve; the audience comes to know the young man's family history, his fears and dreams, while also examining the structural root causes of violence in our communities. Audience members see themselves reflected in the different characters and are moved to share emotional reflections and visions for community transformation in post-show talkbacks. In *La Cortina de la Lechuga*, a short play recently written and directed by Cristal González, B12 creates a window into the stories of Salinas Valley residents struggling with housing insecurity and skyrocketing rents that don't match the low wage jobs that dominate the area. They toured the play in parks and community centers throughout the area facilitating critical dialogue about the issue. The vision of B12's artistic director is to continue a long tradition of storytelling in the Salinas Valley to make visible the people and histories often invisibilized and exploited by extractive industries like agriculture and criminal justice. Chican@ Theater provides a dynamic and cathartic platform for contextualizing the issues Salinas Valley residents face within their historical root causes.

COPA also draws on the power of storytelling to cultivate personal and collective power to address the issues their members face. Organizers and members alike regularly share their personal stories and use them for advocacy purposes. Being a membership organization, COPA is also working to bring health services to the undocumented population. While COPA does not approach healing in a programmatic way such as MILPA, they see power in organizing through a story; that when a member tells their story of not having health insurance due to their immigration status they see that they are not alone and that there is something that can be done through organizing with others. As COPA organizer Maria Elena Manzo puts it, "we don't think of healing as sitting in circle. For us healing comes from realizing that our stories have power. One of our members was interviewed for a video we used at our convention. She is undocumented and in the interview, she spoke about organizing and how thanks to organizing she is no longer afraid of being undocumented. Later when we were discussing the video another member said we should not use her real name to protect her. She said 'no, I want my name to be on there. My name is all I have and I am not afraid anymore.' That to me is healing. To go from being afraid, to finding your power, to using that power to make a change and not being afraid anymore." COPA utilizes this same model in all of their organizing in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito County.

BHC's commitment to healing-informed practice as core to the work of racial equity is reflected in part, by the creation of the position of Lead on Healing-Informed Practice & Organizing, staffed by Laura Tinajero. She works to cultivate the capacity of staff and collaborative partners to integrate National Com(p)adres Network curricula from La Cultura that includes trainings such as *Cara y Corazon* (designed for parents), and *Joven Noble* and *Xinachtli* (designed for young people). Increasingly more staff and collaborative partners are able to include healing practice as part of the leadership development process. Laura facilitates *Joven Noble* at Rancho Cielo's alternative education program for students on probation, collaborating with Luis 'xago' Jaurez of Baktun12 and Gabriela Manzo, BHC Youth Equity Organizer to integrate organizing and advocacy into the curriculum. The *Joven Noble* process, they discovered, was vital to the students readiness to speak out about the neglectful educational conditions they experience on campus and to declare that they deserve better;

that is to say, it was only once students began to heal and to reclaim their humanity that they could name those neglectful conditions and advocate for a change. Padres Unidos initiated some of their parent organizing work by inviting parents to participate in Cara y Corazón, a curriculum that supports parents to connect to the cultural wealth they bring as parents, heal from wounds that inhibit healthy parenting practices, and connect to one another in life-affirming ways. Parent leaders within Padres Unidos are now being trained to facilitate La Cultura Cura curriculum within schools and the community.



The Community Alliance for Racial Equity (CARE)

CALLED THE “VALLEY OF THE WORLD” by author John Steinbeck, California’s Salinas Valley provides food for the nation and the world. In addition to feeding the world, the Salinas Valley has produced community leaders, professional athletes, musicians, educators, and creatives of all kinds. Working families in this region have a long history of enduring hardship and sacrifice to create opportunity despite structural barriers to advancement. And it is the labor of predominantly migrant workers, often indigenous to Mexico and Central America that feeds the world. But the disproportionate impacts of poverty, criminalization, and disinvestment threaten the health and mobility of the region’s Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant community members. For these reasons, the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Initiative³ has established the Community Alliance for Racial Equity (CARE). CARE is made up of community-based organizations⁴ dedicated to activating resident voices and power for the policy and systems changes needed to close persistent racial equity gaps.

When members of CARE describe the systems changes needed to advance racial equity solutions in Monterey County, they point to the need for inclusive spaces where city and county staff and officials collaborate with resident leaders and community representatives to identify the root causes of the problems residents face, develop solutions, and enact plans for implementation. Systems change efforts are focused on ensuring that local public systems and institutions work for communities that have been persistently neglected and excluded, and therefore experience the worst life indicators. And while collaborative approaches are ideal, they aren’t possible without community power building strategies to put pressure on local systems to be accountable to the low income residents, migrant families, and youth and adults impacted by the school to prison pipeline.

³ Building Healthy Communities is a comprehensive 10-year, \$1 billion initiative launched by The California Endowment in 2010 to promote statewide policy and change the narrative about health inequities in 14 communities around California.

⁴ Alisal Center for the Fine Arts • Building Healthy Communities • Baktun12 • CCA (Center for Community Advocacy) • Californians for Pesticide Reform • CHISPA • COPA • La Cosecha • Ciclovistas • CPTED • Facilitating Power • MILPA • Mujeres en Acción • Monterey Bay Central Labor Council • Padres Unidos • Resident Leadership Academy for Monterey County

Considering the challenges Monterey County faces in terms of housing insecurity, access to clean drinking water, uninsured workers, inequitable incarceration rates, educational achievement gaps, persistent low wages and racialized poverty, it is clear that collaboration across multiple sectors (community, government, philanthropy, and the private sector) is needed to understand the problems, to think comprehensively about lasting racially equitable solutions, and to have the resources and capacity to implement those solutions. These partnerships must be anchored by clear community accountability measures that track progress towards shared racial equity goals, while repairing the harm caused by generations of exploitation and exclusion. CARE is therefore building an ecosystem approach to change, one that centers healing-informed racial equity practice.

In reflecting on their approach to organizing for racial equity, CARE members say attention to healing (addressing traumas and divides while cultivating trust and deepening relationships) is essential to their work with residents and youth, as well as to their work with potential champions within systems like education and local government. This organizing theory acknowledges that everyone has a role to play to contribute to systemic change — both the activists who are grounded in community outside of traditional political structures, and those decisionmakers and staff members who are embedded inside them. Uneven power dynamics however must be addressed to ensure that residents, who continue to be marginalized from decision-making processes, are able to have genuine voice in the decisions that impact them.

Strengthening the relationship between community and local government to solve current crises that disproportionately affect Black, Brown, and immigrant communities in the Salinas Valley should be an obvious choice. Unfortunately, the persistence of profit-driven models and politics designed to divide and disenfranchise communities, serve as obstacles that many community organizers see as steamrolling over grassroots efforts.

Significant culture shift within our local systems to center community values is essential to ensuring these systems unlock their capacity to collaborate meaningfully with and meet the needs of the youth, families, and communities who call the Salinas Valley home.

Overview of Key Phases

THE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE FOR RACIAL EQUITY (CARE) sees the work unfolding in a series of key phases:

- Understanding the necessity of addressing historic racial inequities, **PHASE 1** of this work began in 2014 by centering healing-informed racial equity learning with community and government.
- From 2015 to 2016, **PHASE 2** focused on strengthening the collective's commitment to racial equity which included strategic reviews and alignment, organizational capacity building, skill-building, and equitable decision-making.
- In **PHASE 3**, *Toward a Racially Equitable Monterey County* is focused on building capacity across multiple sectors to understand the root causes of current inequities and to act in coordinated ways to improve the health and life outcomes of the region's most impacted residents. While CARE primarily engages residents and community-based organizations, local partners also recognized the need to advance an ecosystem approach. *Toward a Racially Equitable Monterey County (TREM)* consists of members from five different sectors: Resident Leaders, Philanthropy, Community Organizers, Local Government, and Facilitative Leaders. Sector representatives are working on aligning learning, clarifying roles, building trust and strengthening relationships. These first three phases lay the foundation for the work.
- As the work enters **PHASE 4**, CARE is focused on leveraging capacity investments to achieve comprehensive solutions. CARE understands that to create accountable systems that achieve racially equitable outcomes, it's important to use collective strengths, and for community and local government to come together. As part of the TREM Ecosystem in order to continue building this multi-sector space, CARE decided to create a local GRE learning cohort which includes a planning team with representatives from community-based organizations (CBOs), resident leaders, the city of Salinas, Monterey County and the Monterey County Office of Education. This learning cohort is not only being co-developed by community and government but there will also be participation from across the sectors represented in TREM, as well as the opportunity to onboard other jurisdictions and institutions. In addition, Phase 4 will invest in the leadership capacity of residents to develop a People's Budget to ensure community values and priorities are reflected in government budgets.
- In the final phase of the work, **PHASE 5**, the goal is to create community infrastructure for lasting solutions.

This table provides a high level outline of the 5 phases of work, which are elaborated on in greater detail in the following sections.

» LEARNING & EVALUATION » STORYTELLING » NARRATIVE CHANGE »					
PHASE	1 Healing-informed Racial Equity Learning 2014 (pg. 30)	2 Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity 2015-16 (pg. 32)	3 Building Capacity Across the Ecosystem 2017-18 (pg. 40)	4 Leveraging Investments for Whole Systems Solutions 2019-20 (pg. 45)	5 Building Community Infrastructure for Lasting Solutions (pg. 46)
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community circles to process police-involved killings » Racial Equity trainings for community leaders & City of Salinas staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Strategic Reviews with potential grantees to clarify TCE priorities & BHC strategy » Strategic Alignment around a North Star and policy goals » Deeper investment in community organizing capacity rooted in healing-informed practice » BHC University for skill-building among partners » Equitable decision-making principles & practices established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community involvement in public planning » Launch of Toward a Racially Equitable Monterey County (TREMOC), an ecosystem approach to achieving racial equity. » Philanthropic Partners racial equity cohort & Strategy Screen » Ecosystem meet-ups for shared learning across sectors » Systems Change strategy development » Resident Leadership Academy to establish pathways for leaders rooted in community-driven power-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community Alliance for Racial Equity formation » Local Racial Equity Learning & Action Cohort focused on implementation of community accountability measures » Implementation of Roadmap towards ending the school to prison pipeline and achieving equitable economic and community development without displacement » Resident Leadership Ladder full implementation » People's Budget community organizing process implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community Representatives in key leadership positions (who have come up thru the Resident Leadership Ladder) » Community schools designed by and for families most impacted by inequities » Divestment from incarceration of youth and reinvestment in opportunity pathways » Alisal Vibrancy Plan implementation » A People's Budget adopted by Monterey County » Plan for Community Ownership implemented
» ALLIANCE BUILDING » COMMUNITY ORGANIZING » LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT »					

Systems Change is about Community Power

“When I first started organizing around education equity, I thought that power lies in systems, but I quickly learned that real power is in communities.”

—Alma Cervantes

BHC Education Equity Organizer

BHC COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS ARE WORKING to transform systems – so that solutions to create racial equity are envisioned by and accountable to communities who have been most impacted by our history of inequities. The BHC Collaborative partners mapped the systems changes needed to advance racial equity goals via the campaigns and projects of their action teams and came to a critical conclusion: systems change is essentially about community power. Power is about the ability to affect reality, to change conditions, to effectively advance solutions, and to define one’s future. The purpose of systems change is to shift the systemic conditions so communities can elevate solutions to the problems that impact their lives. Current government systems, such as the education system, the criminal justice system, and the health care system organize power in ways that uphold the status quo which excludes communities of color and low-income communities. BHC and its collaborative partners organize for changes in system practices in order to reorganize power in ways that make it more possible for our communities to:

- End the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Brown youth and adults
- Transform educational culture and improve success rates for all students
- Expand economic opportunities to those who have been excluded
- Make sure no one is left without the care they need to be physically and mentally healthy.

“There is going to be a lot of pushback from people inside the system, so you need to build resident power to advocate for that change and to be able to sustain the pressure from the pushback. The key is really identifying the change you want to reach because along the way you’ll have so many things hitting you side to side. You have to ID one change you want to do and push at it and push at it, really aligning and making sure we are not going to move to any other issue until this issue gets resolved. It builds credibility with la gente (the people) and makes sure you have a solid win.”

—Joel Hernández

Lead Organizer, Center for Community Advocacy (CCA)

It took BHC Collaborative organization Padres Unidos four years of organizing other parents, attending board meetings, as well as meeting with district administration and members of the Board of Trustees to get the Alisal Unified School District to implement more inclusive parent engagement practices. The goal is for parents to inform the decisions that impact students and families’ health and well-being, such as budgetary priorities, approaches to school climate, curriculum development and teaching styles. They had to build enough power on the outside to push the administration to make changes in their budget prioritization process that would allow parent voice and power to affect concrete changes – in this case a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) budget that reflects their priorities for their students. Changes in the way the system operates can help unlock channels within systems for community voice and power to translate into concrete changes.

With more spaces for parents to voice what they experience, to align on shared priorities, and to build the skills to advocate for those priorities, Padres Unidos is able to chip away at the disillusionment that so many parents in the district feel and begin developing a real base of parents prepared to participate in improving the educational system and educational outcomes for their students. It’s difficult to convince parents to participate in processes where they have no real voice. This is why it has been so crucial for Padres Unidos to work with administrative staff to build a more responsive and transparent process for engaging parents in decisions around local control funding formula priorities. Padres Unidos has assumed the responsibility of documenting parent priorities and assessing the budget to make sure they are reflected. They then share their analysis with the Board of Trustees and turn parents out to board meetings to advocate for the best possible budget for school success. They are working both inside and outside the system to ensure that parent voices matter.

“The work inside systems shifts so much because the system has so much power, it’s a mechanism that has so many moving parts. It’s not like ‘this is our plan to oppress you.’ There’s no transparency in their oppression. They organize in a way that we cannot see. We are constantly impacted by exclusion. That’s one of the challenges I want to address. It’s very challenging to do systems change when it has so many components that we have to tackle in order to see the system change because it is beyond one target. There are layers and layers.”

—Alma Cervantes

BHC Education Equity Organizer

Essential Elements of Systems Change in Monterey County

BHC AND ITS COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS ARE WORKING to create systems that will allow for community solutions to racial inequities to take hold. The systems changes they are working toward fall into three categories: Community Accountability, Culture Shift, and Authentic Partnership for Real Solutions. Ideally, these three aspects of systems change work together to produce tangible results for residents most impacted by racial inequities:



COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY: As Cesar Lara of the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council asserts, “At the end of the day, what we are doing when it comes to governing for racial equity is trying to make sure our local systems actually work for the community.” Holding local systems accountable to the community is significant in a region that relies so heavily on low-wage labor and therefore on limiting the political and economic power of the Mexican, Central American, African-American, and Filipino labor force. Many of the workers who grow lettuce and strawberries in the Salinas Valley that are shipped all over the world, or work in service positions in the high-end tourist industry on the Monterey Bay Peninsula, struggle to feed their families and pay rent. And yet, a very small percentage of public revenue is invested to ensure the health and upward mobility of the region’s working families. Instead, the largest percentage of public revenue is devoted to “public safety,” including police and fire departments. While residents tend to see the value in existing allocations for fire fighters, many residents, particularly in highly policed Latino/a and African-American neighborhoods find it difficult to understand how it benefits communities to have such a large bulk of tax dollars going to police salaries and equipment. An overreliance on punitive practice contributes to the criminalization of Black and Brown communities, and contributes to persistent poverty. There is a growing movement in Monterey County to shift funding priorities toward prevention of crime, such as:

- Youth and adult leadership pathways
- Investments in green space and structured recreational programming
- Deeper investments in equitable community development
- Increased school funding with culturally relevant education reform to rectify the academic achievement gap
- Increased access to essential services that contribute to economic and social prosperity.

Moreover, as communities open themselves up to collaborate with local government to close racial equity gaps and improve life outcomes for working families in the Salinas Valley, they seek accountability measures to track progress. Without accountability measures in place, it can be hard to see how racial equity talk aligns with concrete action. Examples of accountability measures include:

- Use of Racial Equity Impact Assessments
- Develop scorecards communities can use to measure whether we are moving the needle on addressing racial inequities, rate the effectiveness of programs, and the commitment of elected officials to uphold the needs and values and of their constituents
- Implement participatory budgeting
- Integrate racial equity impact measures into performance reviews of relevant staff charged with helping to rectify existing inequities

CULTURE SHIFT: During the development of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (a plan that came as a result of direct advocacy from residents), members of the resident steering committee reported how disconnected East Salinas residents feel from government. They asked that city staff make an effort to come to the community and get to know people.

For these reasons, culture shift is a major theme describing many of the systems changes needed to close racial equity gaps. Examples of culture shift include:

- Greater transparency and information-flow around the decisions being made that impact residents
- Opportunities for resident participation in the decisions that impact them that are accessible and culturally rich (e.g. language access, welcoming environments, etc.)
- Communications and connections between systems (such as education and mental health) so as to effectively meet the needs of youth and families
- Culturally relevant services and programming to improve access
- Hiring practices and workplace environments that reflect the values, needs, and cultural diversity of the community

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIP: When community leaders describe the systems changes needed to advance racial equity solutions in Monterey County, they point to the need for inclusive tables where city and county staff and officials collaborate with resident leaders and community representatives to identify the root causes of the problems residents face, develop solutions, and enact plans for implementation. Considering the challenges Monterey County faces in terms of housing insecurity, access to clean drinking water, uninsured workers, inequitable incarceration rates, persistent low wages and racialized poverty, and educational achievement gaps, it is clear that collaboration across multiple sectors is needed to understand the problems, to think comprehensively about lasting solutions, and to have the actual capacity to implement those solutions. Authentic partnership among community, government, philanthropy, and the private sector is key to achieving racial equity. Unfortunately, due to decades of neglect, there are serious barriers to authentic partnership between community and government; barriers that BHC Partners are hoping to break down by using an inside/outside approach.

Inside/Outside Organizing Model

An essential part of working collectively towards systems change is identifying the roles that community organizations and institutions both play in advancing advocacy efforts. One framework for effectively leveraging power dynamics is using an Inside/Outside strategy. Outside organizing refers to building community leadership, power and capacity to effectively advocate for policy changes needed to close equity gaps. Inside organizing refers to building the skills and infrastructure of staff within local government to advance racial equity and relationship-building with staff and public officials willing to champion the changes needed to make government more responsive to the needs of the communities it is meant to serve.

This organizing theory acknowledges that everyone has a role to play to contribute to systemic change—both the activists who are grounded in community outside of traditional political structures, and those decisionmakers and staff members who are embedded inside them.

During the summer of 2019, Rosa González of Facilitating Power and Jesús Valenzuela of the Action Council convened members of the BHC collaborative in a series of focus groups to reflect on the group’s progress and to continue work on developing a shared understanding of inside/outside strategies. After generating and sharing the work they are doing both outside systems to build community power and inside systems to remove barriers to systems change, community organizers affirmed that these two core elements of inside and outside power building work hand-in-hand. Organizing youth to advocate for changes within alternative education, for example, is complemented by working with school administrators to actually listen and be responsive to the concerns voiced by students and to change policy and practice. Alfred Diaz-Infante of Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association (CHISPA)—the largest private, nonprofit housing developer in Monterey County—added that while working on the inside can be seen as a priority, it’s critical to focus resources on community healing as a foundation. “It can fluctuate but the majority [of work] has to be on the outside. It has to do with the healing work and the trauma they have. I have to say most of the work has to be done on the outside.”

The following are examples of inside/outside approaches to policy and system change across three different systems:

SYSTEM	GOAL	OUTSIDE ORGANIZING	INSIDE ORGANIZING
Alternative Education	Assert student input into priorities for the Local Control and Accountability Plan to improve student achievement & well-being	BHC organizers use theater-based techniques, working with students to identify areas of need, and to build their capacity to participate.	BHC organizers meet with administrative leaders to ensure there are mechanisms in place for student voice to be heard and acted on.
City of Salinas	Ensure resident voice & leadership guide the development of a community revitalization plan for East Salinas	Land Use Action Team builds coalition of organizations to advocate for the plan, to name best practices for resident engagement, to identify resident leaders for the steering committee, and to support those leaders to advocate on behalf of the larger community.	BHC Land Use Organizer builds working relationships with staff in the Community Development Dept. to co-design the planning process, and to implement an accountability tool to assess authentic resident engagement.
Monterey County	Activate community voice in prioritization of Cannabis Tax dollars to ensure they are used to serve community needs	Justice Reform Action Team organizes community input/ advocacy at board of supervisors meeting to have transparent community engagement in community processes	Co-designed process/ outreach w/community-based organizations (First 5, MILPA, BHC).

“What are we learning about building the power and the practice shifts within systems needed to advance community priorities?”

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE POWER BUILDING WORK HAND IN HAND

“That’s why I think it’s a balance. We need to understand what’s going on in the inside to be better able to prep on the outside. Just the whole research and relationship with Board of Supervisors takes a long time. There are times when we have to focus more on the outside than on the inside.”

—Joel Hernández

Lead Organizer, Center for Community Advocacy (CCA)

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE A PRIORITY FOR “INSIDE” SYSTEMS

“I think there is a challenge to balance both inside and outside. I have learned from the organizing aspect sometimes systems don’t understand why we have to engage community in some actions. Sometimes we have this urgency to do some action but sometimes we need to pause and see if the community wants to or has the capacity to move. What does it really mean when it’s resident led? Is it you at the front?”

—Alma Cervantes

BHC Education Equity Organizer

“The work has to be on the outside building residents. So the insiders know that you have the power, they know you mean business.”

—María Elena Manzo

Organizer, Mujeres en Acción and COPA

POWER ANALYSIS IS KEY TO INFLUENCING DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

“I want to lift up the importance of doing a power analysis. Sometimes we think it’s one Board Supervisor that makes the decisions, but there are a lot of people influencing those decisions.”

—Daniel González

Executive Director, Center for Community Advocacy (CCA)

HEALING AS A CORE ELEMENT OF THE ORGANIZING PROCESS

For us there has be personal, interpersonal, and systemic healing. We have to help people overcome the idea that the woman has to stay home, and shouldn't be out organizing and advocating. At the interpersonal level, we have to address judgments between parents – like if you don't engage, that means you don't care about the education of your child. And then at the systemic level, we have to create new spaces where parents feel heard, because they are so used to being denied a real voice. With Padres Unidos healing must be at the center.”

—Alma Cevantes

BHC Education Equity Organizer

“It took a lot for students at Rancho Cielo to trust us. They have probation telling them no, their parents telling them no. It took a lot for them to know we are on their side. It took them going through Joven Noble to be able to talk about them having a voice in the budget (LCAP).”

—Gabriela Manzo

BHC Youth Equity Organizer

TRUST & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

“One of the important skills is facilitating conocimiento between communities and systems. When we go to residents we have to help them to understand what the system does. Who is the health dept? But when we work with the health department, we need to help them understand that this is the community and this is what they need. If we want to do systems and policy change it won't happen just because there is that relationship. We have to break down barriers. A lot of it is language too. It's helping the system staff break those barriers and be more humanized. When systems leaders share their stories, it humanizes them to the community.”

—Joel Hernández

Lead Organizer, Center for Community Advocacy (CCA)

Community Rises Up In City Planning

In 2013, the Building Healthy Communities Collaborative started advocating for a better structure for community involvement in the City of Salinas' planning process. BHC organizer Jeanette Pantoja brought together leaders who were already involved in the development of the City's Economic Development Element (EDE) to identify common goals. By creating space for CBO leaders from the Center for Community Advocacy, CHISPA, and the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council to develop shared analysis and strategies, they were able to move quickly when opportunities for community wins emerged.

While there were already plans underway to implement a Downtown Vibrancy Plan in Salinas, for decades there hadn't been any significant investment in the Alisal—the East side of Salinas where farmworker families are most concentrated. The idea to invest in the Alisal emerged from a resident participating in a small group discussion at an EDE meeting in 2013. The community's proposal was clear: It is time for an Alisal Vibrancy Plan (AVP). After much advocacy and the support of council members, Ray Corpuz, City Manager, included a line item for the development of the plan in the City budget. But the real work was yet to come.

As the reality of an Alisal Vibrancy Plan came into clearer view, CBO leaders within the Collaborative realized they must organize to ensure the plan was guided by East side residents. Key to the success of this vision were the improved hiring practices of the City that came as a result of their participation in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity training. Ray Corpuz hired Megan Hunter as Director of the Community Development Department, who came with previous experience integrating equity practices into public planning.

When the Community Development Department sought to hire a new Senior Planner, they engaged CBO leaders, like Andrea Manzo, then the BHC hub manager, on the hiring committee. Lisa Brinton, who was hired to the position, then developed a plan along with Andrea Manzo and other leaders from the community to initiate a resident steering committee for the AVP. Community partners established guidelines for the development of the committee to ensure it was equitable and got the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership⁵ adopted by the AVP Technical Advisory Committee within the Community Development Department to guide the community engagement process.

Steering Committee members were selected through a community-led application process, and there was a concerted effort to select a mix of English- and Spanish-speaking members to accurately reflect the demographics of the area. The Steering Committee met 20 times between Summer 2017 and Summer 2019.

“The way we were looking at the steering committee wasn't a means to an end, but rather a place to build resident leadership. The plan at the end of the day is just a document, to really get it implemented or for things to happen somebody has to push.”

—Mónica Gurmilán
BHC Land Use Organizer

The Steering Committee met to understand the potential of the plan and decided the different topics the plan would cover. They also planned and facilitated the kick off and visioning community-wide meetings. In collaboration with the community, the Steering Committee drew on the input from residents at the community-wide meetings and established a first draft of a vision statement and shared with the rest of the community to refine. The process gave way to six topic-specific Working Groups to develop content for different areas of the plan: Housing, Community Health and Safety, Economic Development, Quality of Life,

⁵See Appendix.

Transportation and Infrastructure and Land Use. These groups had 34 meetings between Fall 2017 and Spring 2019.

This process was significant because it represented a transformation in how public entities in Salinas engaged with communities; rather than presenting ideas conceived from the city to the community with little input, this was a pivotal point in empowering residents to take the lead in the planning process.

In addition to these committees and working groups, there were workshops and pop up events to solicit input from the broader community. Critically, the workshops were held during evening hours, and provided food and childcare to reduce barriers to civic participation. One of the greatest shifts was that all community meetings were held in Spanish with simultaneous interpretation to English. This was a tremendous cultural shift because the City was valuing the native tongue of East Salinas residents so that they would feel comfortable enough to fully participate.

While City staff demonstrated willingness to make changes in practice, resident leaders and community-based organizations who participated in the process saw the need for significantly more changes and were often disillusioned with the City as a result of persistent practices of placation and tokenization. Because the City and BHC hadn't adequately invested in the capacity of resident leaders to facilitate their own meetings, some working groups were primarily facilitated by City staff who sometimes brought ideas, such as a rental inspection program, that they wanted to include in the plan without enough attention to the potential unintended consequences of such programs, and without equitable decision-making practices in place. In the case of the housing work group, steering committee members and CBO leaders along with some resident leaders from Mujeres en Acción, COPA and the Resident Leadership Academy (who later formed the group, Viviendas Para Todos), had to intervene during a working group meeting and bring up concerns about starting a rental inspection program without first making sure there was enough affordable housing in place for working families who may end up displaced as a result of the program.⁶ It became clear that ongoing community organizing was needed throughout the process to interrupt practices that inhibited the voice and power of resident leaders.

Organizers from the BHC Collaborative started hosting preparation meetings for the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (AVP) working group sessions as a way to align around key priorities that they could advocate for in the plan. They also began providing direct feedback to City staff who did their best to make adjustments in the process.

City staff also utilized a method of outreach called a Roadshow to bring the ideas and vision of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan to people who might not have had the opportunity to go to the workshops. There were hundreds of participants at these events, which took place at

⁶Because of the push-back from resident leaders, the Alisal Vibrancy Plan only includes the rental inspection program after legal protections for renters are in place.

community spaces like WIC Spanish and English classes and Cesar Chavez Library.

The outcome of all of this outreach was a truly community-informed plan for East Salinas that fosters healthy and prosperous living that benefits generations of today and tomorrow.

Youth Organizing

When BHC started, it was around the time of the economic downturn precipitated by the 2008 financial collapse. As BHC Communications Manager, and longtime Salinas resident Jesús Valenzuela observed, “there are a lot of young people who had left the area for school and if the economy had been better they probably would have found jobs in the same city as their university. But many could not find a well-paying job after graduation and returned to Salinas. This, I feel, brought a renewed energy to the area.” Many of the youth and residents who form the base of the East Salinas BHC are actually families; youth and their parents working alongside each other to ensure they have a voice in schools and public planning. This is most evident in one of the BHC events that was instrumental in BHC’s initial collaboration with government - Ciclovía Salinas.

Ciclovía is perhaps the most visible display of youth leadership at work. Now in its seventh year, Ciclovía is an annual event where 1.6 miles of Alisal Street are blocked to vehicular traffic to encourage families in the East Alisal and West Alisal neighborhoods to come together and do physical activity. More importantly, Ciclovía Salinas is a gateway to youth involvement, investing in youth leadership shifts the narrative of their experience in Salinas. “It’s very inspiring to see the youth go through Ciclovía,” says BHC Youth Equity Organizer Gabriela Manzo, “we are now seeing young people from the first Ciclovía Salinas returning from the university to Salinas. There are so many of them that are currently changing their majors into something that has to do with community work because of their involvement with us. And the ones that don’t go to the university volunteer every year.” Ciclovía has become a gateway to youth involvement, as it provides an entry point for community participation through the auspices of a fun event. Investing in youth leadership helps them see themselves as assets, and encourages them to forge a space for themselves to contribute to the community. Ultimately, seeing youth as an integral part of the community helps young people fight against the quest to criminalize them, and gives them a stronger foundation to act as advocates in their own backyard. This, in turn, helps to create a public sector that is truly responsive to and aligned with community.

Over the years the work of the staff person in charge of Ciclovía Salinas evolved from being a seasonal, ciclovía coordinator, to a full time Youth Equity Organizer. This allows for Ciclovía Salinas to be seen not just as a primary event, but, rather, an entry point to more community organizing. In recent years there have been two main avenues for involvement created for youth - the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and the Youth Participatory Action Project (YPAR), now known simply as La Cosecha. CPTED provides a platform for youth to view public safety as more than just policing a community. Youth learn

that simple actions such as better lighting or trimmed bushes at sidewalks, are a far more cost effective way of reducing crime. This in turn allows for youth to advocate for public dollars to be invested in the creation and maintenance of parks and open spaces. La Cosecha, still in its infancy, will work on a research question of their choice. This cohort of young people will then learn important skills that will help them in their schooling as well as in community organizing.

LOOKING BACK

Reflection on Phase 1: Learning, Healing & Connection

“In a time of confusion, distrust, fear and anger, it was essential to engage in dialogue and attempt to initiate the process of healing, reconciliation and PALABRA (Truth). With Racial Equity and social determinants of health being at the forefront of the conversation, as a community we knew we had to have our unity, hope and prayer guide us toward restoration.”

—John Pineda
Co-Director of MILPA

IN THE SUMMER OF 2014, a spate of police-involved shootings of four unarmed Latino men (Carlos Mejia, 44; Frank Alvarado, 39; Osman Hernandez, 26; and Angel Ruiz, 42) in four months sparked protests among the city’s largely Latino/a population.⁷ These shootings surfaced the racialized tensions that have long plagued the city, leading residents (primarily youth) to take to the streets to protest their widespread mistrust of police and the deepening chasm alienating community members from city officials.⁸ As an immediate response to the collective trauma the community experienced in their aftermath, Partners in the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Collaborative, such as MILPA (Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement) and La Colectiva Mujeres convened community circles to process the impact of the killings and began identifying citywide, community-led solutions. Residents shared that to prevent these tragedies from happening, the police department needed better training with improved cultural responsiveness.

⁷ [Killing of Four Latino Men Sparks Protest in Salinas, Calif.](#) NPR, August 1, 2014.

⁸ See “Building the We: Healing-Informed Governing for Racial Equity in Salinas” for a more detailed account: <https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/building-we-healing-informed-governing-racial-equity-salinas>.

It became apparent to BHC leadership that the police brutality that caused the deaths of the four men was, at its heart, a public health issue in the community. While these four deaths were tragic, it was also clear that deep and pervasive racial inequities across every indicator for community success represented an even greater systemic tragedy, although sometimes more difficult to identify. Building Healthy Communities invited Race Forward and the National Compadres Network to collaborate in the development of a healing-informed approach to racial equity issues in Salinas. In a city of 150,000 with nearly 80% Latino/a residents, structural racism is a matter that deeply affects the entire community, and which permeates every interaction between government institutions and residents. The fact that the city government is overwhelmingly white in a city where white people are a scant 15% of the population means that racial equity trainings and conversations are central to beginning to build trust and lay the groundwork for community-driven solutions.

After a weeklong healing-informed racial equity training with City officials and community leaders, BHC began to develop a collaboration with the City to launch a joint steering committee comprised of representatives from City departments and community leaders committed to putting racial equity into practice.

While gains were made as a result of bringing city staff and community leaders together around racial equity learning, there were also missteps and lessons learned. In terms of gains, this collaboration laid the groundwork for resident-driven planning in the development of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (described on pg. 26), contributed to more equitable hiring practices at the city, and inspired the County to engage staff in racial equity training. A challenge that emerged was the unspoken expectations that come from collaboration between city and community, which can often put more pressure on community organizations to suppress criticism in order to maintain an amicable relationship with municipal departments. Achieving policy and systems change takes building community power to put enough pressure on systems leaders to shift, but the more immediate collaboration that was formed seemed to create the expectation that community groups would not protest against the city or advocate publicly on any opposing viewpoints. These expectations led to tensions that almost destroyed the collaboration between city staff and the BHC Collaborative. This work reinforced the importance of investing in healing work before bringing together systems-impacted community members with members of the police department and city staff.

LOOKING BACK

Reflection on Phase 2: Cultivating a Commitment to Racial Equity

“In a state more carceral than caring, the city has proven a magnet for philanthropic funding and community-based programming. But being persistently criminalized makes engaging in many liberal institutional settings, let alone in public, a problem.”

—Megan S. Raschig,

“Not Yet? Ya Basta: Healing and the Horizons of an Otherwise in Salinas, California”

TO ALIGN AROUND A COMMITMENT to racial equity as core to achieving health equity in the Salinas Valley, the East Salinas BHC Collaborative established a number of core practices including:

- Strategic Reviews and Alignment
- Formation and Strengthening of Action Teams with a Deeper Investment in Organizing and Advocacy
- Centering of Healing-Informed Practice within Organizing
- Collaborative learning Through BHC University
- Establishing Principles and Practices for Equitable Decision-Making

BHC staff and partners agree the commitment to racial equity was strengthened across the Collaborative, not just in words, but in actions and a tangible investment of capacity and resources for resident leadership and organizing. The challenge in this phase of the work was investing in the capacity of BHC staff and Collaborative partners to be able to confidently talk about their work through a racial equity lens. Partners also celebrate this phase as a time when collaboration was deepened through alignment around key campaigns such as the effort to stop police officers from being assigned to school campuses, BHC University, and other collaborative learning opportunities. The Collaborative could have invested more in

racial equity learning and practice during this phase. Despite the fact that staff and partners come from the community, have lived the inequities, and have been dedicated to racial justice for years, it is easy to doubt one's capacity to be a leader for racial equity, particularly when working within systems. Moreover, with a large foundation and national partners involved, there can be an unspoken assumption that local knowledge is being compared to that of outside "experts." There is a need to more clearly honor and uplift local expertise as vital to the success of local efforts, and to demystify the work of racial equity.

Strategic Reviews

As the events of 2014 were unfolding, the need to clarify the focus of The California Endowment's (TCE) strategic investment and strengthen the commitment of the BHC Collaborative to healing-informed racial equity became clear. Given TCE's prominence in the philanthropic sector, having TCE Senior Program Manager Lauren Padilla-Valverde as a champion helped engage local philanthropic partners. These partners attended a Racial Equity 101 training, and the racial equity cohort of philanthropic partners⁹ invited Rosa González to facilitate a collaborative process to develop a racial equity framework to inform the direction of their work, and to frame a shared vision for the community. The following strategy screen is an excerpt from the shared racial equity framework:

RACIAL EQUITY STRATEGY SCREEN FOR PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

by Rosa González, Facilitating Power

As philanthropic leaders, our role is to partner with communities in creating the necessary conditions for effective racial equity strategies. The following Racial Equity Strategy Screen reflects our understanding of the necessary conditions and fundamental dimensions of racial equity, and can be used for real time strategic decision-making to assess our programs, projects, and philanthropic investments.

Bringing an Ecosystem Lens

What are the conditions, strengths, gaps, connections, and disconnections across the region essential to advancing a racial equity strategy?

- What role does the given effort play (in relationship to other efforts) to achieve racial equity in the region? How is this effort fulfilling a unique gap, bolstering an essential strength, or forging a needed connection across disparate efforts?
- How does the effort address historical, political, economic and cultural context of the issue? How does it draw on community strengths?

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

⁹Philanthropic Partners included: The California Endowment, Nancy Buck Ransom Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Monterey Peninsula Foundation, United Way of Monterey County, Claire Giannini Fund, Community Foundation for Monterey County, First 5 Monterey County

- How does the given effort contribute to strategic collaboration across multiple efforts to achieve collective impact?
- If the given effort is issue specific, how is it connected to a vision or strategy for racial equity?
- Which systems change condition(s) does it address?

Balancing Power to Increase Impact

What communities and populations are most impacted by racial inequity in this region? How can we best partner with these communities to support authentic leadership, power and participation to advance strategies to close equity gaps?

- How does the given effort work to center the leadership of politically, economically, or socially disenfranchised communities?
- What forms of power does the given effort generate? For whom? By whom?
- How does the given effort affect the status quo?

Building Community Capacity for Transformative Leaps

Vision: What are the existing community-driven processes to develop a regional vision for racial equity (or related issues)? How can we help to strengthen visioning processes, ensure leaders from relevant, impacted communities are resourced to lead and contribute to the articulation of a shared vision and strategy for racial equity (or relevant issue area)?

- Is the given effort connected to a clear vision?

Priorities: What are the community values and priorities that flow from this vision? How can we best support community-based organizations and leaders to align on a set of racial equity values, core priorities, and/or strategic leaps?

- How does the given effort uphold or advance racial equity priorities?

Strengths: What is the spectrum of strengths needed for the community to realize its vision, advance its priorities, and/or make the strategic leaps articulated?

- How are community-driven projects in the given effort partnering to assess and articulate their own capacity-building needs in relationship to the vision, priorities, and/or strategy?

The leaders from within the philanthropic partners who participated in the development of the framework are using it to guide their shared investments, and to guide their work within their foundations to make needed shifts towards for equitable grant-making models.

Strategic Alignment

Rosa González, of Facilitating Power, then facilitated a collaborative process among BHC staff and partners to develop a shared North Star to guide BHC's racial equity approach, along with policy and systems goals that reflected the following priorities identified by the collaborative:

North Star	Activate resident voice and power for a healthy inclusive democracy
Policy & System Change Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replace the school-to-prison pipeline with thriving opportunity pathways for youth and adults and healing-informed preventative practices• Cultivate healthy communities through equitable economic and community development without displacement

The process to collectively develop the North Star and Policy and Systems change goals resulted in a commitment to transform what had started out as a TCE-led project into a fully community-driven initiative. This would take time, so BHC decided to:

- **DOUBLE** the resources and capacity invested in community organizing;
- **INVEST** in the further development of Action Team leads dedicated to the different policy and systems change goals;
- **PROVIDE** Action Team leads with direct action organizing training;
- **INCREASE** the focus on building resident leadership within Action Teams;
- **DEVELOP** and implement the Resident Leadership Ladder, to support residents interested in and available to build their leadership as organizers around the issues that affect them and their neighbors.

Formation and Strengthening of Action Teams with Deeper Investment in Organizing and Advocacy

Through the strategic review process and the alliance-building that followed, the BHC Collaborative established a structure that centered on the work of Action Teams. The BHC Hub serves as both a community organizing group and the convener of the overall BHC Collaborative.

EAST SALINAS BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COLLABORATIVE				
ACTION TEAMS	EDUCATION EQUITY	JUSTICE REFORM	LAND USE	HEALTH FOR ALL
Goals	<i>Replace the school to prison pipeline with opportunity pathways (through community-driven education reform and resourcing)</i>	<i>Replace the school to prison pipeline with opportunity pathways (through ending mass incarceration)</i>	<i>Healthy communities through equitable community development w/out displacement</i>	<i>Healthy communities by expanding health care to undocumented residents</i>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent organizing and leadership development • Advocacy around priorities of Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) • Systems change work with Alisal Union School District • No SRO campaign + Dignity in Schools campaign • Joven Noble circles within schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Our Values campaign (for local budgets that prioritize prevention over punishment) • Statewide justice reform advocacy • La Cultura Cura programs for systems-impacted youth and adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (AVP) • Organizing to ensure the AVP is resident driven • Advocacy for the passing and implementation of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident Organizing via house meetings around health care for undocumented residents • Advocacy to the County of Monterey allocation of funds for EsperanzaCare
Resident Leadership Committees	<p><i>Padres Unidos (Parent Organizing)</i></p> <p><i>La Cosecha (Youth-led Participatory Action Research)</i></p>		<p><i>CPTED Interns (Youth Leadership)</i></p> <p><i>AVP Steering Committee Leaders</i></p>	<p><i>Salud Para Todos Comité (Resident organizing)</i></p>
Core Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BHC Hub • Baktun12 • MILPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BHC Hub • MILPA • Labor Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BHC Hub • Baktun12 • CCA • COPA • CHISPA • Mujeres an Acción 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COPA • Labor Council

BHC University

In addition to committing to a significant shift in resources toward supporting community-led organizing, González worked with the Collaborative to help develop BHC University, which was a collaborative series of trainings, highlighting shared skill-building and relationship building among the BHC partner organizations. The goal of these trainings was to provide BHC collaborative organizations a baseline of tools to reinforce their skills in key areas, prioritized by the Collaborative partners. Workshop content included:

- Facilitation
- Media Strategy
- Community Organizing
- Participatory Evaluation
- Data Literacy

While the lasting effects of such projects are often difficult to see immediately, it is clear in retrospect that BHC University helped to solidify the Collaborative while creating a space for ideas to be generated on what future organizing efforts could look like.

Establishing Principles and Practices for Equitable Decision-Making

As Andrea Manzo, regional equity director for the Salinas BHC, reflects, building a shared vision across multiple organizations and action teams takes a significant amount of leadership and coordination. The BHC Hub focused first on improving decision-making practices, guided by a set of principles and practices the leadership developed:

PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES WITHIN THE CORE TEAM	PRACTICES WITHIN THE COLLABORATIVE	PRACTICES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY
AGILITY	Not getting stuck within a model; adapting models to meet real needs	We are responsive to the needs and interests of our partners, assessing our organizational strategy to make sure there is synergy with our partners	We pay attention and respond to flashpoints within our community
APPROPRIATE PACING	Balance thoughtfulness with urgency; listen to those impacted to find appropriate pace for decision-making	We strive for a pacing that contributes to synergy with our partners	We strive for pacing that maintains momentum in resident engagement while allowing for authentic participation from community
ASSET-DRIVEN	Assess strengths; draw on the strengths of the team when making decisions	Overarching strategies draw on the strengths of our partners	We assess community assets and focus on health equity solutions that build on existing assets
INCLUSIVITY	Include the voices of those affected by decisions into the decision-making process	Regular Collaborative convenings and check-ins are designed to hear from partners and share the thinking behind decisions	Through Action Teams and their respective campaigns, we engage residents in building health equity. Our work seeks to cultivate the conditions for deep democratic participation among East Salinas residents.
INQUIRY	Form critical questions; Talk to those affected to answer questions that inform decision-making	Our collaborative work is guided by the critical questions that we pose to make sense of the opportunities and challenges we are facing	Through action teams, we engage resident leaders in participatory action research and in participatory evaluation of BHC's work
COMMUNICATION	Communicate authentically and directly; be consistent with communication among key decision-makers and among those affected; communicate why and how decisions are made	We use multiple means of communication with partners, including email, phone, newsletters, surveys, assessment tools and in-person meetings to keep partners informed and to create feedback loops	We strive to improve communication with community and partners outside the BHC Collaborative

Unity Through Shared Struggle: The Fight to Stop School Resource Officers

In light of the police killings that served as the initial catalyst for collaboration, the community felt strongly that allowing law enforcement in schools would reinforce a message of youth criminalization, and would undermine the shared vision of reframing public safety. BHC Hub and partners, such as Padres Unidos, MILPA, La Colectiva de Mujeres and Baktun12 worked together to organize a campaign against the use of \$3million from the federal government to install School Resource Officers (SRO's) on multiple campuses. After much deliberation, BHC Collaborative partners also organized against a third-party program called "Why'd You Stop Me (WYSM)," in which officers "educated" community members on how to behave while being stopped by police. Youth and community members still devastated by seeing four unarmed men killed by officers, attended the first workshop and experienced the workshop as akin to a slap in the face; it seemed to imply that the way to address the problem was to teach to community to behave properly. BHC partners and others again came together to protest the program and advocate that the city not spend public dollars to continue it. The funds, though, had already been spent, and the program continued. Both the SRO and the WYSM fight brought community groups together around shared values reflected in Black and Brown communities across Monterey County who are disproportionately impacted by policing and mass incarceration.

Conversely, these fights became a significant point of contention between the BHC Collaborative and some Salinas City government leaders and staff, and almost ended the collaboration. This fraught moment could have signaled the end of the collaboration, if it weren't for a commitment to continued communication, that eventually gave way to a revamped approach to racial equity training within the City of Salinas.

LOOKING BACK

Reflection on Phase 3: Investing in an Ecosystem Approach to Systems Change

“BHC is trying to build these relationships and connections across stakeholders so that post-2020, people still have these connections and when something comes up you are like ‘Hey theres this great opportunity coming up who is interested?’ and then they know they can come to the table and form part of this group.”

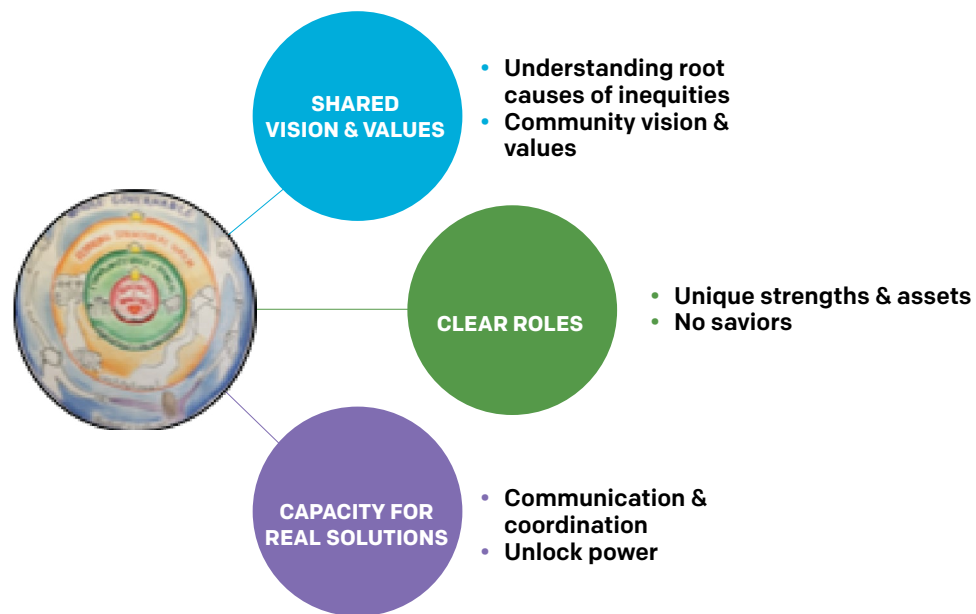
—Andrea Manzo

BHC Regional Equity Director

AS THE BHC GOALS BEGAN to require more organizing, additional work is needed to be done outside of East Salinas. Some goals, such as the fight against SROs, required the participation of the school district and, as such, an area larger than the east side. Other goals, such as pushing for health care programs for the undocumented population, required a county-wide approach. With the policy goal of ending the school-to-prison pipeline, Action Teams took the work from the neighborhood and city levels to the county and state levels. The Justice Reform Action Team played a role in the success of statewide efforts to reduce incarceration for non-violent offences and to divert local savings from the jail to other county programs. Furthermore, with many of Monterey County’s school districts outside of Salinas having some of the highest expulsion and suspension rates in the states, MILPA and BHC increased efforts to work outside of traditional spaces.

What is an Ecosystem Approach to Regional Racial Equity?

The Toward a Racially Equitable Monterey County (TREM) ecosystem consists of members from five different sectors: Resident Leaders, Philanthropy, Community Organizers, Local Government, and Facilitative Leaders. Sector representatives participated in Ecosystem Meet-ups to begin aligning learning, clarifying roles, building trust and strengthening relationships. It was critical for TREM to define roles for each cohort sector and member organization to implement systems that accelerate progress. As with any coalition across multiple sectors, member organizations have the opportunity to learn from each other.



Regional Equity Director, Andrea Manzo and TCE Senior Program Manager, Lauren Padilla-Valverde host quarterly meetings of representatives from the multiple sectors of TREM for shared learning to play their unique roles in relationship to other sectors while centering resident voice and leadership.

SECTOR	ROLE	INVESTMENTS IN CAPACITY
Resident Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess community assets, strengths, and threats Assert a vision for a racially just future, the values that flow from that vision, and a set of priorities that match community needs and cultural assets Organize community 	BHC Hub organizers use the resident leadership ladder (included below) to guide investments in resident leadership. Partners across the Collaborative use healing-informed curricula like Joven Noble, Xinachtli, and Cara y Corazón to ground leadership development in a healing framework and practices. The Resident Leadership Academy is a nine-month investment in cohorts of seasoned resident leaders.
Philanthropic Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to balance uneven power dynamics by partnering with impacted communities Make long-term commitments to serve as partners within collaborative efforts to close equity gaps Fund community organizing strategies 	Monterey County Philanthropic partners convened for 18 months to develop an internal framework for racial equity (included above) to guide investments of greater impact that are responsive to community needs; now meet periodically for peer consultancy around implementation of the framework.
Community Organizers (staff within community based organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out community organizing strategies that build power within impacted communities Cultivate leadership pathways for resident leaders Assert the vision, values, culture and priorities of impacted communities Framing campaigns in a larger systemic narrative; helping resident leaders connect individual campaigns to larger transformation 	Organizers across the collaborative participate in organizing trainings and engage key tools, such as strategy charts, the spectrum of community engagement to ownership (outlined below), and the resident leadership ladder to help guide organizing efforts.
Racial Equity Champions working within Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work within local government to facilitate internal shifts in policy and practice that remove systemic barriers to closing equity gaps Partner with community-based organizations to ensure the work is aligned with impacted communities Include community involvement in the planning process Soliciting feedback from residents on the Racial Equity Action Plan 	Two racial equity champions within City government and two from within County government participate in the ecosystem meet-ups, participate in trainings and support through GARE, the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.
Facilitative Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate the conditions for collaboration Assess and guide processes to co-develop solutions to racial inequity Help to hold the entirety of the vision and goals to help the ecosystem move forward 	Facilitative leaders investigate best practices for creating the conditions for transformative solutions, and connect with facilitative leaders in other areas to share and learn strategies for centering community power in systems change efforts.

RESIDENT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Central to the Ecosystem Approach is a Resident Leadership Academy to build leadership skills to organize and advocate with city and county government. The 9-month program, organized by the the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council, consists of monthly workshops in community organizing, the history of social movements, racial equity, and community-driven leadership approaches to addressing the issues residents face. Participants are recruited from the memberships of various unions and organizations for their potential to move from participant, to leaders, to community organizer.

The first cohort of resident leaders took on housing as their core issue, organizing theater-based housing forums in public spaces to spark dialogue about the issue with the support of Baktun12. The second cohort focused on Health for all, increasing the access of health services for all residents in Monterey County, specifically undocumented residents. Now in the middle of its third cohort, the focus is a people's budget to recruit new leaders and unify existing campaigns around a shared vision for systems change through a racial equity lens.

RESIDENT LEADERSHIP LADDER

The following Leadership Ladder provides a glimpse into how the BHC Collaborative in Salinas approaches community leadership development.

Core to the work of the Community Alliance for Racial Equity is building resident voice and power for a healthy and inclusive local democracy. The Resident Leadership Ladder guides organizers in investing in the capacity of leaders as they deepen their commitment and skill in recruiting and mobilizing other residents to take action within campaigns. Leaders advance along the ladder by building their capacity to engage, mobilize, and support new leaders. The vision is that multiple leaders will rise up through the ladder to represent an extensive base of residents.

ASSESSMENT	INTERACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	CAPACITY
5 Community Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has indicated interest in long-term leadership Has demonstrated support from 25+ people 	Hold a key decision-making position (Could sit on boards, commission, run for office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and support to sit on boards, commissions, run for office, serve as a representative of the base they have helped to build
4 Resident Organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has attended multiple trainings Has demonstrated ability to recruit others and host house meetings Has demonstrated long-term commitment, leadership skills 	Carry out organizing functions; Candidates for employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training & support to lead campaigns or actions and develop campaign strategy (Public speaking, Decision-making, Power Mapping, Issue-specific content)
3 Resident Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has attended multiple events (including at least one training) Has expressed longer term commitment; Has been developing recruitment skills 	Ask to mobilize and develop others; Can serve on committees, have decision-making power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide coaching to hold a lead role in planned events or actions Solicit their strategy ideas in planning sessions
2 Consistent Supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed Supporter and Strong activist Attends events when invited 	Committee member or dependable activist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one to assess interest & needs Ensure participation needs are met
1 Supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed Supporter Not yet consistent 	Baseline supporter, possible candidate for committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Base, Turnout pool, possible development
0 Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended an event or is connected to a resident leader Not yet had a one-on-one to understand interests, needs, experience 	Contact info listed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one with a resident leader

Looking Forward

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED during the first three phases of this work, partners in Salinas and Monterey County have coalesced around a five-year vision:

“In five years, Salinas and Monterey County becomes a region that has a cross-sector, multi-institutional capacity to achieve racially equitable outcomes. Capacity and leadership grow beyond Salinas outward into Monterey County communities that currently lack investment.”

Phase 4: Leveraging Investments for Whole Systems Solutions

As the collaborative, now the Community Alliance for Racial Equity (CARE), enters into Phase 4, leveraging capacity investments to achieve comprehensive solutions is the foundation of the work. CARE understands that to create accountable systems that achieve racially equitable outcomes, it's important to use collective strengths, and for community and local government to come together. As part of the TREMC Ecosystem in order to continue building this multi-sector space, the collaborative decided to create a local GRE learning cohort which includes a planning team with representatives from community-based organizations (CBOs), resident leaders, the City of Salinas, Monterey County and the Monterey County Office of Education. This learning cohort is not only being co-developed by community and government but there will also be participation from across the mentioned sectors/institutions as well as the opportunity to onboard other jurisdictions/institutions.

The local racial equity learning and action cohort is guided by a vision of interconnected systems that center youth, families and residents impacted by racial inequities. On the community side, the cohort sees residents building collective power for a healthy, inclusive democracy. The peer learning and relationship building component of the cohort will be designed to assess and address the root causes of racial inequities in Monterey County and balance uneven power dynamics. To this end, the concrete work of the racial equity learning

cohort will be to establish accountability mechanisms and a plan for actionable next steps. Ideally, this approach will facilitate system changes that ensure the institutionalization and implementation of healing-informed racial equity across multiple systems serving impacted communities.

The CARE has developed a 10+ year roadmap toward achieving healing-informed racial equity in Monterey County. Real solutions require that local budgets center community values and priorities. Budgets are a moral document that can lift up and recognize the value of investing in people. Having influence to change budgets will require more balanced power dynamics in the region. CARE is working to build more alliances with those bought into the long term vision and is working on a participatory process to develop a People's Budget, focused on ending the school-to-prison pipeline and achieving equitable economic and community development without displacement. The People's Budget will serve as a platform for base-building and mobilization to intervene on public planning processes. It will be a powerful avenue for building resident capacity to organize and influence or shift systems. To this end, the CARE is developing a curriculum that centers political education for reclaiming governance and ensuring an inclusive democracy. It is worth noting as well, the breakthroughs needed to shift resource allocations from punitive practices to investments in prevention, such as housing stability, affordable health care, access to mental health and culturally rooted healing, structured recreational programming and greater access to green space, opportunity pathways for youth and adults, and an education system designed to nurture whole children, whole families, and whole communities. This shift points to an opportunity to end mass-incarceration, no longer locking young people behind bars.

Phase 5: Building Community Infrastructure for Lasting Solutions

Phase 5 of their work, which will be focused on building community infrastructure for lasting solutions, is focused on moving toward community ownership. Key goals for this phase include:

- Implementation of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan and transforming the budget to ensure that implementation supports community priorities;
- Getting community leaders who have been trained through the Resident Leadership Ladder model in key leadership positions;
- Building community schools designed by and for families most impacted by systemic inequities;
- Divesting from youth incarceration and reinvesting in opportunity pathways driven by youth and adult residents.

The work in Salinas and Monterey County is ongoing, and the foundation that the community has built puts them on a path toward making tangible, substantive strides towards racially equitable practices. It also highlights what's possible when individuals, organizations, institutions, and sectors come together around a shared vision for their community—a vision

that honors and values the experiences of residents as key partners in decision-making processes.

This report provides a snapshot of the stories, learning, and successes that have emerged from the past five years of collective work. It also offers a vision and what is needed to achieve healing-informed racial equity in Monterey County. In spite of the many challenges there is tremendous opportunity for breakthroughs that will actually change the lives of people in Monterey County. The intentional way that local partners have cultivated relationships across sectors—while elevating community power—is a model for other locations looking to advance racial justice. While every geographic location is unique in its local context, we hope that people will see themselves reflected in this document and find lessons that are applicable to their own work.

AUTHOR BIOS

Rosa González is the Founder of Facilitating Power. She provides facilitator leadership support to a number of organizations and initiatives with a focus on ecosystem approaches to community-driven solutions, and serves as learning and evaluation consultant to the Community Alliance for Racial Equity in Monterey County.

Juell Stewart is the Policy Research Manager in Race Forward's Oakland office. Juell joins the organization with a strong background in urban planning and policy research, and has previously worked in food systems planning and municipal government. Juell has a BA in Sociology & Philosophy from Cornell, and a Masters in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

Jesús Valenzuela is the lead organizer for Building Healthy Communities. He focuses on building community voice and power in Monterey County and is working to embed healing-informed practices to the organizing work.

APPENDICES

I. Historical Context

When the United States had a labor shortage following World War II, the country entered a bilateral agreement with the Mexican government to enable U.S. agricultural employers to enter into labor contracts with Mexican workers. The Migrant Labor Program—commonly referred to as the Bracero Program—was jointly administered by the State Department, Department of Labor, and Immigration and Naturalization Services under the Department of Justice, beginning in 1942 and lasted for over 20 years, until 1964.¹⁰ Throughout the program's duration, the United States issued between 4.8 million and 5.2 million temporary worker contracts, becoming one of the largest labor programs in U.S. history. The Salinas Growers Farm Labor Association (GFLA) was at one point responsible for contracting one in seven of California's Bracero Program workers, making Salinas into the "Salad Bowl of the World," thanks to its production of leafy greens, artichokes, zucchini and other fruits and vegetables.

While Mexican workers were guaranteed legal protection on paper, basic accommodations in worker camps, transportation to and from farms, and lack of government oversight left Braceros vulnerable to exploitation and substandard working conditions from the very growers who depended on their labor for their livelihood. A pivotal moment happened in September 1963, when 32 Braceros were killed and 27 were injured in a bus collision in the Salinas Valley traveling from the fields to their labor camp. The tragedy exposed the lack of accountability and oversight of the Bracero Program throughout all levels of government and became a flashpoint for protests concerning labor and civil rights. As the social justice movements of the 1960's grew, the Bracero Program became less justifiable in the face of inhumane working conditions and ongoing controversial deaths of Mexican farm laborers, and ultimately Congress ended the program.

After the program ended, the Salinas Valley agricultural industry went through a dramatic shift in power, eventually becoming a hub of labor union activity, as Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Larry Itliong formed the United Farm Workers union. In August 1970, The UFW led 5,000 to 7,000 Salinas Valley farmworkers in the Salad Bowl strike.

The crucial point in the UFW's organizing strategy was that they were able to build strength by convincing workers of their inherent collective power. A *Time Magazine*¹¹ article published

¹⁰ (Flores, Summer 2013)

¹¹ (From Fruit Bowl to Salad Bowl, 1970) RACE FORWARD | 2019

shortly after the dispute was resolved pointed out that the issues driving the strikes were about much more than labor: “It was La Causa—the Cause of economic parity and social dignity for Mexican-Americans.”

The Salad Bowl strike marked a significant period in labor history, which was punctuated with violence and retaliation against workers and the UFW. Ultimately the strike led to the state legislature passing the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975 (CALRA). With CALRA, California became the first state in the country to give farmworkers the right to collective bargaining. This victory was hard-won, but it was significant in establishing a legacy of political activism among the region’s Mexican and Mexican-American communities.

This history is deeply ingrained in Salinas. Today’s activism and organizing has many direct connections to the organizing sparked by the UFW. “We had heard rumors of the grape strikes,” says Sabino Lopez, Deputy Director for the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA), “by the time Chavez came, we were already organized and ready.” Many of those organizers, like Lopez, are still involved with the work either directly with the Community Alliance for Racial Equity, or have embedded those organizing tactics into their own organizations. Others have passed on those teachings to their children and grandchildren. Every generation of activists continues to build on and adapt on the teachings of the past while building community power. It is important to acknowledge the role that policy decisions made in creating the conditions for structural racism¹² and racial division in Salinas. The influx of Mexican workers through the Bracero Program and their subsequent reclaiming of labor power prompted many White residents to express racist sentiments and resentment.¹³ This sentiment has been reflected in centuries of racial tensions between Latino and White residents in the region through explicit atrocities such as the lynching of Mexicans, laws that would forbid Mexicans from being in city limits after a certain hour, and red lining.

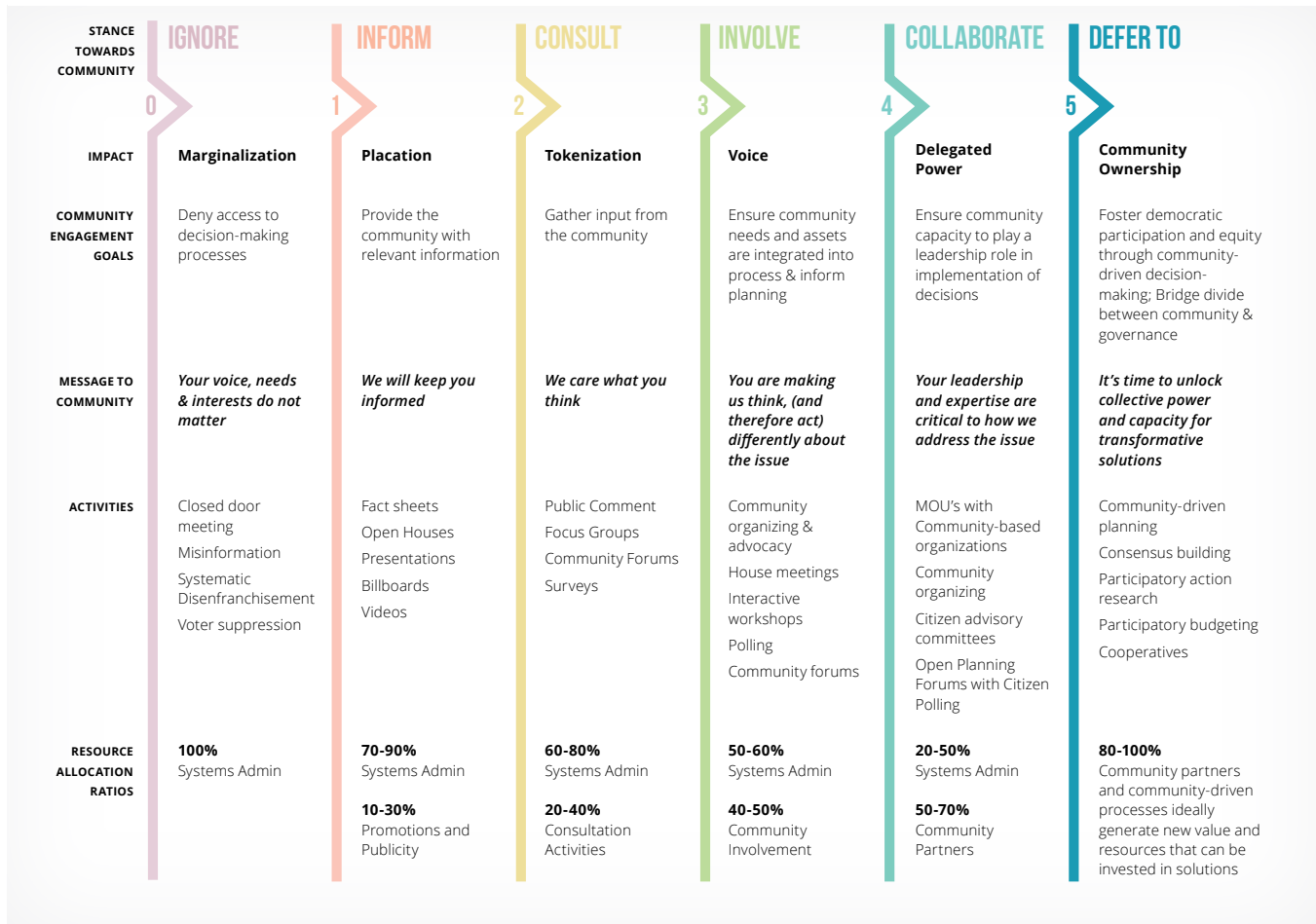
With the annexation of the Alisal community in 1963, Salinas became divided by the 101 freeway, with the predominantly Latino/a farmworker community concentrated on the Alisal, (or East Side). Through the persistent effects of structural racism, the East Side has been systematically deprived of community development funds and civic infrastructure. Once again, it has become evident that the community needs to be front and center and empowered to fight for real change.

¹²Race Forward defines structural racism as “A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.”

¹³(Roberts, 1970)

Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership*

THE SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP



* This tool was developed by Rosa González of Facilitating Power, in part drawing on content from a number of public participation tools, including Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, and the Public Participation Spectrum created by the International Association for Public Participation. The contents have been piloted with municipal community-centered committees for racial equity and environmental justice at the cities of Portland Oregon, Providence Rhode Island, Seattle Washington, and Washington DC; and with the Building Healthy Communities Initiative in Salinas, California, and developed in partnership with Movement Strategy Center.



NEW YORK
145 East 57th Street, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10022
p 212.248.2785 f 212.248.6409

OAKLAND
900 Alice Street, Suite 400
Oakland, CA 94607
p 510.653.3415 f 510.986.1062