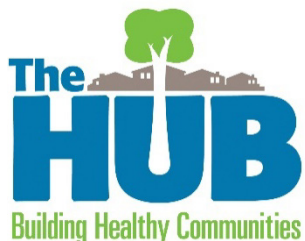


# Sacramento BHC Boys and Men of Color Case Story



February 2019



**THE  
CALIFORNIA  
ENDOWMENT**



2<sup>nd</sup> Annual BMoC Summit

## A Very Special Thank You

This case story was possible due to the reflections and key contributions of the following individuals:

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Sacramento BMoC Case Story Provided By:  
LPC Consulting Associates, Inc.  
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February 2019



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7<sup>th</sup> Annual BMoC Summit Workbook, 2018

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4th Annual BMoC Summit, 2015

# Introduction

## **In 2010, The California Endowment (TCE) launched the 10-year Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative in 14 different communities.**

The criteria for choosing the 14 BHC communities included the social determinants of health, or the economic and social conditions that influence health status.<sup>1</sup> When reviewing health indicator data for California, TCE staff discovered that young males of color in particular, are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to educational attainment, health access, economic opportunity and exposure to violence.<sup>2</sup> For example, although 70 percent of California youth under the age of 25 identify as people of color, California fails to graduate 34.7 percent of its Black and 25.5 percent of its Latino youth from high school compared to 12.2 percent of its white youth.<sup>3</sup> This data led to TCE's commitment to support boys and men of color through the BHC to truly advance the health of California. The BHC initiative is directed at reshaping the 14 communities to positively impact the health of residents. Sacramento is one of the 14 communities, which are racially and geographically diverse, and primarily low-income communities of color.

This case story chronicles the work funded through the BHC initiative in Sacramento to advance the health of boys and young men of color. The intent of this case story is to shed light on a facet of the Sacramento BHC initiative that is addressing the systems of oppression that negatively impact boys and men of color by (1) empowering youth, (2) dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline, and (3) shifting government resources from incarceration to prevention, which are briefly described below.

**Empowering Youth |** TCE identified five drivers of change necessary to transform the 14 BHC communities. One of those drivers is Youth Leadership, Development, and Organizing, which, when realized, includes: (a) youth leadership training, activities and programs; (b) youth actively participating in decision making at the local, regional, and statewide levels; and (c) youth organizing within and across all BHC sites.<sup>4</sup> This section of this case story details the campaigns, programs and services funded through the Sacramento BHC initiative to inspire, and instill the skills necessary for young men of color to be active change agents.

**Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline |** The school-to-prison pipeline is used to describe how punitive school discipline policies and practices remove students from school and push them into the juvenile, and then the criminal justice systems. This “pipeline” can occur directly, when a student is arrested in school due to school discipline policies that mandate a school administrator call the authorities for certain behavioral offenses, or indirectly, since students who are suspended or expelled are nearly three times as likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year.<sup>5</sup> Students of color are often the target of punitive school policies and practices. This section of the case story documents the campaigns and programs implemented by Sacramento BHC grantees to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline locally, as well as how those grantees supported state-level interventions backed by TCE.

**Shifting Government Resources from Incarceration to Prevention |** Incarceration in the U.S. disproportionately impacts communities of color. According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), while the U.S. accounts for five percent of the world’s population, it has 21 percent of the world’s prisoners. Furthermore, in 2014 African Americans were incarcerated at five times the rate of whites and comprised 34 percent of the correctional population. In 2015, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos combined made up 56 percent of the incarcerated population.<sup>6</sup> The statistics for youth of color are just as distressing: African Americans and Latinos make up 80 percent of the incarcerated youth population. Additionally, youth of color are locked up with greater frequency than white youth for similar offenses. California has one of the largest youth prisons systems in the United States (U.S.) that costs taxpayers more than \$1 billion annually.<sup>7</sup> In 2018, criminal justice reform gained traction in California with a series of bills focused on overhauling the state’s juvenile justice system.<sup>8</sup> This section of the case story highlights the Sacramento BHC funded efforts to shift government resources from incarceration to a focus on prevention to restore the health of the Sacramento community.

The above three themes serve to categorize or bring order to the Sacramento BHC boys and men of color work (see *Sacramento Boys and Men of Color timeline*). While the themes provide a structure for presenting this broad range of activities, the tie that binds all the activities together is BHC funding.

The BHC initiative is entering its ninth year, and while there were many stakeholders interviewed and TCE funded case studies reviewed for this case story, due to the length of the initiative, the breadth of work that has occurred, and the resources allotted to create this document, it is probable that not all work directed toward improving the health outcomes for boys and men of color in Sacramento was addressed. Also, the literature about the disparities experienced by boys and men of color, focuses on Black or Latino boys and men of color and typically does not address the Asian and Pacific Islander communities. The “model minority stereotype” has led to these communities being overlooked or treated as the “Asian Pacific Islander or API” panethnicity. To tell the story of how all boys and men of color are disproportionately impacted by systems of oppression, there is a need for a disaggregation of the “API” data to account for the unique experiences of specified Asian and Pacific Islander groups. Additionally, this case story does not detail the important advancements being made by organizations not funded through the BHC initiative, nor does it include girls and women of color who are in equal need of having their story told.

## Sacramento BMoC Timeline 2009-2018

|   | 2009-11   | 2012-14   | 2015-17   | 2018   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>TCE Breaks Ground on BMoC Work</b>                                 | <p><b>2009:</b> TCE launches Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) in Fresno, Oakland, and LA</p> <p><b>2011:</b> South Sacramento forms BMoC Collaborative</p>  | <p><b>2013:</b> TCE approves Sons and Brothers, provides BMoC grants to all 14 BHC sites</p>  | <p><b>2015:</b> Sacramento launches My Brother's Keeper Sacramento Collaborative</p>  |  |
| <b>Empowering Youth</b>   | <p><b>2011:</b> SCUSD establishes the Men's Leadership Academy (MLA)</p>  | <p><b>2012:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> annual BMoC Summit</p> <p><b>2013:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> annual Southeast Asian Youth in Action Summit</p> <p><b>2014:</b> SCUSD establishes the Women's Leadership Academy (WLA)</p>   | <p><b>2015:</b> SCUSD passes Resolution 2845 "Ethnic Studies Resolution"</p> <p><b>2016:</b> SCUSD's MLA and WLA curricula get UC a-g approval</p> <p><b>2016:</b> SCUSD launches Ethnic Studies pilot</p> <p><b>2017:</b> SCUSD launches 2<sup>nd</sup> Ethnic Studies pilot</p>   |  |
| <b>Dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline</b>                      | <p><b>2011:</b> TCE school discipline policy video rally, gave rise to Zero Tolerance Youth Team</p> <p><b>2011:</b> Black Parallel School Board (BPSB) forms the BMoC School Push Advisory Committee</p>               | <p><b>2012:</b> BPSB partners with Cornerstone Theater Co. to produce the play "Zero"</p> <p><b>2012:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> annual youth advocacy training and legislative visits</p> <p><b>2012:</b> State polices AB-1729, AB-2537, SB-1088, AB-1909, and AB-2616 pass</p> <p><b>2013:</b> SCUSD launches the Restorative Justice Collaborative</p> <p><b>2014:</b> National Compadres Network provides healing circle training to SCUSD Youth Development Department and community-based organizations</p> <p><b>2014:</b> State policy AB-420 passes</p> <p><b>2014:</b> SCUSD adopts Whole Child Policy, Student Discipline policy, and enacts the Positive School Climate policy</p> | <p><b>2015:</b> SCUSD announces reducing kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade class sizes</p> <p><b>2016:</b> Campaign for Black Male Achievement launches efforts in Oakland and Sacramento</p> <p><b>2016:</b> Statewide #SchoolsNotPrisons concert tour kicks-off in Sacramento</p>  | <p><b>2018:</b> SCUSD forms an African American Achievement Initiative Advisory Task Force</p>   |
| <b>Shifting Government Resources From Incarceration to Prevention</b> | <p><b>2011:</b> Sacramento County forms the Blue Ribbon Commission on African American Child Deaths</p> <p><b>2011:</b> City of Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson forms the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF)</p> | <p><b>2012:</b> City of Sacramento adopts the MGPTF Strategic Plan 2012-2015</p> <p><b>2012:</b> City of Sacramento receives \$455K of California Gang Reduction Intervention and Prevention funding to implement Ceasefire, TCE funds technical assistance to launch the violence reduction strategy</p> <p><b>2014:</b> I am Prop 47 Sacramento Coalition forms and becomes the Reinvestment Coalition</p>  | <p><b>2016:</b> BHC Hub forms a South Sacramento Unity Circle</p> <p><b>2017:</b> City Council approves 3-year, \$1.5M contract for Advance Peace to implement a gun violence reduction strategy</p> <p><b>2017:</b> Sacramento County Board of Supervisors votes to stop charging fees to families of juvenile offenders, writes off \$23.2M in uncollected debt</p> <p><b>2017:</b> City Council adopts police accountability and reform measures</p> | <p><b>2018:</b> City of Sacramento receives \$500K California Violence Intervention and Prevention grant to fund Advance Peace to include youth ages 12-17</p> <p><b>2018:</b> City of Sacramento initiates the Cannabis Opportunity, Reinvestment, and Equity Program</p> <p><b>2018:</b> Sacramento County rejects Sheriff's contract with ICE to detain immigrants in county jails</p> <p><b>2018:</b> Sacramento Police Department update policy governing the use of officer body cameras</p> <p><b>2018:</b> Sacramento County strengthen independent oversight of Sheriff</p> |

## Immigration, Oppression, and Race-Based Inequalities

The Sacramento BHC has included a large body of work devoted to improving the lives of boys and men of color by directly and indirectly addressing and/or dismantling systems of oppression. Systems of oppression in the U.S. have resulted in communities of color with a lack of access to affordable housing, quality education, jobs, health care, public transportation, grocery stores, and parks and recreation. These communities are often over-policed, have high rates of crime, and are segregated from white communities. The race-based inequalities have a negative impact on the health of communities of color, in that communities of color have shorter life expectancies than most white communities. The disparities are so pronounced that zip code is a predictor of life expectancy. The inequality in life expectancy between zip codes is one reason TCE decided to implement the BHC place-based initiative. The theory is that a long-term investment in a place can begin to reverse the negative health trends experienced by communities of color, in-part by dismantling system of oppression.

Immigration to the U.S. and the social and political response to those waves of immigration, provides a lens for understanding how racism is imbedded in the U.S.'s economic, political and educational institutions thereby creating structural racism or systems of oppression that have produced long-standing, race-based inequalities that negatively impact communities of color. Social and political response to immigration also provides a lens for understanding why 10 years of place-based funding cannot undo entrenched systems of oppression, but can plant seeds that will ultimately grow, and reshape the people and their communities in monumental ways. Following is an abridged summary of immigration to the U.S. and Sacramento Valley, and the racist reactions to the movement of people globally.

For thousands of years the Nisenan Indian Tribe, a branch of the Maidu, inhabited the area now known as the Sacramento Valley.<sup>9</sup> Settlers arrived in the area between 1839 and 1848 establishing agricultural and gold mining communities. These settlements were devastating to the Native peoples, many of whom died due to hunger, disease, displacement and violence.<sup>10</sup> In 1869, the Central Pacific Railroad connected the western and eastern U.S. providing an effective means for Sacramento Valley farmers to ship produce east, and for agriculture to replace gold mining as the primary industry in the region.<sup>11</sup> Early immigration to California and the Sacramento Valley was largely driven by the railroad, and the mining and agricultural industries. Unfortunately, most immigrant waves were met with a racist response from the white European settlers; a few examples are described at right.

### Examples of Historical Discrimination in the United States

**Africa:** After being forcefully removed from their country of origin in the brutal slave trade, many African Americans migrated to California through a migratory movement known as “The Great Migration.” The Great Migration was prompted by the creation of industrial-era jobs in the north and west, and the oppressive conditions in the south where white supremacist ideologies remained after the abolition of slavery. According to the NAACP, lynching became a “popular way of resolving some of the anger that whites had in relation to the freed blacks.” From 1882-1968 (during the period of Jim Crow laws), in the U.S. there were 3,446 known lynchings of African Americans, with 79 percent of all lynchings occurring in the south.<sup>1</sup> Although African Americans were afforded more opportunities in the north and west as compared to the south, they still faced more insidious forms of discrimination.

**China:** Chinese immigrants traveled to the western U.S. to build the railroad and work as laborers in the mining industry.<sup>1</sup> While industry welcomed the cheap labor, white hostility led the United States Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which prohibited further immigration from China. The U.S. continued to pass laws that denied Chinese and Asian immigrants' citizenship, the right to own land, and marry whites.

**Japan:** The Chinese Exclusion Act created a shortage of cheap labor and U.S. employers encouraged Japanese immigration to fill the gap.<sup>1</sup> Japanese immigrants who migrated to California worked primarily as farmers. During World War II Japanese Americans were taken from their homes and placed in internment camps because of U.S. hostility toward and fear of the Japanese government.

**Philippines:** The American colonization of the Philippines that began in 1898 was the catalyst for immigration of Filipinos into the U.S. to work as farmers or fisherman. Like the Chinese and Japanese populations, the Filipino people faced anti-Asian sentiment that often led to low-wages and substandard housing.

**Mexico:** The Mexican Revolution and strong U.S. economy drove the first large wave of migration from Mexico between 1910 and 1930.<sup>1</sup> In 1942 the Braceros program encouraged Mexican nationals to relocate to the U.S. to fill labor shortages caused by World War II.<sup>1</sup> While the Braceros program included rules meant to safeguard Mexican workers, U.S. business owners often ignored those rules and farm wages dropped sharply.

## Racial Covenants Shape Sacramento BHC

The African, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican American peoples settled into the City of Sacramento's West End creating a diverse and interracial neighborhood.<sup>12</sup> The concentration of people of color in this neighborhood was in-part due to the U.S. enacting racial covenants between 1910 and 1930 grounded in historic and entrenched racist ideologies. Racial covenants restricted people of color from owning, leasing/renting or occupying a property, and led to increasing segregation between white and culturally diverse neighborhoods. In Sacramento, racial covenants were not applied to Sacramento's West End neighborhood (i.e., what is now known as the downtown and Old Sacramento areas), and therefore funneled people of color into this neighborhood. However, racist ideologies also informed the development of bank loan rules that classified neighborhoods of color as high risk for loan default, also known as "redlining," preventing the extension of financing for those neighborhoods. This led to economic disinvestment in racially diverse neighborhoods such as Sacramento's West End, and eventually blight. Paradoxically the lack of investment in racially diverse neighborhoods made those neighborhoods targets for redevelopment and ultimately displacement of the residents.

In the 1950s, the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency received support from city leaders to burn down the "blighted" homes in Sacramento's West End neighborhood to make way for new development. The residents were forced to relocate to areas of the city that did not have racially restrictive covenants, e.g., North Franklin, Glen Elder, Meadowview, Oak Park, Lemon Hill, and Fruitridge. The legacy of racially restrictive covenants is evident today; areas of the city that historically had racially restrictive covenants are largely comprised of white, high-income residents and neighborhoods without racially restrictive covenants are home to middle and low-income communities of color.

The City of Sacramento continues to draw immigrants from other countries. As Hmong, Laotian, Vietnamese, Afghan and Syrian war refugees, and immigrants from other countries move to the Sacramento area, they are largely settling in the communities that house the populations displaced by the redevelopment in the 1950s. The neighborhoods are vibrant cultural centers but continue to be plagued by economic disinvestment. The Sacramento BHC area encompasses many of the neighborhoods that did not have racial covenants and is therefore racially diverse and culturally vibrant. However, the history of racial covenants has also led to the Sacramento BHC area having economic and social conditions that are indicative of poor health, which led to TCE selecting the community as one of the 14 BHC sites. How boys and men of color became a focus for TCE and Sacramento is detailed in the subsequent section.



*4<sup>th</sup> Street Sacramento's Japantown, near Capitol Avenue c. 1949. Courtesy: Center for Sacramento History*



*A former site in Japantown and a future site of an office building on Capitol Mall c. 1958. Courtesy: Center for Sacramento History*



## The California Endowment Breaks Ground on BMoC Work

In 2009, TCE began piloting a **boys and young men of color strategy** by funding exploratory efforts in Fresno, Los Angeles and Oakland to address school climate and the school-to-prison pipeline. The three sites were chosen due to their geographic, historical, and demographic conditions, and because they had existing efforts focused on boys and men of color. TCE also began convening local and statewide organizations engaged in boys and men of color work with the goal of developing a coalition with a sustained focus on policy and system change. TCE wanted the coalition to be an independent entity, and therefore funded PolicyLink to convene the coalition that was initially called the Leadership and Learning Network, later known as the Boys and Men of Color Network, and now named the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. The coalition provides space for state and local organizations from the 14 BHC communities to collectively engage in conferences and trainings to improve life outcomes for boys and young men of color. In August 2013, based on the exploratory work with the three pilot sites and coalition building, the TCE board approved **Sons and Brothers**, a \$50 million funding commitment to improve the health and life outcomes of boys and men of color.<sup>13</sup> This strategy began funneling \$25 - \$50 thousand annually to the 11 BHC communities that were not part of the pilot program, to broadly support the boys and men of color work throughout California.

## Putting Sacramento BHC on the BMoC Map

When TCE began funding boys and men of color work at three BHC sites in 2009, Kim Williams (K. Williams) the Sacramento BHC Hub Manager, recognized that Sacramento already had organizations dedicated to improving the lives of boys and men of color that would add value to TCE's statewide coalition, and therefore should be included in the work. According to K. Williams:

*Those doing BHC work heard about boys and men of color work and realized that it did not include us. For me when I looked at it [TCE's BMoC work] and was reading about it, I said, 'wait a minute, we have organizations doing this work in Sacramento, why can't we do this?'*

To begin building a centrally organized Sacramento boys and men of color collaborative, K. Williams invited PolicyLink - funded by TCE to convene what is now known as the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color - to speak in Sacramento about the three boys and men of color pilot sites, and the statewide network. The presentation was well attended and led interested parties to form the **Sacramento Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) Collaborative** in 2011.

The Sacramento BMoC Collaborative included organizations involved in youth leadership development, trauma-informed care, and school discipline policy work.<sup>14</sup> The BMoC members met regularly to discuss the direction and purpose of the collaborative, as well as strengthen the working relationships of collaborative members. From the outset, collaborative members knew that the voices of boys and young men of color was essential for guiding the work. To solicit youth voice, the collaborative decided to organize a Boys and Men of Color Summit, which is *described further in a subsequent section*. K. Williams relayed that, "as we were building a BMoC Collaborative, those [summit break out session discussion themes] were going to be the issues" the BMoC Collaborative would focus on.



1<sup>st</sup> Annual BMoC Summit, 2012

The BMoC Collaborative used the information obtained from the first summit to outline the results they desired to achieve, the strategy for attaining those results, and to develop a vision statement, which was as follows:<sup>15</sup>

***Using a multi ethnic, multi sector approach focused on policy and system change the Sacramento BMoC Collective will seek to improve the quality of life of boys and young men of color. The Sacramento BMoC collaborative is working collectively to improve the educational achievement of BMoC living in Sacramento.***<sup>16</sup>

While the Sacramento BMoC Collaborative focused on issues facing boys and young men of color locally, statewide and national efforts increased as well. In 2014, President Obama launched the **My Brother's Keeper (MBK)**, to address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color. MBK included a community challenge for cities, Tribal Nations, towns and counties to create and implement plans to ensure all young people can achieve their full potential.<sup>17</sup> In response to the challenge, then City of Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson led the creation of a regional My Brother's Keeper initiative in Sacramento with funding from the Sacramento BHC and the Sierra Health Foundation.



Youth attending 6<sup>th</sup> Annual BMoC Summit, 2017

Sacramento now had two active and overlapping collaboratives: Sacramento BMoC Collaborative and the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Sacramento Collaborative, which included most of the individuals and organizations involved in the Sacramento BMoC Collaborative. According to a Sacramento BMoC Collaborative member now active with the MBK Sacramento Collaborative:

***The BMoC Collaborative how it used to be has changed. That collaborative became the place for MBK [Sacramento]. All of the people involved with the BMoC Collaborative are still involved with MBK. I would say it is the same group.***

In 2014, three years after the Sacramento BMoC formed, the members made the strategic decision to disband and focus their efforts on the MBK Sacramento Collaborative. The BMoC Collaborative members acknowledged that both the MBK and BMoC Collaboratives were focused on boys and men of color, but that the MBK Sacramento Collaborative, led by the City's Mayor and tied to a nationwide movement started by the President of the United States, had a higher potential for capturing additional financial resources for much needed programs and services. The accomplishments of the Sacramento BMoC Collaborative (i.e., building trust between partner agencies, developing a shared vision and mutually reinforcing strategies, and founding the annual BMoC Summit) provided a strong foundation for the MBK Sacramento Coalition to build on.

In 2018, the MBK Sacramento Collaborative released a Guide to Action that outlines strategies for change in four impact areas. Additionally, MBK Sacramento – in partnership with Black Child Legacy Campaign, Healing the Hood and the Positive Youth Justice Initiative – was one of 10 entities in the nation that received an Obama Foundation grant to improve life outcomes for boys and young men of color.



7<sup>th</sup> Annual BMoC Summit, 2018

## Empowering Youth

### Youth development has been a sustained emphasis of the Sacramento BHC initiative since day one.

The partners believe that youth are integral to transforming Sacramento into a place where everyone thrives. To this end, the Sacramento BHC includes programs that teach youth tangible leadership skills, while also providing them opportunities to use their voice and apply the skills learned to become strong leaders of change.

### Annual Boys and Men of Color Summit

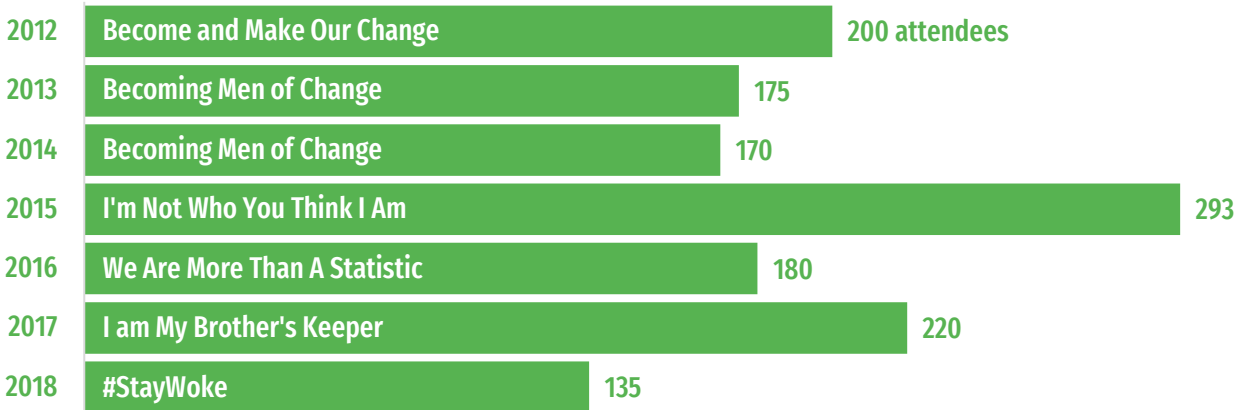
While the Sacramento BMoC Collaborative folded into the MBK Sacramento Collaborative, the **Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) Summit** is the BMoC Collaborative's legacy that the Sacramento BHC Hub and Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD or District) Men's and Women's Leadership Academy (MWLA) have carried forward. The BMoC Summit is an annual event that brings together high school age youth and a network of community-based organizations, schools and government leaders from the Sacramento region to "address the systemic problems that contribute to the inequities and crisis facing boys and men of color" and to "promote policies and system changes that improve the health and success of boys and men of color."<sup>18</sup> The summit is a venue for the youth to talk openly and honestly amongst themselves and with adult allies, about how they are impacted by race, power and privilege and what it means to be a young leader of color. The youth are encouraged to celebrate their culture and their diversity, and to draw upon their strengths to positively impact their communities. The MWLA Leadership Team, which is described in the next section, plans the annual summit with mentoring and facilitation assistance from the BMoC Summit Coordinator. The Sacramento BHC Hub provides financial and logistical assistance (i.e., reserving space for the summit, distributing press releases).

Youth have been involved in planning the annual summit to various degrees since its inception. According to adult allies who facilitate youth involvement in the planning process, the summit has always been “youth led,” but in the past few years has become a summit “for youth and by youth.” In the first two years, youth provided input through the planning process, but adults made the final decisions. In year three (2014) the planning process became a full-fledge leadership development opportunity, as the youth requested autonomy to plan the summit, a role that has continued to strengthen with each year, as described by one of the adult allies:

*There have always been young people at the table... [but] in the early days, it was [adults saying], ‘we want to have sessions about XYZ, what do you think? You like it? Good, let’s do that.’ But next time around, we said, ‘let’s have young people have conversations by themselves and see what they think’... that was a good idea, but the adults would still come back and say, ‘that is a good idea, but what about doing it this way?’ Next year, they [youth] were the ones saying what they want and making the decisions. Since then, it has been youth making the decisions and not seeking approval.*

The MWLA youth choose the summit theme, workshop topics and plenary speaker(s). In 2017, the youth decided to go a step further and facilitate the workshops too, a role they had assigned to adults in previous years. While the summit was primarily attended by youth from SCUSD in the first year, in subsequent years the number of nearby school districts that send students to the summit (e.g., Washington, Elk Grove, Twin River, Natomas, and San Juan Unified School Districts) has steadily increased. The themes and estimated attendance for each of the annual summits are below:<sup>19</sup>

### Annual BMoC Summit Themes and Estimated Attendance



For the first five years, the summit was held in the summer. However, beginning in 2017 the youth decided to hold the summit in the fall to: (1) leverage transportation resources provided by the respective school districts and lessen the burden on youth trying to find a ride to and from the summit, and (2) facilitate the youth using their communication networks at school to advertise the summit. According to Adrian Williams (A. Williams), a Youth Development Specialist and MWLA Coordinator/Adult Ally, youth are more inclined to attend the annual summit because:

*They [youth] have been talking to their MLA counterpart that is planning it. They [youth] knew somebody on the planning committee, versus a group of young people that only know it is a BMoC Conference.*

Additionally, by moving the summit to the fall, youth can bring the workshop topics back to their school classrooms and continue to discuss the issues with peers, building on the initial learning acquired through the summit. Shifting the summit to the school year also allows the adult allies to follow up with youth to determine if the summit made an impact. According to A. Williams:

*How do we follow up with, how do we know if they [BMoC Summit participants] enjoyed it? In the past, we could not do that ... if they are not [summit attendees] in MLA, I do not know how I am going to reach them. Now, if they are not in MLA ... they will all be in Google classroom, so we can check in with them and see how it is going.*

According to young men with the MWLA Leadership Team, it is important to have an annual summit for boys and men of color because it provides a space for education, learning about life skills, and advancing peace as illustrated by the below quotes:

*It is all about unification, it will eventually bring peace ... in Sac, if you go ten minutes down the street, it is a totally different area from where you just came from, and those two areas do not get along. If you bring together the youth from those areas, it will eventually break down the confrontation you have when two different neighborhoods meet.*

*It is very important because it [the summit] offers education and it [the summit] offers networking. Education is one of the most powerful ways to influence the future.*

*You learn [at the summit] if you get in trouble, do this, this, or this or do not say this or this. You learn about jobs and applying to jobs, and they are teaching you about college and what to do when you get a job interview. They are teaching you necessary life skills to survive in life.*

The BMoC Summit is an example of what youth can accomplish when given the trust, encouragement and space necessary to realize and exercise their leadership skills.



3<sup>rd</sup> Annual BMoC Summit, 2014

## Men’s and Women’s Leadership Academy

One strong partner in the Sacramento BMoC landscape is the Men’s and Women’s Leadership Academy (MWLA), a leadership development program for elementary through high school age youth in the SCUSD that aims to “intentionally combat the school-to-prison-pipeline for underserved low-income students of color by creating supportive and productive learning environments.”<sup>20</sup> When **SCUSD launched the district-wide program in 2012**, it was for young men only and was referred to as the Men’s Leadership Academy. In **2014, SCUSD expanded the program to include young women**. The program is currently offered at 11 school sites (7 high, 2 middle and 2 elementary schools) as an in- or after-school program. While the program is for young women and men, the classroom component separates the women (WLA) from the men (MLA) for the students to have deep, and sometimes personal, conversations about the unique issues that impact each gender. According to Marcus Strother (Strother), Director of Youth Development with SCUSD and MWLA Coordinator, in MWLA...

“Before I joined MLA, I felt really isolated. I did not really have a voice, things would happen that I did not like, that I did not feel like I could do anything about... But now, as a group, not just [my school site] but the whole of Sacramento, each of the MLAs have their own power and our voice actually matters now. If there is an issue we see and want to change, we now have voice because we are more unified now. **Together, we will rise.**”

- MWLA Leadership Team member

*...we teach our students to be scholars of advocacy, to be change agents for the school system, to salvage dreams and save lives. We focus on empowering them, not just through grades but experiences they have had. ... We give them access to adult advocates ... so every student has an adult they know they can count on. We tie them into their own schools, as well as to their communities.*



Pacific Elementary School MLA student showing off his “I AM...” statement

MWLA uses a *Social Justice Youth Development Model*<sup>21,22</sup> to empower the youth to be scholars of advocacy for self, culture and community. In part, students are empowered by district administrators, school counselors and certified teachers collaborating to provide wraparound services that promote: (a) *social emotional learning*, which is defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, as, “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions;”<sup>23</sup> (b) *culturally relevant and responsive leadership development*, which builds on developing leadership capacities of diverse students by incorporating an understanding of how systematic oppression influences educational contexts;<sup>24</sup> (c) *meaningful mentorship* that pair youth with adult advocates, and (d) *academic support* that engages students through their own means of learning.

## Social Justice Youth Development

The Social Justice Youth Development framework stems from the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which is an assets-based framework that promotes: youth participation and involvement; positive environments and safe and structured places; skill and asset development opportunities; opportunities to serve others; and positive relationships with adults. The Social Justice Youth Development framework adds to PYD by using an ecological model to examine social, economic, and political forces affecting youth, and positions democratic participation and identity development as central to youth development.

## Curriculum and Program Components

MWLA uses a curriculum that aligns with Common Core State Standards and is an a-g certified college-preparatory elective course, meaning that the MWLA course is recognized by the University of California system for college admissions. The curriculum received a-g approval by the University of California in 2016. While the curriculum provides structure through four focus areas: (1) education to career path, (2) identity development, (3) social justice youth development, and (4) personal and community impact, it was intentionally designed to be flexible and provide teachers with a high degree of autonomy, so the teachers can respond when the students ask to take a “deeper dive” on a topic. According to Strother:

*There is a real intentionality around the autonomy of our teachers ... our themes are very ambiguous ... we want to make sure that the they [MLA teachers] are touching what they [students] want around identity development and their career path, social justice advocacy, and youth leadership ... there are certain curriculum elements that are fixed ... there is structure. There is also culturally relevant teaching, but there is life relevant teaching as well.*

This high degree of teacher autonomy and curriculum flexibility resonates with students who feel that the MWLA teachers value their interests, which enhances their learning experience. A MWLA Leadership Team member relayed what he values about the program<sup>a</sup>:

*I love that when teachers come into the classroom, they do not have books they have to catch up on... if they do not feel like they spent enough time on a certain topic, they will dedicate that time to that... rather [than] being a forgotten page in a book they have to move past in a chapter. A lot of the time, they will scrap their agenda because they found something else that the students feel is valuable to learn.*

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<sup>a</sup> The MWLA youth focus group participants were young men to align with the case story emphasis. The young men referred to the program as MLA, which may have been a result of the focus group questions referring to the program as MLA. This case story uses MWLA when referring to the program - with the exception of the youth quotes - in keeping with District convention.

Following is a summary of how the four MWLA curriculum focus areas shape the program.

## 1. Education to Career Path

According to Strother, the MWLA teachers encourage career exploration by determining, “if they [students] are interested in certain careers, we try to introduce them to those careers. If they are not sure, we introduce them to as many things as we can.” One MWLA student highlighted this approach by stating that the program helped him find his career path:

*[MLA] helped me find a career for myself that I actually want to go into once I got out of high school and college ... I like to produce music. At first, I did not think I was going to do anything like that, I did not have any experience in music, but MLA helped me find that. [MLA] helps you find yourself and where you are going to fit [in] society... There is a pressure, but it is a good pressure to try to find yourself and to know what you are going after... You just have to get good grades and then you are set... a huge part of being successful is finding something you enjoy, and MLA definitely helped with that.*

## 2. Identity Development

One student described a program activity called “who are you?” in which one student repeatedly asked his partner the question “who are you?” and the partner must answer the question differently each time. According to that student, “it was [about] thinking differently, it was thinking about and being aware [of] who you really are and trying to figure yourself out. That is one reason I like MLA, because it opened my mind to who I really am.”

Another student noted how the brotherhood fostered through MWLA helped increase confidence in himself:

*The benefit of MLA is an increase in self-confidence. I am a part of a brotherhood; I can be a role model and still be myself. I do not have to put on a facade for anyone. More so, it has given me self-belief that I can do what I want. Before [MLA], I had all these ideas in my head... I did not know if I was going in the right direction, but after [being in MLA], it told me that I am going in the right direction.*

## 3. Social Justice Youth Development

The Social Justice Youth Development framework encourages youth to examine social and economic forces. One MWLA participant demonstrated his knowledge of such forces by describing what he had learned about structural oppression impacting the health of low-income neighborhoods:

*We talked about different forms of oppression – sometimes it is intentional, but sometimes it is not intentional. We talked about low-income neighborhoods [have] less fresh produce and grocery stores, [but there are] more liquor stores and gas stations, [and] there is more smoke shops. But if you go to a nicer part of town, there is more fresh produce and... things that promote better health. Because when all you have [are] liquor, gas, and smoke shops, that is where people are going to go to get food if there is not a grocery store for two miles. That is a form of oppression itself. It is keeping our communities unhealthy.*



## 4. Personal and Community Impact

MWLA aims to have youth become scholars and advocates of “self, culture, and community.” According to Strother, this means:

*Getting young people individually to understand who they are and stand up for who they are. Whether that is being an advocate individually or at the community level. For culture, we are intentionally focused on young men of color, how do we step into that place where we step into that culture, as well as how to create legacy wealth in our culture. Being in a place where they have vocabulary and be strong in being what they believe, whether it is self, culture or community.*

When asked to explain what it means to be an advocate of self, culture and community, a youth provided:

*In low-income communities... there is a lack of thought going on for what is happening. [People] do self-destructive things, [such as] taking or selling drugs... [being] advocates of self, culture, and community is becoming aware and conscious of what you are doing individually, [and] being an advocate. If you see someone selling drugs, you tell them, 'if you are selling drugs, do you realize you are hurting yourself [and your] community?' And that culture is happening all over America. It does not have to be just selling drugs... We can fix ourselves but being advocates for community means looking out for [others]. So, if we see someone else selling drugs, we are going to help them out.*

Adrian Williams relayed that the youth are becoming strong advocates, as demonstrated by two MWLA classes that wrote letters to their school principals expressing their desire to have an MWLA class every day, like a math, English or science class. According to A. Williams the youth “will let folks know this is what they want and what they need.” While youth being vocal about their needs can be uncomfortable to some adults, A. Williams noted that MWLA encourages and embraces youth advocacy because, “if we create advocates, they have to be advocates all around, not just here and there when we [adults] want it.” Strother iterated, that in MWLA, “we do not study leadership, we practice it.”

## Experiential Learning

The MWLA includes experiential learning where students develop knowledge and skills from direct learning outside of a traditional academic setting. According to Strother, these types of experiences are important because, “as much as we are telling them about things, the more we can do it the better.”

**Field Trips:** Each year the MWLA teachers and coordinators fundraise to take youth on a field trip. The field trips are a means for helping students understand, “how the global effects the local.” Many of the MWLA students have little to no experience traveling outside of Sacramento. During the field trips, the MWLA youth will connect with Black and brown youth and adult leaders from other parts of the U.S. and visit museums that celebrate Black and brown culture and history. Strother relayed that through connecting with others, “they [MWLA youth]



MLA students visiting the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C.

are able to relate to someone that looks like them,” and is, “building the perspective outside of the world you live in since a lot of youth in Sacramento do not know much outside of Sacramento.” A. Williams noted that the field trips also show the youth that, “you are not the only one going through what you are going through.”

Since 2012, MWLA has made field trips to the Coronado Naval Base near San Diego, Washington D.C., Atlanta, and several college campuses throughout California. During MWLA’s most recent trip to Atlanta, 15 students attended the Student African American Brotherhood conference “Destined, Determined, Dedicated: A True Journey to Success,” which included speakers and workshops regarding empowerment for young men of color. According to A. Williams and Strother the conference provided an opportunity for youth to learn the value of leadership and had an impact on students. A. Williams and Strother noted that this conference, in particular, demonstrated that, “there are a lot of students in leadership programs, and that it is cool do good in school.” Students were exposed to something outside of Sacramento, and then reflected on, and juxtaposed, the local with the global.

**Leadership Team:** The MWLA Leadership Team is composed of two to four students from each MWLA site. The students who are selected for the Leadership Team either apply or are chosen to represent their school because they have demonstrated leadership qualities. Members of the Leadership Team help plan the annual BMoC summit, contribute to the program’s recurring “WE DREAM” podcast and represent MWLA at speaking events.

**Alumni:** Upon graduation, MWLA participants can engage with the program as alumni mentors. Alumni mentors primarily work at the MWLA school sites, providing support for the MWLA advisors. Alumni are also involved in planning the development of the MWLA alumni program.

The MWLA program and curriculum is structured differently than most academic classes. The curriculum is adaptable and can build on current events and student interests; youth are taught leadership and advocacy skills and provided with opportunities to apply their talents, and adults make concerted efforts to connect with students. The students that participate in the program are the best source for expressing the value of the MWLA program. When asked how MWLA differs from traditional classroom learning, young men from the MWLA Leadership Team relayed the following:

*I took AP Calc last year. I did well in the class, I got good grades, but it was not meaningful. I stepped out the class and forgot everything I learned. For my MLA class, I keep thinking for hours and hours, for days and days. It plants a seed and leaves me thinking about issues or whatever it is.*

*If they [MWLA Advisors] ask a question and you do not have an answer right away, they will wait for you and let you think, as opposed to a “real” teacher; if you do not get it right, they will tell you, you are wrong. They [MWLA Advisors] care what we have to say, they do not limit us. It is more open-ended where it can lead to discussion to take those deeper dives to understand what we are thinking.*

*With regular school teachers, they do not actually ask you how you are doing. But MLA Advisors always ask, and they mean it. They know what is going on in our life.*

*With traditional school, there is a clear obvious agenda that is being pushed that we have to go through things, and that is what makes it feel plain and stale ... with MLA there is a more personal connection, that can help it not feel like you are going through a conveyor belt for the other classes.*

## Sacramento City Unified School District | Ethnic Studies Initiative

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the SCUSD Board of Education adopted Resolution 2845: Ethnic Studies Resolution to require ethnic studies as a graduation requirement as proposed by the Student Advisory Council (SAC).<sup>25</sup> The SAC is comprised of students from each participating high school student leadership class or Youth Congress and was the driving force behind the Board adopting the resolution. The SAC received campaign support from the Sacramento Ethnic Studies Now (ESNS) Coalition, comprised of community members and nonprofit organizations such as Sacramento BHC grantee Hmong Innovative Politics (HIP).

The SAC works in partnership with SCUSD administration and the School Board to strengthen and infuse student voice into district-wide policies. The SAC is focused on decreasing school drop-outs and closing the achievement gap by creating college- or career-ready students.<sup>26</sup> Each year, the SAC selects initiatives to focus on during the school year. In the 2014/15 school year, the SAC sought input from their peers through 1,000 surveys and focus groups and interviews to inform their initiatives. The SAC selected three initiatives to work on based on the data collected - one of which was the Ethnic Studies initiative - and divided into three working groups.

The SAC students working on the Ethnic Studies initiative met with California State University, Sacramento and University of California, Davis representatives, and SCUSD Academic Office and Administration representatives, to learn about the steps required for SCUSD to implement Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement, and to learn about existing curriculums. The SAC also received assistance from the ESNC to develop a media campaign, release a petition to demonstrate support for the program that was signed by 3,000 people, and to draft a letter of support, which 26 community-based organizations signed.<sup>27</sup>

The District implemented the Ethnic Studies program during the 2016/17 school year at three pilot high schools – Luther Burbank, C.K. McClatchy, and George Washington Carver – serving approximately 325 students. Data from the initial pilot indicated that students reported higher levels of critical thinking, social emotional learning, and positive identity development.<sup>28</sup> In the 2017/18 school year, the Ethnic Studies program was expanded to nine of the 13 SCUSD high schools, serving approximately 1,500 students.

Sacramento BHC grantee HIP is an active member of ESNC who continue to monitor implementation of the SCUSD initiative. Based on the success of the SCUSD initiative, the ESNC is expanding their efforts to other Sacramento County school districts and has launched a campaign advocating for Elk Grove Unified School District to add ethnic studies as a high school graduation requirement.



*Sacramento's Ethnic Studies Now Coalition upon SCUSD's approval of Resolution 2845 "Ethnic Studies Resolution", 2015*



*MLA youth advocating for continued funding and support for programs like MLA at SCUSD board meeting*

## Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

**Punitive school discipline policies and practices that remove students from school and push them into the criminal justice system is referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline. Young men of color are disproportionately funneled into this pipeline.**

The school-to-prison pipeline is exacerbated by “zero-tolerance” policies that automatically impose severe punishment regardless of the circumstance and can result in a student being removed from school for a relatively minor infraction, even if it is the student’s first offense. Zero-tolerance policies are often applied to acts of “willful defiance,” which is a vaguely defined term and can include inconsequential acts such as a student not following directions, wearing a hat in class or talking back to a teacher.

Zero-tolerance policies disproportionately impact students of color. African American and Latinx students are three times more likely to be suspended under zero-tolerance policies than white students.<sup>29</sup> Whereas students of color are disciplined for subjective offenses like “insubordination” or “willful defiance,” white students are disciplined primarily for objective behaviors like drug possession.<sup>30</sup> The BHC initiative has supported efforts to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and to create educational systems that embrace and support young men of color in culturally responsive ways.

# Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

## Formative School Discipline Reform Movement

The BHC planning process in 2009 revealed that high rates of suspension for students of color was an issue in most of the 14 communities. In response, TCE funded school-discipline reform campaigns in Oakland, Los Angeles, Fresno and Long Beach. As the initiative unfolded, BHC Program Managers from the 14 sites continued to bring the school discipline issue to the attention of the TCE statewide team, who in response compiled data showing that the problem was widespread, and that in almost every county in California students of color had high rates of suspension. Recognizing that school discipline had the potential to be a statewide policy issue, TCE partnered with the Council for a Strong America's Fight Crime: Invest in Kids program (Fight Crime), and two community organizing groups – Community Asset Development Re-defining Education (CADRE) and Labor Community Strategy Center (LCSC) - to convene stakeholders working on the school discipline issue across the state. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, representatives from eight BHC sites, the LA-based organizers, Fight Crime, and TCE convened to discuss their respective school discipline work. This convening led to the establishment of the School Discipline Action Team - a coalition of community organizers, legal and statewide advocates that collectively works on school discipline reform - and was pivotal for school discipline becoming a statewide campaign.<sup>31</sup>

The **Black Parallel School Board (BPSB)**, a Sacramento BHC grantee, was present at the May 2011 school discipline convening. The BPSB formed in 2008 to act as a “parallel” school board of the SCUSD Board of Education and to promote Black student achievement. The mission of the BPSB is to “support the educational growth and achievement of Black students by monitoring all educational activities and programs of the school district to ensure that they are compatible with the needs of African American students in the district.”<sup>32</sup> When TCE staff decided to hold a “virtual rally” in October 2011 for youth from the 14 BHC sites to share their personal stories and raise awareness about the magnitude of the school discipline policy issue, BPSB was asked to mobilize Sacramento youth for the rally. At the rally, a youth with the BPSB recounted how strictly enforced school discipline policies negatively affected one of her classmates:<sup>33</sup>



Sacramento youth attending the Virtual Rally, October 2011  
Source: [SacramentoPress.com](http://SacramentoPress.com)

*I remember one incident at my school where a student was playing around with another student and threw a water balloon at him. Well, he missed his friend and hit the teacher. Administrators classified this balloon as a weapon. Now, I agree that the student should have been punished for this accident, although I do not agree that ... the student should have been charged as an assault on the teacher and suspended for five days. It was clear he did not mean to, but just because the teacher was mad and embarrassed, he wanted to punish the kid in a very severe way. This student missed many assignments and had a hard time passing his class when he returned. It is school policy not to let students make up work when they are suspended – to me, this is crazy.<sup>34</sup>*

# Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Through sharing their personal narratives, the students began to understand that their experiences were not isolated incidents, but part of a larger punitive school discipline policy trend that disproportionately impacts students of color. According to Christine Tien, TCE Program Manager for the Sacramento BHC, the virtual rally was, “the first time the young people in Sacramento were like ‘these other kids are facing the same issues as me’ and it felt really empowering.”

The youth BPSB mobilized had a strong presence at the video rally, which strengthened the organization’s role to connect local, Sacramento-based school discipline efforts with state-wide work led by the School Discipline Action Team. This, along with the growing momentum around school discipline reform, provided an opportunity for BPSB to facilitate the development of the **Zero Tolerance Youth Team, Boys and Men of Color School Push-Out Advisory Committee**, and the **Restorative Justice Collaborative** to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

## Zero Tolerance Youth Leadership Team

The BPSB founded the Zero Tolerance Youth Leadership Team in 2011. According to Carl Pinkston (Pinkston) with the BPSB, the program is a leadership pipeline to create, “the next generation of movement builders.” Through the leadership program high school students learn: how to structure and deliver a presentation, public speaking, action research, and data and policy analysis.<sup>35</sup> The Zero Tolerance Youth Leadership Team uses those skills to make presentations about the negative impacts of zero tolerance school policies to legislators, policy experts, and school boards.

One innovative way the Zero Tolerance Youth Leadership Team advocated for school discipline reform was by performing two plays, *Zero* and *Willful*. In 2011, TCE funded Cornerstone Theater Company, which creates original plays based on community members’ narratives, to produce plays about punitive school discipline policies and the school-to-prison pipeline. The BPSB, with assistance from the Zero Tolerance Youth Team, brought together youth, adults, and school staff from three different Sacramento high schools to obtain firsthand accounts upon which to base the play *Zero*. Cornerstone wrote and produced the play, which included training Zero Tolerance Youth Leadership Team members and community residents to act alongside Cornerstone actors.

The play functioned as a powerful advocacy tool by humanizing the issue of zero-tolerance policies through the portrayal of James, a student who is suspended for willful defiance. According to Pinkston, *Zero* not only exposed the impact of the policies on James, but, “shows how the teachers and administrators are under constant pressure to perform... they are forced to get rid of the kids they do not want to teach” and how parents “do not have a lot of time and attention to work with kids because they are working two or three jobs.”



*Zero Tolerance youth and adult allies*

# Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

In 2012, *Zero* was performed at the California State Capitol for legislators and their staff. According to Pinkston, it was especially impactful for legislators who may “talk about the issue, but never hear the young person’s and parents’ point of view about zero-tolerance.” *Zero* was then performed at the Guild Theatre located in the Sacramento BHC area, and included a moderator that engaged the audience in dialogue in-between acts. The conversations pertained to issues such as: “How many people know someone who’s been suspended from school?” to iterate the impact of school policies on Sacramento area communities of color.<sup>36</sup> Overall *Zero* was a very successful education and advocacy tool. The State Capitol performance was packed with legislators and their staff, and the subsequent performances at the Guild Theatre were sold out.



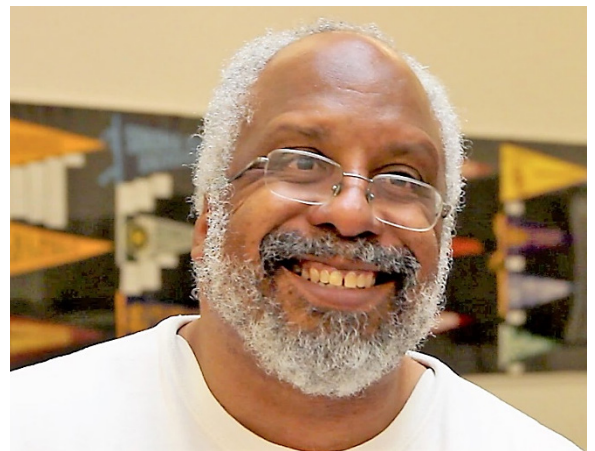
*Production still from the play Zero, 2012*

In 2013, the BPSB, in partnership with Cornerstone developed and performed a similar play, *Willful*, which described the impact “willful defiance” has on students’ lives. BPSB used the play to advocate for legislators passing AB420, which eliminated the suspensions of kindergarten through third grade students for willful defiance. *Willful* was performed at the State Capitol during the AB420 legislative hearing. The play was also aired through Access Sacramento, a nonprofit public access station and Sacramento BHC partner.<sup>37</sup>

The BPSB owns the *Zero* and *Willful* screenplays and uses the plays as an education tool for the Zero Tolerance Youth Leadership Team.

## Boys and Men of Color School Push-Out Advisory Committee

The BPSB received BHC funding to form the Boys and Men of Color School Push-Out Advisory Committee in 2011 to: (1) better understand how school discipline policies were impacting Sacramento communities of color; (2) develop policy reforms based on community input, and (3) engage community members in advocating for policy change. Recognizing that school push-out policies (i.e., discipline policies that remove students from school and push them into the juvenile justice system) affect racial and ethnic groups in different ways, the School Push-Out Advisory Committee included three racial/ethnic committees - Southeast Asian, Latino and African American - and a coordinating committee. BPSB made concerted attempts to establish a Native American racial/ethnic committee in partnership with SCUSD staff but was ultimately not successful. Parent and student outreach was impacted by the inability to get an accurate count of how many Native American students attend SCUSD, and staff transition at the District. The racial/ethnic committees provided a place for organizations and residents to talk about the nuanced ways their communities are impacted by the school push-out policies, and



*Carl Pinkston, Black Parallel School Board  
Source: AcesTooHigh.com*

# Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

the coordinating committee was an opportunity for all three committees to come together and discuss the similarities and differences in their experiences and develop cross-ethnic policy recommendations. BPSB contracted with community-based organizations, which in a few cases were BHC grantees, to anchor the subcommittee work by providing dedicated staff support to recruit and maintain adult and youth resident participation. The anchor organizations also facilitated youth participatory action research projects to examine the unique ways students of their ethnic group experience school push-out. According to Carl Pinkston with BPSB, “youth from the Hmong community are looking at potential reasons that Hmong students are being pushed out. Is it language, culture, immigration?” The subcommittee structure allowed for a nuanced understanding of school push-out policy impacts, as explained by Pinkston:

*It was a powerful strategy. To this day, I can walk into a room, we can talk about suspension and expulsion but it is specifically about African American or about Latinos or about Cambodian and Hmong populations ... you cannot assume all Latinos are the same ... you have to understand why immigrants do not get suspended versus those who have been there for generations, and there is the colorism mix. Why are darker tones suspended more than those with European features? ... It is still useful for me when I talk about what the numbers [suspension and expulsion data] look like.*

The School Push-Out Advisory Committee was also effective for developing a common agenda around which each group could mobilize as a unified front. However, maintaining the committee structure was labor intensive.

BPSB staff were the backbone organization for each subcommittee and the coordinating committee, and all four committees met monthly. As the backbone organization, BPSB chaired the committees, developed the meeting agendas, called committee members to remind them about upcoming meetings to maintain a high level of engagement, arranged for policy or research experts to attend meetings, and maintained meeting records. Carl Pinkston noted that, “if someone asked me now to do this work, I literally do not have the capacity to do it.” The labor required to maintain the Boys and Men of Color School Push-Out Advisory Committee was part of the reason that BPSB disbanded the committee in 2013 and, “shifted all of our efforts to bringing everyone together to be a part of the Restorative Justice Collaborative.”

## Restorative Justice Collaborative

In 2012, BPSB began meeting monthly with the SCUSD Superintendent’s Office to promote establishing a team focused on reforming the District’s school discipline policies. In 2013, SCUSD received funding through the Sacramento BHC to convene the *Restorative Justice Collaborative* to develop policies directed at repairing school climate and reducing the use of suspensions and expulsions as disciplinary measures for students of color. A requirement of SCUSD receiving funding was including BPSB on the committee.

For Pinkston, shifting BPSB resources from the School Push-Out Advisory Committee to the Restorative Justice Collaborative made sense:

*We were really excited, we liked this approach ... I think it was a good tactic too, to put us in the grant proposal. We dragged everyone else in. We brought in Hmong Innovative Politics, a lot of youth, all the networks cultivated through the multiethnic racial [school push-out] strategy.*

When SCUSD launched the Restorative Justice Collaborative, the members included parents, teachers, school site and district administrators, and community members. The collaborative also included a Steering Team comprised of a SCUSD Board member, the Interim SCUSD Superintendent, Presiding Judge of Sacramento



# Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

County's Juvenile Court, a Judicial Council of California attorney, and BPSB staff. The Steering Team was responsible for developing collaborative meeting agendas and providing resources and expertise to guide policy development.

During its first year, the Collaborative members researched school discipline issues and used the data collected through their research to guide a series of discussions with community members and school staff. In January 2014, the Collaborative compiled a document - based on the data collected and stakeholder discussions - that identified school discipline policy best practices, policy language, and support and services, and then sought stakeholder feedback on the document in February of 2014. The Restorative Justice Collaborative utilized language from the document to draft Resolution number 2789 to establish a Whole Child Policy that was adopted by the School Board in March 2014, and to revise Board Policy 5144 which was adopted in May 2014.<sup>38</sup> The tireless advocacy efforts of BPSB staff, the Zero-Tolerance Youth Leadership Team, parents engaged through the Boys and Men of Color School Push-Out Advisory Committee and Restorative Justice Collaborative members were instrumental in the SCUSD Board adopting the following new and revised resolutions:

## **Resolution 2789: Establishment of a Whole Child Policy**

March 20, 2014: Directed the Superintendent to reduce racial disparities by establishing a district policy and implementation plan. The resolution directed the District to review and revise all other board policies to reflect the Whole Child Policy; to provide professional development for teachers, administrators and staff to build their intellectual, social and cultural capacities; and to develop an accountability framework to evaluate policy outcomes.<sup>39</sup>

## **Revise Board Policy 5144: Student Discipline**

May 15, 2014: Set forth a framework for implementing equitable discipline practices and eliminating disparities by minimizing the excessive use of willful defiance as a reason to impose in-school and off-campus suspensions. The policy also: (1) created non-suspendable and suspendable willful defiance categories; (2) directed the development of a Discipline Matrix - with stakeholder input - to guide disciplinary actions; (3) established a schedule for schools to review discipline data to ensure equitable practices are followed; and (4) designated the provision of professional development for all district and school-based employees on positive behavior and intervention supports, restorative practices and social and emotional learning, implicit bias, and cultural proficiency.

## **Revise Board Policy 5137: Positive School Climate**

June 5, 2014: Detailed action steps for creating an effective learning environment by developing social emotional learning competencies skill sets and a positive school climate and culture through: (1) ongoing professional development and training on evidence-based positive school discipline, conflict resolution, cultural relevancy and responsiveness, behavior management, social justice and equity; (2) increased investments in social and emotional learning; (3) development and implementation of school improvement plans that focus on improving physical conditions, communication between stakeholders, and structures that affect school climate; (4) implementation of initiatives that provide students with self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness; (5) multiple opportunities for staff to receive conflict resolution training; and (6) incorporating objectives from the policy into an accountability system that monitors student, classroom, school site and district-wide progress and growth.

# Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline

When a new SCUSD Superintendent was hired in 2014, the focus on reducing or eliminating inequality through a collaborative approach was no longer a priority and the District disbanded the Restorative Justice Collaborative. In 2016, BPSB reconstituted the Collaborative with a grassroots focus. The Collaborative now includes representatives from BHC-grantees Sacramento Area Congregations Together and PRO Youth and Families, as well as the Sacramento City Teachers Association, parents, and youth.<sup>40</sup> According to Pinkston, while the Collaborative is still focused on policy reform, the members also provide direct education and services to youth and parents affected by suspensions and expulsions. These services include offering workshops, such as a “Know Your Rights” training on suspensions and expulsions, youth parent and leadership training, and legal support when a student is expelled.

While SCUSD made noteworthy progress in enacting school discipline reform policies, challenges remain with district-wide implementation of these policies. Pinkston refers to policy implementation as “trench work”:

*The qualitative difference between then and now is that much of the work has to do with the implementation of policy...Statewide policy did have an impact, but the challenge has been...how do you empower local communities to implement [these policies]?*

This is particularly true for SCUSD, which suspends more Black males (in number and percentage) than any other school district in the state and has the second highest number of overall suspensions,<sup>41</sup> despite being the 13<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the state.<sup>42</sup> In addition, racist incidences at SCUSD schools have been reported and include: (a) in February 2018 when a student in a SCUSD magnet program submitted a project for a science fair that concluded: “the lower average IQs of Blacks, Southeast Asians, and non-white Hispanics means that they are not as likely as non-Hispanic whites and Northeast Asians to be accepted into a more academically rigorous program such as Humanities and International Studies Program (HISP); therefore, the racial disproportionality of HISP is justified”<sup>43</sup>; and (b) two high school students that posted a video with racist slurs to Instagram<sup>44</sup>. This racist antagonism at SCUSD schools coupled with the alarming district suspension statistics is proof that the district still has work to do to create a positive school climate and address inequality that is propagated by outdated school discipline policies and practices.



*MLA youth sharing their school experiences as students of color with the State Superintendent and California Department of Education staff*

BPSB, with support from the Zero-Tolerance Youth Leadership Team and the reconstituted Restorative Justice Collaborative, continue to advocate for SCUSD to implement the policies passed in 2014. The advocacy efforts have focused on providing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Justice professional development. This advocacy includes meeting with the newest SCUSD Superintendent - hired in 2017 - who has affirmed his commitment to equity and data-driven decision making and who has taken a step towards addressing the negative impacts of school discipline policy. In September 2018, the School Board established the African American Achievement Initiative Advisory Taskforce - of which the Sacramento BHC Hub Manager and Black Parallel School Board are members - to guide action steps for reducing African American student suspension rates and increasing their attendance and graduation rates. The Taskforce will also oversee efforts to increase students’ sense of connectedness and safety through implicit bias and trauma training for a governance team, who will then set a direction for scaling that training across the district. The Taskforce will also monitor the District’s initiatives for impact on African American students and their peers.

## Youth Legislative Advocacy

In 2011, BHC stakeholders involved in dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline were preparing an advocacy campaign focused on California State Legislators passing seven bills to reform punitive school discipline policies. At the same time, the California Senate formed a Select Committee on Boys and Men of Color to examine key issues affecting the health and well-being of boys and young men of color and to create a state plan to address their needs. The Select Committee began a series of five regional hearings over the course of the year, and the Alliance for the Boys and Men of Color mobilized youth in the BHC sites to testify at these hearings. The final Select Committee hearing occurred in Sacramento in August of 2012 and coincided with the final phase of advocacy for the passage of the seven bills that would rectify punitive school push-out policies. These events provided an opportunity for the Sacramento BHC organizations involved in school policy reform and boys and men of color youth leadership development work to collectively mobilize.<sup>45</sup>

The Alliance for the Boys and Men of Color coordinated a two-day advocacy training on school policy reform in Sacramento for youth from the 14 BHC sites. At the training, the youth received information about the bills before testifying at the final Select Committee hearing and meeting with legislators. The Sacramento BHC Zero-Tolerance Youth Leadership Team and MWLA Leadership Team were in attendance, and the advocacy efforts were largely successful, with five of the seven bills passed:

### **AB-1729 Pupil rights: suspension or expulsion: alternatives and other means of correction**

Authorizes a superintendent of the school district or principal of the school to use alternatives to suspension or expulsion that are age appropriate and designed to address and correct the student's misbehavior. For example, the positive behavior support approach with tiered interventions that occur during the school day on campus, or participation in a restorative justice program (*Approved by Governor September 21, 2012*).

### **AB-2537 Pupil discipline: suspension and expulsions**

Provides the principal or superintendent of a school discretion to expel or use an alternative means of correction for a student caught in unlawful possession of certain controlled substances, or imitation firearm at school or at a school activity off school grounds (*Approved by Governor September 21, 2012*).

### **AB-2616 School districts: truancy**

Provides school districts more discretion in determining whether a pupil is truant and outlines alternative means to address truancy (*Approved by Governor September 21, 2012*).

### **SB-1088 Pupils: readmission**

Prohibits a school from denying enrollment to readmission to a pupil on the basis that he or she has had contact with the juvenile justice system (*Approved by the Governor September 19, 2012*).

### **AB-1909 Foster children: placement: suspension and expulsion: notifications**

Ensures that social workers and attorneys who represent the foster youth know of pending expulsion and can offer services and supports (*Approved by Governor September 26, 2012*).

TCE has continued to fund yearly advocacy training and legislative visits for youth from the 14 BHC sites. The annual advocacy training was initially called "Sons and Brothers at the Capitol," and was then changed to "Brothers and Sisters at the Capital," and to "Free Our Dreams" in 2017.

## Healing Circles

In 2014, TCE funded the National Compadres Network to conduct a two-day, healing circle training for SCUSD administrative staff members and community-based organizations that partner with the District. According to Andrea Nava, a Youth Development Specialist at SCUSD, “Healing circles [are] healing within yourself. Maybe there is stuff going on in the community, maybe you saw a community shooting. So, events can bring about a healing circle... [it is] a method of brining a sense of togetherness, so when something comes up, [community members] can hopefully bring it up [to the healing circle].”

The training included a half-day session intended for SCUSD staff and parents, community-based organizations, and community members. Approximately 100 people attended this portion of the training that included a healing circle overview and the importance of community resilience and culture to deal with the impact of trauma on families. The second half of the training was only for SCUSD staff and community-based organizations that partner with SCUSD, and approximately 30 attendees learned how to facilitate a healing circle.

Nava then trained seven SCUSD teachers on how to facilitate a healing circle in their classrooms. The two-day training has had a lasting impact; five of the community-based organizations - Roses Family, Earth Momma Healing, PRO, Rock Solid, and Epic Bloom - and educators from Luther Burbank High School and Parkway Elementary School continue to facilitate healing circles. Overall, when asked about the impact of the healing circles, Nava said the following:

*It gives a sense of safety and togetherness and understanding amongst our youth... they have a safe space to talk about things they have never... gotten off their chest... In terms of healing, not needing to hold something and talk could be part of the healing process... I am very grateful... it was very beneficial for the District.*

## Campaign for Black Male Achievement

The Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA) received a BHC grant to provide adults with training and tools to better work with, and support youth. CBMA received funds to implement the following activities in the Sacramento/Oakland area: recruitment of, and training for approximately 80 Black male mentors to create positive social and economic outcomes for 300 middle school boys; development of a parent peer support network for caregivers of Black children to assist in helping their children address trauma through quarterly retreats, and personalized recovery action plans co-created by parents to address trauma-related incidents; and development of a media campaign that includes podcasts, webisodes, newsletters, and presentations to create empowered narratives for Black men and boys, as well as positive narratives about Black men and boys for the public.<sup>46</sup>

The Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA) is a “national network that seeks to ensure the growth, sustainability, and impact of leaders and organizations committed to improving the life outcomes of Black men and boys.” CBMA increases awareness of the Black Male Achievement movement, tracks major Black Male Achievement efforts to identify cities to engage with to strengthen the field, partners with on-the-ground leaders to strengthen their work, and implements high school initiatives to increase graduation rates.<sup>47</sup>



*Residents supporting the RAACD Initiative at the Sacramento County Board of Supervisor's Meeting, 2016*

## Shifting Government Resources from Incarceration to Prevention

**There is growing momentum to reform the prison system and shift government resources from incarceration to social supports and services that prevent crime and inmate reentry services.**

The Sacramento BHC includes prevention programs and services, as well as campaigns focused on the realignment of government funding, as a health reform measure.

### **Blue Ribbon Commission on African American Child Deaths**

In 2011, Sacramento County Supervisor Phil Serna created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Disproportionate African American Child Deaths to examine the 20-year trend of African American children in Sacramento County dying at twice the rate of all other races. In 2013, the Commission released a report recommending a 10-20 percent reduction in African American child deaths by targeting the top four leading causes of African Americans child deaths, which were: (1) third-party homicides, (2) infant sleep-related deaths, (3) child abuse and neglect, and (4) perinatal conditions.<sup>48</sup>

In 2013, a Sacramento County Board of Supervisors' resolution established the Steering Committee on the Reduction of African American Child Deaths (RAACD) to develop and implement strategies to address these four causes of death. The RAACD Steering Committee launched a communitywide movement - now called the Black Child Legacy Campaign (BCLC) - in 2016 to: (a) increase awareness about the high rate of African American child deaths, (b) coordinate across systems to improve access to services for African Americans, and (c) mobilize the community to prevent child deaths.

The BCLC identified organizations to serve as Community Incubator Leads (CILs) in the seven areas of Sacramento County with high rates of African American child deaths. The Sacramento BHC Hub is the CIL for the Fruitridge and Stockton area. The Hub has drawn on many of the organizations involved in the BHC to inform community residents, make community connections, and provide an array of services to support families. Overall, African American infant deaths decreased by 45 percent from 2013 (when the RAACD was established) to 2016, the most recent Sacramento County data.<sup>49</sup>

## Project Ceasefire

When young people feel unsafe, it can negatively affect their health and educational performance. According to research from the U.S. Department of Justice, gang activity creates trauma and fear in community members who are exposed to unnecessary violence, which in turn may lead some individuals to join gangs for protection; the perceived protection that gangs provide is the most common reason youth join gangs.<sup>50</sup> Gang violence reduction programs can prevent young people from joining gangs and move gang members away from gangs by providing alternative activities and resources.

Beginning in January 2009, Sacramento Area Congregations Together (Sac ACT), later a BHC grantee, launched a Ceasefire task force to develop public and political support for a Ceasefire initiative. Ceasefire, which was developed in Boston in the 1990s, is a problem-solving police strategy that seeks to reduce gang violence, illegal gun possession, and gun violence in communities. The strategy includes coordinated and concentrated government and community-based organization services to combat violence. In June 2009, Sac ACT and the California Partnership for Safe Communities presented the Ceasefire model to key City of Sacramento officials and secured their support and commitment. In March 2010, the City of Sacramento combined BHC funding and a Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) grant from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to implement Ceasefire.

The first generation of Ceasefire included *night walks* lead by local clergy in neighborhoods with high rates of gang violence (e.g., Del Paso Heights, Mack and Meadowview Roads in South Sacramento, and Oak Park) to create a sense of community, *call-ins* with selected gang members, where Sacramento Employment and Training Agency would offer employment programs, and a coordinated approach to enforcement via the Sacramento Police Department's Community-Oriented Policing Unit. Fourteen months after Ceasefire became operational in November 2010, the initial findings from the data collected for the grant were both positive and promising, as reported shooting incidents dropped dramatically in the target neighborhoods. However, crime data from 2011 showed Sacramento was ranked second highest among the top ten cities in California for violent crime rate. Between 2009 and 2011, the Gang Suppression Unit of the Sacramento Police Department estimated that the number of active gangs had increased from 60 to 95, and that gang membership ranged between 4,100 and 4,500 validated members. Furthermore, the actual "drivers of the violence" were mostly young men who ranged in age from 16 to 24, who had "the highest influence regarding violent criminal activity."<sup>51</sup>

In 2012, the City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Neighborhood Services, received a second round of CalGRIP funding, to expand Ceasefire, supporting the following program components: (a) night walks; (b) call-ins for gang members; (c) brief interview assessments to collect demographic information and to identify a participant's education and employment history and barriers to successful participation in employment services; (d) analysis of crime statistics over time, especially violent crime; and (e) tracking targeted activities in the geographic areas known for gang presence, in addition to analyzing quantitative and qualitative data related to program implementation and outcomes. Data showed

that after implementing Ceasefire in 2010, the crime rate dropped in Sacramento, especially in the area (Mack Road) where services were targeted.<sup>52</sup>

Despite Ceasefire's successes, the program ultimately ended after CalGRIP funding expired in December of 2014. While Ceasefire partners advocated for the use of city funds to continue and expand the program, the City of Sacramento ultimately decided not to fund Ceasefire and instead moved forward with an alternative violence prevention strategy, Cops and Clergy, directed by the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force.

## Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force

After several high-profile gang-related shootings in Sacramento during 2010, despite the best efforts of the Ceasefire Task Force, community leaders advocated for the City of Sacramento to take preventative action. In response, then Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson announced the creation of the Gang Prevention Initiative in January 2011 and convened the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) in February, with funding support from TCE, to shift resources from enforcement and incarceration toward prevention and intervention.

The Task Force included city and county leaders, elected officials, neighborhood leaders, school district officials, faith- and community-based organizations, and law enforcement. The Task Force met regularly and held neighborhood meetings throughout Sacramento to inform the development of the *Strategic Plan for Gang Prevention, 2012-2015 (SPGP)* released in November 2011. The MGPTF SPGP included a vision statement, core values, six goals and implementation strategies. Initial MGPTF efforts included gang intervention training; expanded literacy programs in Sacramento City, Elk Grove and Robla School Districts; and collaborative law enforcement efforts between the City of Sacramento Police Department and County of Sacramento Sheriff's Department, which both have jurisdiction in South Sacramento.

In 2016, the MGPTF launched the Gang Prevention and Intervention Grant Program to coordinate strategic investments in partnership with community-based organizations to increase support for high-risk youth and families. Since the competitive grant program was launched, the MGPTF has awarded \$3 million in grants to 31 non-profit organizations to prevent youth and gang violence. The MGPTF also oversees the City's Advance Peace gun violence intervention program described below.

## Advance Peace

In 2017, Advance Peace received a BHC grant and a \$1.5 million-dollar contract with the City of Sacramento to prevent gun violence. The Advance Peace program gained notoriety after it successfully reduced crime in Richmond, California. Advance Peace pairs the small number of individuals identified as most likely to perpetrate or be victims of gun violence with mentors, known as Neighborhood Change Agents, who often have similar backgrounds as the individuals, for an 18-month fellowship program that provides alternatives to criminal activity. The fellowship includes support services, as well as a stipend if a participant meets a specified goal, like obtaining a GED. The Advance Peace program differs from other gang prevention and intervention initiatives in that it relies less on law enforcement to implement the initiative.



# Shifting Government Resources

Advance Peace began implementation in the City of Sacramento in 2018, meeting with 60 adults who were identified as those that would benefit most from the fellowship program. Out of the 60 identified candidates, 38 agreed to fully participate in the fellowship program. Additionally, Advance Peace received a 2018 California Violence Intervention Program (CalVIP) grant from the BSCC, to implement a junior fellowship program for youth under the age of 18, with the goal of 25 youth completing the program.

Less than a year after implementation, Advance Peace has achieved several milestones. Advance Peace has identified numerous Sacramento community organizations to provide services to, and engage with, those individuals who are most likely to commit gun violence; performed 2,083 hours of street outreach work and 83 community conflict meditations; stopped 10 individuals from shooting; responded to 14 shootings; made 121 social service referrals; enrolled eight fellows in a forklift driver certification program; and assisted an additional six fellows in obtaining jobs.<sup>53</sup>

## Sacramento Reinvestment Coalition

The Sacramento Reinvestment Coalition formed in 2016, with the aim to advocate for increased resources for crime prevention and intervention while supporting the implementation of police reform and violence reduction strategies, like the Advance Peace program described previously. The Sacramento Reinvestment Coalition is convened by BHC-grantee, Sacramento ACT, and has its roots in the “I Am Prop 47 Sacramento” Coalition that advocated for the passing of California Proposition 47 to reclassify six low-level felonies as misdemeanors. Proposition 47 passed on November 4, 2014 and the I Am Prop 47 Coalition members worked with the formally incarcerated community members to reclassify their felony offenses as misdemeanors or to expunge their criminal records.



*Community leaders celebrate the anniversary of Prop 47, 2015  
Source: AccessLocal.tv*

In response to a survey confirming Californians’ support for Proposition 47, and overwhelming support for prevention services including job training for young people, mental health services, and substance abuse and treatment, BHC began working with advocates to encourage decision makers to include funding for prevention services in local budgets. At the same time, some of the “I Am Prop 47 Sacramento” Coalition members, such as Sac ACT, the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), and Always Knocking, sought to mobilize around the reinvestment and ensure that money saved from reducing incarceration costs through Proposition 47 augmented funding for local prevention efforts, especially reentry services for the formerly incarcerated. To align efforts, BHC funded Sac ACT to form the Sacramento Reinvestment Coalition for partners interested in advocating for reinvestment.

The Sacramento Reinvestment Coalition meets monthly and members include formally incarcerated individuals, community members with an incarcerated or formally incarcerated family member, ACCE, the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Self-Awareness and Recovery, Del Paso Heights Mothers, Brother to Brother, and Legal Services of Northern California. Since forming the Reinvestment Coalition, the members have undertaken a variety of reinvestment advocacy efforts with a countywide focus.



# Shifting Government Resources

The members held four public forums for over 500 participants in various parts of the city to hear input from community members and partnering organizations about reentry needs, and how to reinvest Proposition 47 funds to meet those needs. As a result, the members are meeting with city and county staff and elected officials to advocate for reentry support services and explore reinvestment initiatives. The Coalition is invested in examining reentry services for the formally incarcerated (e.g., job training and readiness, mental health services) as well as their families (e.g., trauma healing and mental health services). The Coalition is also advocating for the Probation Department to provide education and transition services for the adult incarcerated population, like those provided for youth. Since its formation in 2016, the Sacramento Reinvestment Coalition was a strong advocate for the City of Sacramento to contract with Advance Peace, and contributed to several policy wins in the City and County of Sacramento, as follows:

*I Am Prop 47 Resource Flyer*

**2017 – The City of Sacramento City Council adopted a series of reform measures**, including a more restrictive use-of-force policy, training on and issuing of less lethal weapons to all officers, funding for body cameras, and a new requirement that video from officer-involved shootings be made public within 30 days, after the killing of Joseph Mann, an African American man suffering from mental health issues.

**2017 – Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted to stop charging fees to families** of alleged or convicted juvenile offenders, while also writing off \$23.2 million in uncollected debt from these families.

**2018 – Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted to end a contract** with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to detain immigrants in county facilities while they awaited deportation proceedings.

**2018 – Sacramento Police Department changed policies** and ordered rank-and-file officers to keep their body worn cameras and microphones on until the investigative or enforcement activity involving a member of the public has concluded, with fewer exceptions, after community outcry of the Stephon Clark police shooting.

**2018 – Sacramento County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a proposal** that strengthened independent oversight of the Sheriff by stating that the Inspector General (IG) must “monitor” significant use of force incidents, including officer involved shootings and in-custody deaths, within the Sheriff’s Department and report to the board. The adopted proposal also provides Supervisors the ability to request an independent investigation of these incidents. A few months earlier, the Sheriff unilaterally fired the IG after the IG was critical of the Sheriff’s Department and said deputies fired an “excessive” and “unnecessary” number of rounds during a fatal shooting in 2017. The Sheriff blocked the IG from county premises and went to the board with a proposal to strip the IG of his ability to launch misconduct or use-of-force investigations of the department.

## Equity and Marijuana Legalization

Due to the disproportionate enforcement of cannabis crimes in communities of color during the war on drugs, communities of color face barriers to starting a cannabis business. The California Urban Partnership, a community development advocacy organization and Sacramento BHC grantee, took a lead role in negotiating with the City of Sacramento to establish a program to provide communities of color access to the Sacramento region's \$4 billion legal marijuana industry. In November 2017, the Sacramento City Council unanimously approved the Cannabis Opportunity, Reinvestment, and Equity (CORE) program (Resolution 2018-0323) and committed \$1 million to support business development among impacted communities.<sup>54</sup>

The CORE program recognizes that, while people of color represent most of the arrests for marijuana possession because of the war on drugs, few legal marijuana businesses in Sacramento are owned by people of color. The CORE program assists communities of color by:<sup>55</sup>

- Prioritization of hiring individuals who qualify for the CORE program (low-income individuals or immediate family members who were arrested for a cannabis-related crime between 1980-2011, or individuals living in a zip code that has been identified as having disproportionately high arrest rates).
- Prioritization for new retail store licenses for CORE eligible participants. The City committed to a goal of awarding 50 percent of all cannabis business licenses to CORE eligible participants.
- Processing business applications at no cost, which typically costs \$8,000 to \$40,000.
- Providing fully equipped business operating space for free for two years, or greatly reduced rent for four years.
- Promoting pathways to obtain a 33 percent ownership share in major marijuana industries.

In addition, in 2018 the City of Sacramento committed to establishing a public health advisory committee on cannabis to examine the negative health impacts of marijuana use. The committee will include youth of color organizations, public agencies and local health organizations.

Lastly, in the summer of 2018, California Urban Partnership presented the Sacramento County District Attorney with a letter signed by 30 community-based organizations that outlined recommendations for accelerating the reclassification and expungement of past marijuana convictions and examples of how other counties have approached expungement. The letter paved the way for a series of meetings between the District Attorney's and Sacramento County Public Defender's Offices, and community-based organizations to discuss the recommendations put forth in the letter. Because of the meetings, the District Attorney and Public Defender will work together to reclassify the records of 6,000 Sacramento County residents with past marijuana conviction. California Urban Partnership also championed Governor Brown to sign Assembly Bill 1793 that requires responsible agencies to identify people with a marijuana conviction(s) who are eligible for resentencing or expungement by July 2019, and to resentence and clear their records by July 2020. A nonprofit, Code for America, is developing an online process that promises to dramatically speed up the expungement process.

## Unity Circle for Racial Healing

In the summer of 2016, there were home, business and marijuana grow house robberies targeting the Asian community in Sacramento. In response to these targeted robberies, a town hall was held to discuss the issue. While the town hall brought community members together, some BHC leaders saw a troubling theme emerge: racist narratives which placed blame predominantly on African Americans. In addition, there was a petition among South Sacramento businesses to deny services to African Americans, and a South Sacramento community Facebook page with increasingly anti-Black racist commentary. Racist tensions were also rising in response to law enforcement shooting Joseph Mann, a mentally ill and homeless African American man.<sup>56</sup> According to Kim Williams (K. Williams), Sacramento BHC Hub Manager:

*You could tell the direction it was moving in was pretty negative, so we wanted a unified front and press conference to denounce the racial aspect and to have the community be closer. At the time, the Joseph Mann issue killing had happened, so a lot of the relationships between African Americans and police [were] tense.*

In response to racial tensions between the African American and Asian communities in South Sacramento, K. Williams and Elaine Abelaye-Mateo, Principal Consultant at Everyday Impact Consulting who provides staff support for the BHC, convened a monthly “Unity Circle” to have community dialogue about the racial tensions.

In October of 2016, Sacramento ACT facilitated the first Unity Circle for approximately 40 attendees, including representatives from the Sacramento BHC, SCUSD School Board Members, area residents, leaders of community-based organizations, and law enforcement. Overall, there was diverse racial and ethnic representation at the first Unity Circle, with significant representation from the Asian community. The event was intergenerational, bringing together older generations, nonprofit and community leaders alongside younger attendees.

The Unity Circle continued to convene monthly until January 2018, when attendance became inconsistent. Around that time, members began to discuss their future efforts and the overall purpose of the group. In March 2018, Stephon Clark was fatally shot eight times by police in his grandparent’s backyard, which garnered national media attention, ignited local and national protests, and prompted the Unity Circle to once again meet monthly. The Unity Circle wrote a letter to the City of Sacramento Police Department to demand justice and law enforcement reform in Sacramento. Moving forward, members of the Unity Circle plan to write additional letters and are considering organizing a panel of prosecutors who have been successful in enacting police reform policies.

When considering the impact, K. Williams believes that the Unity Circles have created a foundation to address community issues when they arise. According to K. Williams:

*We want to see [the Unity Circles] as a table to come to when we can solve [community issues] together and lend our voice from a collaborative perspective for some of these things that we want to see changed. I am convinced more than ever, when we as people of color do something collaboratively versus doing our own thing in our own... we can be unified together.*



## Conclusion

*MLA youth council members teaching each other how to tie their new ties*

### **Over the course of eight years, Sacramento BHC partners have engaged in activities to strengthen the health outcomes for boys and men of color.**

Organizations formed coalitions to advocate that local and state government resources are used for prevention programs and services, rather than incarceration. The coalitions have achieved several wins that resulted in stronger oversight of the County Sheriff; City of Sacramento police accountability reform; and programs to expunge records, forgive debt, and provide economic support for communities of color that are historically over-policed and over-incarcerated. The partners are also breaking the pipeline that funnels youth of color from schools into the juvenile justice system.

Sacramento BHC partners have formed and joined coalitions that are linking local and state resources to advocate for institutional reform of a school system that has used zero tolerance school discipline policies to discriminate against young men of color – whether inadvertently or intentionally - resulting in disproportionate, and high rates of suspension and expulsion. The partners achieved a number of policy wins in the early phases of the BHC initiative, and continue to monitor policy implementation to mitigate the discrimination and bias built into the structure of the U.S. educational system. BHC partners have been intentional about having youth at the table as partners in the advocacy efforts to build youth power.

The Sacramento BHC has supported programs to empower youth by providing them with the skills, mentoring, experiential and applied learning necessary to be effective advocates of change. Adult Allies have stepped back to let youth step forward when making the case for school reform and prevention funding. Policy makers have shared that youth voice and testimony is a strong motivation for change. Young men of color with systems of support to counteract systems of oppression are given an opportunity to realize their potential, achieve their dreams and positively impact community health.

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