Addressing Structural Crisis
CRC’s Racial and Economic Justice Cohort
In our work and in our living, we must recognize that difference is a reason for celebration and growth rather than a reason for destruction.

AUDRE LORDE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2020, amid the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the California Reinvestment Coalition launched its Racial and Economic Justice Cohort, a forward-looking training program meant to help undue the unequal distribution of wealth in California and address the power structures that perpetuate structural racism and inequity.

The pandemic exacerbated the health, financial and economic inequities already felt by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities across the nation. This was yet another structural crisis for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. To meet this head-on, we sought to build crucial relationships and increase the overall capacity amongst organizations working closest to structural racism and inequity to deliver long-term returns in the fight for racial and economic equity.

The contents of this report reflect our year-one analysis of this program.

Through our Racial and Economic Justice Cohort, we are disrupting anti-Blackness, dismantling white supremacy, and working toward a future where capital centers the needs of BIPOC communities.
PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1 To support CRC member staff and lay leaders in developing a racial justice lens around economic justice issues specifically related to money and wealth in America.

2 To lay the groundwork for future member-led policy development and CRC’s ongoing fight for equitable investment in BIPOC communities.

3 To equip CRC members with the language, tools, and resources to educate, inform, and activate their bases in the fight for racial and economic justice.

LEARNING STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

**Relationship building:** Developing rigorous, substantive relationships with cohort partners and other participants that are durable, transformative, and developmental

**Peer Coaching:** Cultivating the capacity of participants to serve as an active facilitator of the learning/developmental process of others

**Attaining personal and organizational goals:** Through working individually and collaboratively, deepening personal and organizational commitments to racial and economic justice
What does showing up for racial justice mean to you?

To me, showing up for racial justice means that I am putting into practice my belief that everyone has a role to play in the fight for equality and economic equity. It means I am working every day, in both my professional work and in my private life, to build a society that is anti-racist. It means the policies I fight for will dismantle the systems that work to perpetuate inequities, and that we know make it almost impossible for Black people and people of color to build and transfer generational wealth in this country.

How has engaging in CRC’s R&EJ Cohort supported your work?

I feel so fortunate to be in this cohort at this time in our fight for racial and economic justice. It truly feels like divine timing. I have a new network of amazing peers to help reflect on the ways in which we approach our work. I am able to engage in discussions about policies that center race unapologetically. And (CRC’s Racial Justice Training and Organizing Manager) Teshone (Jones) is a gifted instructor!
LEARNING STRUCTURE

The training included quarterly scheduled workshops with the full cohort along with optional training sessions dispersed throughout the year. And because we believe that vulnerable reflections and value-driven learning happens in community, the cohort participants were paired with partners reflecting comparable roles and complementary developmental goals. Each participant received a personalized development plan tailored to their personal and organizational goals for the year. We were intentional in allowing room for the wisdom of participants to inform the learning and leadership development.

Training modules focused on:

- **Designing programs and processes for liberation**: Cohort participants learned how to apply design thinking principles with a lens for intersectionality and liberation. Through facilitating a mock design session, participants learned how to use this methodology to disrupt decision-making and program design processes that tend to exclude historically marginalized groups both internal and external to their organizations.

- **Creating shared language and rituals**: Cohort participants learned new ways of communicating to foster growth, safety, and healthy tension within their organizations.

- **Developing an institutional compass for racial equity**: Participants developed an understanding of how to utilize a Racial Equity Theory of Change process to bring their organization in alignment with a racial and economic justice agenda.
Decolonizing community engagement practices: Participants learned a new methodology of community engagement through Sankofa Organizing Practice, an organizing methodology steeped in Afro-indigenous wisdom and philosophy where practitioners seek to cultivate an ongoing engagement in the areas of cultural/identity development, community development, and issue advocacy.

Creating antiracist workspaces: Participants learned how symbolic violence in the workplace contributes to the preservation of white supremacist culture and how developing an orientation towards liberatory power can support the organization in creating a more pluralistic work culture.

Sustaining investment in ending structural racism: Through ongoing engagement with CRC’s work in alignment with the strategic plan, 70% of cohort participants took action to address structural racism through engaging in advocacy efforts on CRC’s housing and economic justice legislative priorities. Cohort participants also took action to hold banks accountable for investing in BIPOC communities.

Storytelling for BIPOC community power: Cohort participants learned how to strategically tap into their personal stories to bridge internal and external relationships in the fight for racial and economic equity.

COHORT SELECTION

For CRC members, the cohort was a place for honest reflection, rigorous yet spacious development, and collaborative learning. Garnering 41 applications from its inception, 14
What does showing up for racial justice mean to you?

Racial justice, to me, is about true inclusion in a society that is just and fair. It’s about taking the lead from communities previously excluded, and centering race and place consciousness in decision-making. It’s not only about ending discrimination and systems designed to exclude — it is also about ensuring that life outcomes are no longer determined by the color of one’s skin. And this can only happen with affirmative policies and systems that are designed to guarantee inclusion. More personally, it’s about a world where people aren’t “othered,” scared and divided by social constructs or made to feel invisible.

In my work, it has meant approaching each task with greater intentionality and introspection, maintaining flexibility to redetermine priorities, and reenvisioning systems, both internal and external, so as not to exacerbate inequalities in our very quest to end them.

How has engaging in CRC’s R&EJ Cohort supported your work?

Public interest advocates have a long history of fighting for civil rights and racial justice. But at the same time, we work in a field known for its perpetuation of privilege. This juxtaposition has always existed, but now I have the language to name it. I’ve learned so much from the Cohort leaders and participants! It’s been an incredible space to reflect and to plan.

The Cohort offers learnings and teachings, but also, through a peer-to-peer system, it helps make us accountable to ourselves and to each other. This space has provided me with access to the tools to further examine and evaluate our work in community development with an intentional racial justice lens. And it has reinforced my own very deep and personal connection to this work.

SHASHI HANUMAN

Directing Attorney, Community Development Project, Public Counsel
participants were chosen to participate in the year-long programming targeting senior and mid-senior leaders representing organizations committed to deepening their commitments to racial and economic justice.

Cohort participants were chosen through a selection process that prioritized participation based on the following criteria:

- Palpable passion, enthusiasm for, and investment in the work of racial and economic justice
- Organizational involvement in CRC’s work and/or significant promise for adding value to CRC’s current body of work
- Organizational alignment with CRC’s strategic plan priorities leading into 2021 and a commitment to CRC’s legislative priorities
- Currently a member or actively joining CRC’s membership base

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

1. Bernal Heights Neighborhood Association
2. CAMEO
3. Capital Impact Partners
4. Center for Responsible Lending
5. City Heights CDC
6. Fair Housing Council of the San Fernando Valley
7. Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
8. Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)
9. MyPath
10. Public Counsel
11. Unite A Nation
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– Marisabel Torres, Director of California Policy, Center for Responsible Lending

“I am learning about how my organization’s lending capacity is limited due to systems-level issues around banking, and standards and practices. I am also learning why equitable data and racial equity are important, as well as all the different angles that the fight for economic justice and racial equity requires. The attack must be simultaneous — from a systems level, organizational level, and from a deeply personal and spiritual level.

This cohort and training have been a great gift.”

– Crissy Vo-Khuong, Equity Impact Specialist, Capital Impact Partners

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– Shashi Hanuman
Directing Attorney, Community Development Project, Public Counsel
What does showing up for racial justice mean to you?

Racial justice, economic justice, health justice, environmental justice — it is all the same. I think that none of us have a choice to show up or not; all of this is connected and all are imperative issues of our time, which means we will be required to show up in one way or another. By force due to the depletion and decomposition of systems that will succumb to societal and environmental degradation or by free will with our faith before us and our hearts committed to each other’s liberation because we belong to each other.

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This cohort and training have been a great gift.

CRISSEY VO-KHUONG
Equity Impact Specialist, Capital Impact Partners
CREDITS AND REFERENCES

Training materials and presentations were drawn from the various bodies of work of the following thought leaders/teachers/organizations:

- john a. powell
- Marshall Ganz
- Dr. Glen Singleton
- Stanford University
- Faith In Action
- Stephen Jamal Leeper
- The Aspen Institute
- Cindy Suarez
- Dr. Joy Degruy
- Don Miguel Ruiz
- The Akan people of Ghana
- Teshone Renee’ Jones, Trainer for Cohort One (2020-2021)

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For additional information about the program, please contact Aliyah Shaheed via email at ashaheed@calreinvest.org.

For more on CRC’s work please visit us online at www.calreinvest.org.