



# TO LIFT ALL BOATS:

A STORYTELLING  
EVALUATION OF THE  
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FUND  
2022-23

*Multi-Racial Solidarity,  
Allyship and Healing*

REPORT 2  
LIBERATORY PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS



# A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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National CAPACD has engaged in racial justice and solidarity work since its founding in 2000 by members who were active in the civil rights movement. But it was the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects that proved to be a reckoning in our organizational history, and for this reason, we launched the Community Resilience Fund.

As leaders of grantee organizations and members of the National CAPACD board, it is our privilege to introduce a series of evaluation reports for the 2022-23 Community Resilience Fund that awarded half a million dollars to 21 organizations. The four reports center storytelling as a way to highlight grantees' progress and accomplishments in cross-racial allyship, healing, and solidarity work in our Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) communities. Weaving together diverse stories, these reports also describe how these organizations began their work, developed guiding values and principles, and prepared for new directions for this collective multiracial work in local communities. As board leaders, we appreciate all those who have trusted National CAPACD with their stories and insights. As practitioners, we are grateful to have our work documented alongside the incredible work of our peers across the nation.

The Community Resilience Fund is made possible only through the generosity of Democracy Fund, Northwest Area Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, partners who recognized the timeliness

and importance of investing in this work. National CAPACD continues to fundraise as we are committed to support our own AA and NHPI communities to cultivate spaces of healing and resilience, refuge and support, and restoration and inspiration.

As a national coalition, we are dedicated to uplifting our members' efforts and facilitating learning from each organization's work as they grapple with a complexity of diverse issues and their neighborhood context. As you read these reports, we hope you immerse yourself in these stories that include tough conversations and often challenging work. This social change work involves innovative and culturally appropriate approaches that push us to think and act differently, which we believe is a necessary journey to bring healing and shared prosperity to our diverse, multiracial communities.

Sincerely,

**Inhe Choi**

*National CAPACD Board*

HANA Center, Executive Director  
Chicago, IL

**Duncan Hwang**

*National CAPACD Board*

Asian Pacific American Network  
of Oregon (APANO),  
Community Development Director  
Portland, OR

# ABOUT THE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FUND

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In May 2022, the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD) awarded \$500,000 to 21 organizations through its Community Resilience Fund (CRF) to support cross-racial allyship, solidarity and healing work in Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) communities across the US. These organizations represent different geographies within the US and their unique local demographic contexts, various areas of work (e.g. community development, youth organizing, arts & culture, outreach and education, direct services, policy advocacy, etc.), and history of multiracial coalition building. The funding aimed to improve their readiness and capacity to build and participate in multiracial coalitions in order to advance a progressive agenda for an equitable and racially just society.

The 21 CRF grantees in 2022-23 were:

- [Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education \(ARISE\)](#);
- [Asian American Resource Workshop \(AARW\)](#);
- [Asian Economic Development Association \(AEDA\)](#);
- [Asian Health Services \(AHS\)](#);
- [Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon \(APANO\)](#);
- [Asian Pacific Cultural Center \(APCC\)](#);
- [Athena's Warehouse](#);
- [CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities \(CAAAV\)](#);
- [CAP-USA](#);
- [Caribbean Equality Project \(CEP\)](#);
- [Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community \(CBCAC\)](#);
- [Coalition for Asian American Leaders \(CAAL\)](#);
- [Empowering Pacific Islander Communities \(EPIC\)](#) and [Black Pacific Alliance \(BPA\)](#);
- [Friends of Little Sài Gòn \(FLS\)](#);
- [HANA Center](#);
- [Ka 'Aha Lahui O 'Olekona Hawaiian Civic Club of Oregon and SW Washington \(KALO HCC\)](#);
- [Mekong NYC](#);
- [MinKwon Community Center for Action](#);
- [Southeast Asian Community Alliance \(SEACA\)](#);
- [United Territories of Pacific Islander Alliance \(UTOPIA\)](#); and
- [VietLead](#).

# ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

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The 21 CRF grantees implemented their cross-racial solidarity, allyship and healing work differently, each leveraging their unique strengths, relationships, and cultural competence, in their respective ethnic and geographic target populations. Because of the diversity, the evaluator decided to use a more grounded approach of storytelling to honor the spectrum and nuances of this work, rather than imposing a more traditional evaluation approach that focuses on predetermined outcomes and linear logic models to reach those outcomes. Following the arc of a story, the evaluation answers the following learning questions for the Community Resilience Fund in four related reports.

- **Report #1: Origin Stories** (Why?) – What compels these grantee organizations to take on this work? What values or principles guide their work?
- **Report #2: Liberatory Practices and Innovations** (How?) – What strategies have CRF grantees used to advance cross-racial solidarity, allyship and healing? How did they prepare their organizations and communities to engage in this work? How much have they adapted to evolving external conditions?
- **Report #3: Stories of Transformation** (So what?) – What progress have CRF grantees seen on individual, organizational, and community levels?
- **Report #4: Looking Forward** (What's next?) – What does the “next level” of this work look like? What are the upcoming opportunities and what do they need to meet this moment?

Although these grantees are diverse, this evaluation weaves together their stories of passion, challenges, victories, lessons, and new aspirations to illustrate the unique role AA and NHPI communities play in strengthening multiracial solidarity and point to possible new directions in this work that we can collectively take on. Quotes from the participants are edited for clarity purposes.

# LIBERATORY PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS

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*What strategies have CRF grantees used to advance cross-racial solidarity, allyship and healing?*

*How did they prepare their organizations and communities to engage in this work?*

*How much have they adapted to evolving external conditions?*

By “liberatory practices,” we mean the different ways CRF grantees support their staff and communities in understanding the historical and social conditions that oppress them, so that together they can begin to change those conditions — in this case, in collaboration with other communities of color through solidarity, allyship, and healing. Grantees identified several such liberatory practices.

First, in the era of pandemic and anti-Asian hate, some grantees learned that they had to address the community’s **basic needs** and trauma as they engaged them in strategies to strengthen their solidarity with other communities of color. These strategies allowed them to build trust with community members in a way that encouraged them to be vulnerable and open to more progressive narratives about structural racism.

Second, many grantees recognized that effective community dialogues had to happen over time. They learned to scaffold **difficult conversations** to build momentum for a shared vision of solidarity and allyship.

Third, grantees reinforced that **storytelling** was a culturally responsive way to doing racial equity work. In some cases, storytelling can be the sharing of different personal stories to hold multiple perspectives to sharpen our analysis or to create a collective healing response to private trauma. In other cases, storytelling is the intergenerational sharing of community or activist history or ancestral stories in order to reduce stigma or challenge mainstream narratives like the model minority myth. Some grantees were also experimenting with different creative expressions that do not rely solely on verbal or written language.

## BASIC NEEDS

Fourth, many grantees used **youth and intergenerational organizing** approaches to build bridges to other communities of color. Many grantees reflected that youth organizing in AA and NHPI communities is necessarily intergenerational organizing. Young people could be effective messengers to push adults in our communities to think more deeply about cross-racial solidarity and allyship, and improved relationships between young people and their parents or grandparents could be healing across generations.

Finally, as we expand this work in AA and NHPI communities, a few grantees recognized the importance of **sharing resources with and building capacity** of smaller and emerging organizations.

Ultimately, regardless of which liberatory practices grantees employ, they stressed the importance of the ideological underpinning that links any issue to a **structural or root-cause analysis**. People with multiple identities, especially those that have been most marginalized or stigmatized, could be mobilized to connect with different communities. This is why it was important to center those who are most impacted by building their leadership and bringing them into any decision-making table. To illustrate the importance of a structural or root-cause analysis, this report will conclude with an example of community safety and abolitionism.

In the last few years, the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc in many AA and NHPI communities and brought unemployment, food insecurity, and housing instability to new heights. Many community members fell victims to both crimes of poverty and race-based violence. Even though many of these worsening conditions could be explained by the white supremacy that grew under the Trump administration, many grantees found it very challenging to have community conversations about cross-racial solidarity and allyship when these traumas were not addressed. The lack of economic well-being could also reinscribe a scarcity mindset that makes communities feel competitive with one another.

At **Athena's Warehouse** in Atlanta, Executive Director Dia Parker explained, "Our kids are just trying to get into college. Our kids are worried about the financial outcomes of their parents, and I know that that is the burning, pressing need. Our kids do not know where their next meals are coming from, so I have a hard time being like, 'Okay, let's do this exercise where we talk about resistance.'" While addressing the basic needs has taken front and center for the organization, Parker still finds that cultural empowerment could help young people imagine their future beyond their immediate surroundings. She said, "When we have conversations around career development, we always tell our kids that if you speak a language other than English, that is an asset...You should be talking about how growing up in a bilingual household helps you navigate the

world in this really unique and beautiful way. We do a scholarship each year, and we get the seniors to write an essay in order to apply for the scholarship. I'm hearing already from the students that learning and hearing the fact that their culture as an asset has been really, really affirming, which just makes me want to cry." Even though Athena's Warehouse has shied away from talking about racial justice with their young people, the tenor of our current political times, according to Parker, is making that avoidance less tenable. Recently she's built partnerships with social justice organizations like Planned Parenthood and Asian Americans Advancing Justice — Atlanta, which, in her words, "bring tools and resources to curate these conversations around justice and what that means for the individual and for the community. We just want to really explore those partnerships more."

During the pandemic, **Asian Health Services (AHS)** in Oakland held very popular food distribution events. "We'd have hundreds of seniors, mostly Chinese, some Vietnamese, lining up hours in advance," said Ben Wang, Director of Special Initiatives. "It's a very pressurized environment. No one wants to get cut in line. If you miss out on the food, it's a big deal because of the need. AHS has learned that we have to be very organized. We've had problems with it getting out of hand. People are hungry. They're desperate." Even though the food distribution was available to everyone in the community, AHS received feedback that some Black community members felt excluded. According to Wang, they felt that "the Asians would come and just try to take all the food right away, and it was very transactional, even

hostile." What could be construed as "aggressiveness," Wang said, could be attributed to the "scarcity" mindset that many of these immigrant seniors experienced from wars and other traumas.

In response, AHS began to co-host these food distribution events with another clinic partner that serves primarily the Black community. Once the residents from both communities were assured that their basic needs, food in this case, would be met, they were much more open to learning about each other. These joint events then became opportunities for cross-racial interactions as community members waited in line. Wang said, "We did programming around it. We did education. We had culture performances, and drummers from both communities. These Asian elders were participating in the African drumming circle and vice versa. One event celebrated both Lunar New Year and Black History Month. We're finding ways to incorporate culture and healing activities. We had a mindfulness movement exercise."

Often the nonprofit sector holds a false dichotomy between direct services that provide basic needs to the community and community organizing. The examples from Athena's Warehouse and AHS illustrate how the two are intrinsically linked. The **HANA Center** in Chicago also operates on a similar "model of service to organizing, organizing to service." Senior Organizing Manager Young Woon Han explained, "We had a list of undocumented community members that came for a service, like financial support, DACA applications, and whatnot. We engaged with them by calling them to see what



*HANA Center co-leading a direct action defending DACA at the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, LA*

they need. And then out of that, we made a space for undocumented younger folks and created a group called OCEAN [Organized Community of Empowered Asian Networks]. Since 2020, they had been meeting regularly, biweekly for now. We develop the leadership of the people who are directly impacted. This group has been the guiding force behind HANA’s multiracial immigration justice work.”

**United Territories of Pacific Islander Alliance (UTOPIA)** also uses a similar service approach to empower trans Pacific Islander sex workers in Washington. According to Regional Community Organizer Amasai Jeke, “We get to do our outreach service to our sex

workers who work at night on the street in Aurora. We provide them with condoms, sanitizers, lubricants and all that. We also provide them with makeup, and we serve them meals. We always take food with us to share with them while they’re working. They get to have a hot cup of soup and a sandwich and water while they do their work.” Jeke said this non-judgmental approach destigmatizes sex work and allows these women to build trust with UTOPIA enough to share their stories. Many of these women work with UTOPIA staff in advocating with other communities of color to create a safer work environment for sex workers.

**VietLead** embraces a similar philosophy in working with the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian communities in Philadelphia and New Jersey, including those formerly incarcerated individuals who are being deported. Executive Director Nancy Nguyen said, “Our base-building strategy is multi-tiered, and the first tier is relationship-building and community engagement. Our direct services are our community engagement. Our direct services give us direct access to working class Viet folks. It allows us to be in direct contact around what folks are actually needing and experiencing, and then it helps build trust. Anything that we do politically is a risk. How big a risk one can take as an organization is the rubber band stretch of that trust the community has in you. We don’t have to be in campaign mode all the time, but what we do need to be doing all the time is relationship-building and trust-building because when campaign time comes, that’s when we start to make asks of our community to take risks.”



Stigmatized populations, like undocumented immigrants, sex workers, or people who are at risk of deportation due to their criminal records, often hold a unique place in multiracial coalition building because their issues cut across many communities, and this type of relationship building through direct service is essential to building their advocacy and leadership skills.

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

CRF grantees emphasized that community dialogues about cross-racial solidarity, allyship, and healing, precisely because they are difficult, are not one-off conversations, but they need to build upon one another strategically and over time. As an organization working in the intersection of race, sexual orientation, and gender identities (SOGI), **Caribbean Equality Project (CEP)** recognizes that any effort to make New York safe for LGBTQ+ Afro- and Indo-Caribbean immigrants needs to involve faith leaders in these communities. Executive Director Mohamed Amin explained, “We know that the Muslim, the Hindu, the Sikh, the Jain, the Buddhist, the Christian communities, these are all faiths that have often served as a space of healing and a source of upliftment for a lot of folks who identify within these faiths. But within these faiths, there are conversations that we’re not having, such as how the faith leaders can use their position to talk about racism and talk about making a space more inclusive and affirming to LGBTQ+ people. How do

we talk about women’s rights and having our faith leaders affirming women and not necessarily perpetuating this cycle of language around staying in your marriage because it’s against the religion to get a divorce? Because we know that gender-based violence is deep-rooted in psychological issues. And children growing up in households, seeing this type of abuse can then also grow up and replicate it. So these are some of the things that we’re thinking about.”

Amin continued, “And if we’re going to address faith leaders, then it needs to be a series of conversations. It cannot just be a one-time conversation and then our problems are solved. That’s not how this works. They have to be a series of conversations focusing on survivors and young people. It has to be a series of tailored discussions to address various issues using an intersectional lens.”

Between 2013 and 2015, CEP unsuccessfully petitioned Hindu leaders to allow LGBTQ+ people to march in the [Phagwah](#) parade, a community celebration of the spring season. CEP started having “deep conversations” with Hindu faith leaders, challenging the contradictions of having LGBTQ+ people’s visible presence in their places of worship but not at the parade. Amin recalled, “These were very triggering conversations. They were very, very discriminatory, very dehumanizing, because they had such trivial concerns, like ‘Are you going to be holding hands?’ Yeah, we’re queer people. If we want to hold hands, we’ll hold hands. How is that different from any other straight couple? It was just so triggering, and to be honest, difficult... But because you care about your community, you have to go through

this process to advocate for your community. It started with phone calls and after your phone calls were being ignored, then with emails and then kept repeating, until you're able to get a meeting with them. And once you finally get a meeting, they're like, 'All right, we're here. What do you want? Why do you want to be a part of this parade?' Because a lot of the faith leaders in the Hindu community are men, you're dealing with this very patriarchal religion that doesn't necessarily affirm women or trans people. So you're going into a meeting knowing that you're going to experience discrimination and violence, but you still have to go through these really triggering and



*CEP March*

harmful conversations, but you still have to give this full history of why, why what they're doing is considered discrimination, in order for these faith leaders to fully understand how they're practicing exclusion.”

Their persistence paid off in 2016, when the Irish parade organizers in New York finally allowed an LGBTQ+ group to march for the first time. Capitalizing on the Hindu faith leaders' desire to “show they can be inclusive,” too, CEP convinced them to do the right thing. And that year, CEP “made history by being the first LGBTQ+ Caribbean organization to wave the rainbow flag in the Phagwah Parade. And from then to now,” according to Amin, “we have had a consistent presence at this parade. Now we lead what is called the Phagwah Social Justice Collective, which comprises of LGBTQ+ and gender rights organization, faith institutions, social justice organizations, environmentalist organizations.” While the external event at the Irish parade played an important factor in sparking this change, Amin acknowledged that the internal change wouldn't have been possible without this earlier series of difficult conversations.

Similarly, **Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)** has for years engaged in a multiracial abolitionist coalition in Boston to explore alternative safety responses that do not involve the police. To build grassroots support, AARW was navigating difficult conversations about defunding the police in the local Asian American community. In 2022, a South Asian man with mental health issues was murdered in neighboring Cambridge by the police. This tragedy gave AARW

an opening about mental health services with other AA and NHPI community-based organizations that “built out more opportunities to talk about the broader issues of policing that maybe touch the Black community more,” according to Co-Executive Director Carolyn Chou. For many of these “mainstream” organizations, these conversations had been “uncomfortable” before the murder, but the tragedy highlighted contradictions that most community members could no longer ignore.

The CEP and AARW examples illustrate the importance of persistence, as well as the nimbleness to move decisively when external events open the opportunity to push difficult conversations. The multiple and steady community dialogues are the foundation for the breakthroughs in both cases. While the work of racial equity is long-term and doesn’t occur in a predictable timeline, CRF grantees emphasized that it still needed to be intentional and strategic.

In their response to the very divisive and ugly chatter on Chinese social media about Black Lives Matter in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, **Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC)** in Chicago initiated a series of conversations to explore anti-Blackness in the local Chinese community (“Solidarity 1.0”) that began with first-generation Chinese immigrant parents. In 2021, with additional funding, CBCAC expanded on this first series and invited participants back to “advanced conversations” with Black, Latinx, and white parents (“Solidarity 1.1”). Prior to receiving a grant from the CRF, CBCAC embarked on the next phase (“Solidarity

2.0”) of this scaffolding, by bringing together (mostly) Chinese-speaking parents and English-speaking young people (not necessarily from the same families). The approach with each iteration was strategic.

For instance, Solidarity 1.0 with Chinese-speaking parents was meant to create a safe space to encourage vulnerability and self-reflection. Executive Director Grace Chan McKibben explained, “We started fairly gently. The [first] three conversations were about the history of race and racism in the US, and the racism that Asian Americans experienced and racism that Black Americans experienced. And then hoping to lead the participants into understanding solidarity or understanding similarities and differences in the experiences and building empathy and solidarity.” McKibben was also insistent that the conversation be conducted in Cantonese, the language these parents were most comfortable with, and she found a bilingual graduate student who had grown up in Hong Kong to facilitate this series. “I specifically picked him,” she said, “because I thought the parents would be able to see him as a son. Even in marketing the program, we were cautious in saying, ‘Oh, your children may be experiencing racism,’ or ‘Your children may be discussing racism. Come to this program so that you can learn how to support them.’”

As in the example with AARW, a tragedy propelled these initial conversations to the next level. Chan McKibben said, “At the beginning, most folks were just listening. It was in session 4, right after a high-profiled carjacking that turned into a Chinese American

getting killed that winter. We had been leading pretty gently; usual exercises about implicit bias: If you see these different pictures and you know about their resumes, which one will you pick for this job, kind of exercise. But after that, there was a discussion about when you see somebody of another race, what do you think? And one woman literally said, ‘Because of this incident that happened recently, when I see a Black person, I am afraid that they may rob me.’ I think that actually was one of the most transformational points, when somebody was brave enough to name that. I literally was private chatting on Zoom with the facilitator. I’m like, ‘Don’t go to the next slide. Just let’s unpack this.’ That was one of the most poignant moments. It is so often in the Asian American community that people don’t go into their feelings or they tell you what they think you want to hear. Other people chimed in. That was one of the moments where folks were more able to share different points of view, different experiences.”

These small but pivotal choices along the way, Chan McKibben felt, were why many of the parents became more confident about talking about race and returned to subsequent and deeper dialogues, with parents from other communities and then later with young Chinese Americans in the community.

Across the grantees, these difficult conversations are most powerful when people who are most impacted are able to tell their stories. Storytelling is another liberatory practice.

## STORYTELLING

For many marginalized populations with a history of trauma, collective storytelling is an effective healing strategy because it can decrease isolation, reduce stigma, deepen trust, and connect people to each other. As Amasai Jeke at **UTOPIA** said, “Storytelling is the most powerful way to do this work now. And through storytelling we are able to change narrative or bring back narrative that’s been lost.” Jeke shared a personal story about how “lost narratives” challenge the colonized image of her community and contribute to her own political development as a trans Pacific Islander activist. She said, “Far too often our narrative has been depicted for us. And what I’ve learned within my culture is that we’ve always been known for our oral tradition. We know for a fact that before colonization different or third gender identities exist within our culture. Because of colonization and whitewashing, because the Bible said that this is wrong, that third identity or the traditional cultural identity of trans women was taken away. But our ancestors, our kūpuna, our elders still hold so much of this. They were not only fa’afafine, they were leiti, they were vakasalewalewa.” Even though Jeke acknowledged that these ancestral gender identities are different from contemporary trans identity, she began to adopt a broader gender spectrum and imagine a more authentic possibility for herself. She said, “As someone who was born and raised in Fiji, I thought I was gay femme. I didn’t have the materials and the resources to know that I was trans.” A lot of the work at UTOPIA is to decolonize harmful messages by making ancestral knowledge more available to LGBTQ+ Pacific

Islander young people in Washington. She added, “We make sure that the way that we tell our narratives through our Talanoa dialogues, through our ROOTED in Culture program, so that we won’t forget these marginalized voices.”

In Minnesota, as **CAPI-USA** grows and diversifies its staff to look more like the communities it is serving (including refugees from Afghanistan, North Africa, and Ukraine), its leadership uses storytelling as a strategy to foster a sense of belonging and inclusiveness among its staff that they want to model in the multiracial community. Director of Operations Mary Niedermeyer said, “One of the things that CAPI really values, which I think does have an impact with building resilience and unity, is that we value relationships. We really want to uplift people’s identities and celebrate our different cultures. In October we did a training on culture, and how our culture impacts our worldview and the way that we interact with others, the way that we just process everything, the way that we view time, things like that. It gives you greater insights on why certain people work or communicate the way they do. And we shared stories. I feel like that really helps with that resilience and with coping through some of these really challenging times.” Both Niedermeyer and former CEO Ekta Prakash emphasized that storytelling is not a one-time conversation but has to be embedded into the organizational culture.

The need for a space for healing and relationship building is not only useful for program staff, but among organizational leaders

as well. **Coalition for Asian American Leaders (CAAL)** — a partner of CAPI-USA and another CRF grantee — is a co-leader with three organizations in Latinx and Black communities in a coalition called Linking Leaders that tries to build a leadership pipeline for communities of color in Minnesota. CAAL’s Executive Network Director ThaoMee Xiong shared, “What the organizations learned through the network is that they don’t even know enough about each other. The assumption that we should all naturally have some kind of affinity towards each other just because we’re people of color didn’t make any sense. So how do we come together to build solidarity when we still have to learn about each other and each other’s histories?” But it is more than just relationship building, sharing stories is also about getting on the same page, like what CAPI-USA was trying to do with its staff. Xiong explained, “Everyone’s experience around race is so personal and traumatic, and everyone has a different vision what racial justice looks like. It’s easy to just say all the right words and then the actions don’t match.” In response, Linking Leaders started a storytelling project called Truth in History to build genuine relationships across the organizations as a prerequisite for authentic coalition building.

Many grantees share their community stories in very public ways that allow them to bring in the broader community or even those outside of it (like policymakers) into conversations. For instance, storytelling is central to the work UTOPIA does to advocate for trans sex workers. As Jeke explained, “Policies come to life when we tell those lived experiences of communities that face [discrimination] on a daily basis.”

For CAAL, the relationship building among leaders of color through storytelling is a driver for their collective campaign to institutionalize ethnic studies in public schools. Xiong explained, “The reality is that the public school system or any school system doesn’t do a good job of telling the lived experiences of people of color in America. Asian Americans have a racial identity and have racialized experiences. And sometimes we’re not taught the language to share those racialized experiences.” At CAPI-USA, Neidermeyer expected that these stories from staff will “trickle down into the work that we’re doing in the community because the more aware we are of ourselves, the more we’re also going to be aware of the folks that we’re serving, and be more aware of what is impacting them” and eventually will lead to “systemic change, by sharing them with legislators and building grassroots power. Our stories really matter.”

Nancy Nguyen shared her excitement about a three-part documentary project at **VietLead** that the organization has been working on since 2021 about “Southeast Asian resettlement stories in Philadelphia.” She explained, “The way I see it, this [documentary] is our PE [political education to the Southeast Asian community], but on a live screen. It’s our attempt to tell a broader story about a failed resettlement process. We were dumped into Black and brown neighborhoods. There was a ton of anti-Black, anti-Asian violence. Why was that? What was going on policy-wise?” Once completed, VietLead will use the documentary “as a tool to agitate the Vietnamese community” and “shift the dominant narrative” within that community about US as a “savior” to one that examines how the

Many grantees share their community stories in very public ways that allow them to bring in the broader community or even those outside of it (like policymakers) into conversations.

country’s neoliberal policies like “war on poverty, war on drugs” dilapidated neighborhoods shared by both Southeast Asian refugees and other people of color. Nguyen intended this type of storytelling to open up community dialogues that would drum up grassroots support for VietLead’s various campaigns. Interestingly, VietLead employs a direct services strategy, as explained in [an earlier part of this report](#), to build trust with community members, but also a storytelling strategy to agitate them.

For several CRF grantees, storytelling is a key strategy in addressing anti-Blackness in AA and NHPI communities. **Black Pacific Alliance** is starting a project called Rooted Resilience, that will try to “undo and mitigate generational trauma through storytelling.” Cofounder Jason Finau elaborated: “Through BPA, we’ve met a lot of Pacific

Islander parents of Black children who raised their children in a way that, while well-meaning, might have created trauma for them. These parents did it based on what they knew at the time. For instance, they might have taken their children out of the PI environment that they felt was too toxic with anti-Blackness. Or they might have inherited this trauma that they didn't understand." Estella Owoimaha-Church, EPIC Executive Director, added, "Our parents are struggling with their own traumas and are in need of healing. Some grew up in the diaspora as first-generation immigrants. Others were in the military, and with our relationship to empire and colonization, that's a whole another layer."

Rooted Resilience will create an intergenerational space for parents and children to talk and heal together. Finau believed that it will be a "transformative experience" for them to hear each other's story, so that they can "move forward without carrying this trauma for future generations." BPA has recently completed a storytelling guide and is in the process of inviting five pairs of parents and children to pilot it. The storytelling is more than about improving family relationships. These conversations will be recorded and shared in the community to raise awareness about the havoc anti-Blackness had wreaked in the Pacific Islander community. In addition, Finau said that BPA plans to share these stories with artists and writers in both Black and Pacific Islander communities, so that these artists can digest these messages, make their interpretation, whatever their medium is, and speak to different audiences in our communities."



*In 2022, AHS held a [Community Healing event](#) featuring Asian and Black artists, foods and resource tables, and COVID-19 testing.*

**Asian Health Services (AHS)** embarked on the Black + Asian Trauma Project with its community partner, West Oakland Health Council. The two partners conducted separate focus groups with Oakland residents in the two communities. Through these conversations, the Asian participants, AHS reported, realized that much of their perceptions, distrust, and fear of Black people came from misinformation and negative portrayals of Black communities in media. As part of the scaffolding, the two partners plan to bring both communities together in future conversations. In response to other findings from the focus groups, they also collaborated on some community events, like the joint food distribution described earlier in this [report](#).

Ben Wang, Director of Special Initiatives, shared a story about a Chinese community member, a senior and a patient leader at AHS, who participated in one of the focus groups. He said, “She had been robbed four or five times in the past couple years, mostly in Chinatown. So she had felt very traumatized. And in her case, it had been Black perpetrators who robbed her. She might have had some physical assault, too. She’s been very honest that she understands intellectually that these are just individuals who did this, and it’s not reflective of an entire community, that not all Black people are dangerous. But then she also said that unconsciously her body still would tense up or react with fear. She also recognized that aside from those negative experiences, she hasn’t really had a lot of opportunities to build friendships and relationships with Black community members. And so, if that’s the only experience, it’s such a negative experience to hold. [At one of the joint events,] she got to meet all of the African drumming circle, and she got to play the drums with them. She said she appreciated the chance to get to know people on a human level because she said it’s going to help counterbalance those negative with some positive. It’s one thing intellectually, and another, I think, when it’s on a human level.”

This example illustrates the last couple of liberatory practices: (1) the scaffolding of difficult conversations that starts with safe spaces where people could be vulnerable in challenging each other’s assumptions as a foundation to deeper engagement with other communities of color, and (2) the use of nonverbal and community creative expression (like drumming) that allows people

across communities to play together and build relationships. Not all storytelling has to be told in words. Especially when language is a barrier, visual and performing arts (especially in the cultural traditions of different communities) can be an effective way to share stories and build ties.

### **Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC)**

has opened up spaces for people from different communities to create art together. Executive Director Grace Chan McKibben said, “[Dialogues] are good, but they are mostly intellectual work. They do open up people’s minds. But I think that in a lot of ways, if we can continue to encourage folks to work together and create things together, that does help with breaking down some of the preconceptions that folks may have about other races or build trust for collaborative relationships.”

“We had an artist at the events that we’re tabling at basically set out this big piece of black paper and gel pens and invite people to draw whatever that moves them. The artist pulls the things together to create a picture. I think the powerful message is that individual people may be working using their own ideas and that we can pull them together [into one piece of art]. The [sidewalk] chalk drawing was a similar concept. I think that at some point we want to show some of the videos and pictures of people drawing together and have a discussion.”



## Dancing was another way to break down racial barriers.

Dancing was another way to break down racial barriers. At one event, said Chan McKibben, “we had an African drummer and a Latin dance instructor and a Chinese dance instructor, both giving mini-lessons and then having the entire group dance together using all three elements. All of those people that participated want to do more and they’re interested in other activities.”

As part of its decolonizing strategy, **Black Pacific Alliance** is organizing an in-person “Homecoming” event to convene those who have participated in the virtual BPA affinity space in the past two years. Cofounder Jason Finau explained, “Homecoming is a longstanding tradition within the Black community, where folks come far and wide to celebrate Blackness in its entirety,” including dance, music, food and other cultural expressions. This celebration of Black joy, excellence, and unity is a regular feature at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and was recently popularized by Beyoncé. BPA intends its version of “Homecoming” to uniquely embrace its multiple identities. Finau said, “It’s more than just a celebration, but an opportunity for us to grow as Black and

Pacific Islander, and maybe even a bridge to share our experiences with our PI communities. We have PI festivals all over the country, but we’re not having conversations about Blackness. We need to show how each side of our communities have been resilient and continued to thrive.” Currently, the plan is to piggy-back the Homecoming event on the biennial FestPAC (Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture) slated to take place in Hawai`i in 2024, as a way to encourage BPA members to collectively participate in and debrief their experience from one of the largest gatherings of indigenous people from different Pacific Island nations.

Storytelling through arts and culture is also tied to community development — in an approach called “[creative placemaking](#)” — which can ease tension and build relationships among different stakeholders, including Asian business owners, non-Asian residents or customers, and artists or cultural workers, while spurring local economic activities. In Minnesota, **Asian Economic Development Association** has been working with Asian and Black visual artists, in the words of Executive Director Va-Megn Thoj, “to create cultural districts or nodes in our neighborhoods so that we could anchor our economic development.” Arts & Culture Manager Evie Mouacheupao cited an example from a few years ago where an artist created a light installation in the neighborhood after having conversations with residents about the lack of safety in the evenings. The result was a creation that community members enjoyed and felt a part of, while spurring business activities at night.



*Artists created messages of racial justice and solidarity in Little Mekong after the George Floyd murder and civil unrest. Credit: Thaiphy Phan-Quang*

AEDA even transformed some of its office space into a gallery. Even during the pandemic, AEDA created a “window gallery” to continue displaying the work of these artists. The project also provided some income for the artists during very challenging economic times. In sharing their work, Arts & Culture Coordinator Npaus Baim Her added, “we’re not just celebrating their culture and identity, but we’re also celebrating that they’re change makers and acknowledging that as artists, they continue to create conversations within our communities about cross-racial allyship, about healing, about things that we need to continue conversing about.” Beyond the artwork,

seeing the artists from the two communities together sent a potent message. Mouacheupao explained, “They gathered together as people of color to showcase to the community that we can work together, we can come together and offer the community a sense of hope and peace.” It challenges, Thoj echoed, “the dominant narrative that we [Black and Asian communities] cannot work together.”

Thoj said that artists are a community asset who are often undervalued, when in fact arts could be a more effective pathway for narrative change. He said, “Art just bridges cultures more easily than if we were to just bring, say, Black residents and Asian businesses together, to try to understand each other. That could be forced. Artists create something that’s their expression, and the community will come and see that through their own lives. We’re not dictating to people what they should think, or forcing a conversation that’s difficult and full of baggage... Using art has been more productive than doing a marketing campaign, for example, about how Asian businesses are friendly and will welcome you as customers.”

In conjunction with the exhibits, AEDA invited Black and Asian visual artists to have conversations about their work with the community. As Thoj said earlier, these conversations were a more disarming and humanizing way for residents to learn about each other. Her recalled one Black artist who was particularly effective for the audience. Her said, “She was talking about the [Crown law](#) [which prohibits race-based hair discrimination] and how it’s about the freedom of Black hair. And as an Asian person, I’m not too familiar

with the Crown law, and she was able to give examples, historical moments of how Black women were oppressed and how, she as a Black woman feels, and how that connects to other Black women in her lives, like her nieces.”

In Seattle, **Friends of Little Sài Gòn** also uses creative placemaking strategy, anything from Vietnamese street signs and decorative crosswalks, to an installation of a heritage drum that draws its design from Vietnam’s earliest form of metalmaking. Like AEDA, part of its economic development is the transformation of its office into a gathering space for the community that includes a coffee house and an art gallery, “dedicated to elevating and empowering Vietnamese and Vietnamese American artists, experiences, voices, and stories.” Executive Director Quynh Pham said, “Storytelling and art are really key in our work. We have a whole exhibit called Tying the Threads. It’s an annual rotating exhibit, and we try to come up with some type of theme every year. The last two years, our themes have really been focused on the intersections of people’s identity, and some of the challenges of the external conditions that people have been experiencing. And it’s a multimedia exhibit. So they can do illustrations, they can do a poem, they can do video. And we try to pick a small group of artists to showcase every year. We’ve been so proud of community members coming and saying, ‘Wow, I’ve never knew that I needed a space like this until I came here.’”

Echoing Thoj’s idea that art can open people up to difficult conversations, Pham continued, “Every part of our space was really

thoughtful and intentional about rooting us in our culture and our language, but doing that in a way that it’s not a traditional community center where you come and you have meetings and you talk about issues, but you can talk and communicate casually about personal stories through the art exhibit, seeing it, and then just hanging out, and conversing with people in the community.”

## YOUTH AND INTERGENERATIONAL ORGANIZING

As mentioned in Report #1, for many CRF grantees, young people are and will always be a significant driver for the long journey that is racial justice work. As Estella Owoimaha-Church at **Empowered Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)**, said, “I’m always thinking about young people. I’m raising a Black girl. She is Black and Pasifika, but the world will see a Black girl and treat her as such. It’s been a tough pill to swallow, and I’ve been really trying to sit with and accept that I will not know liberation in my lifetime, and even harder to sit with my daughter might not know liberation in her lifetime. I’m trying to figure out what this means for the next seven to nine generations.”

Many AA and NHPI youth are already operating in school and community settings that are multiracial and are more open to the idea of solidarity and allyship with other communities of color. After

the police murdered George Floyd, Nancy Nguyen at **VietLead** observed how “all the tropes about Black people looting stores on TV” played out with older and more conservative people in the Vietnamese community in Philadelphia. She said, “Who was coming in defense, who was politically ready to push back against the anti-Black narratives was our young people, including those young people who had been with VietLead in the past and went to college. I saw them calling out things that were racist and anti-Black [in our community]. We have been doing this work for this many years, politicized this many people, and then suddenly I was like, ‘Oh, our young people. We have supported them to be ready for this moment.’” She admitted there is still a significant conservative element in the Vietnamese community; however, she said, “when you break it down by gender and by age, you see a huge variety. So, in that variety is the opportunity” for organizing for cross-racial solidarity.

In Los Angeles, Sissy Trinh, Executive Director at **Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA)**, shared a story about how young people brought a new energy that was an antidote to the tension and trauma between races. SEACA, located in Chinatown, works closely with Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN), which organizes the unhoused, mostly Black, population in neighboring Skid Row. Both the Asian and Black populations served by SEACA and LA CAN, respectively, are so poor that they are usually left out of affordable housing options. In their push for deeper and more inclusive affordability, the two organizations came together to influence the Downtown Community Plan that includes

both neighborhoods. One initial step for this allyship was a members’ exchange between SEACA and LA CAN.

Trinh said, “I noticed that a lot of Skid Row folks showed up very angry. I came to realize part of the reason was because they’re used to just fighting to be heard and not talked at or imposed upon.

Because when people talk about the homelessness problem, they always have a solution that never takes into the consideration of the people who are actually experiencing it. So they [Skid Row residents] are used to coming into spaces where even other lower-income communities would talk at them. They were kind of expecting that [at the first meeting of the members’ exchange]. Because we had structured the meeting to intentionally give space for every community to talk and share, and we had prepped our youth, I think it really confused the Skid Row folks because they were not used to being given space.

**Who was coming in defense, who was politically ready to push back against the anti-Black narratives was our young people, including those young people who had been with VietLead in the past and went to college.**

*– Nancy Nguyen, Executive Director at VietLead*

“We didn’t put them in a corner. We dedicated space in the agenda for them to talk about their needs. We broke out into sessions for specific topics. That allowed people to learn from each other.” If the adults had come prepared to fight, the young people were disarming them with curiosity, optimism, humor, and sometimes outright frankness, a contrast to the adults’ experience with typical coalition meetings of “horse-trading” where they were constantly being asked to compromise. Trinh recalled that “the tone and tenor was really different in the second meeting.”

Youth-serving grantees cautioned that youth do not automatically show up in multiracial coalition building spaces as ready bridge-builders. As Trinh said, “They weren’t born or became magically amazing.” The work takes months and sometimes years of political education and leadership development that gives them the lens of structural analysis to reframe their lived experience, so that they could take on subjects as complex as community planning.

Trinh explained, “The youth that come to SEACA want to see social change. They just don’t have the vocabulary or the political understanding or the skills and confidence. And that’s what we do. We recruit them in ninth and tenth grade, and then we go through a series of a year-long curriculum involving popular education, interactive games and activities to contextualize [structural racism] for them. They see it and they experience it, right? They know their schools have crappy books compared to another neighborhood. Or this neighborhood gets all these parks and trees and beautiful

resources, and we don’t. But they’re taught about racism as, ‘You are racist against me as an individual.’ They only see racism the way it’s discussed as an individual failing, as opposed to a systemic structure that replicates these issues. So they just don’t know how to articulate that it’s bigger than just simply individuals becoming racist against each other. That’s what the games and activities do. It also gives them an opportunity to learn about different strategies for addressing the issues. We talk about different ways youth in particular have affected racial justice and economic justice. A lot of times people think change happens because you have this great older statesman theory. When you think about racial justice, you think of Martin Luther King Jr., but then people don’t realize that he was 25 or 26 [when he oversaw the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955] — he was really young — or that there were other people that supported him.” In other words, part of political education should encourage young people to see themselves as change agents.”

SEACA does this by starting where each young person is at, initially delegating simple hands-on tasks like tabling at public events or administering a community survey, and progressively giving them more space to flex their leadership muscle. Trinh said, “By the end of the academic year, we recruit the students to become youth organizers [in the following year]. That’s where the organizing and campaign work happens. And it’s always amazing to watch the students be like, ‘I’m not a youth organizer.’ They’d always look up to the YOs [youth organizers, from the previous year]. And then when it comes time to have them be one, they’d say, ‘But I’m not a

YO.’ And I’m like, ‘Well, what do you think a YO does?’ And then they would list all these things. And I’d say, ‘Well, you did that. You did that. You did...’ And then looking back, ‘Wait, I did all the things that YOs do.’ And then you’d see that light bulb look, just my favorite, like, ‘Oh my God, I’m a YO.’”

Without romanticizing the young people, Trinh also said that one of their stumbling blocks is “acknowledging their own privilege.” She said, “It happens in multiple contexts where there’s a power differential. It might be sexual orientation in one context, or it might be about race, because we do have members who are Black, who are Latino, who are mixed race. Everybody was like, ‘We’re all low income so we’re all the same,’ not realizing, no, there are still differences.”

Sometimes, youth have to unlearn the dominant narrative that pits different races against each other. **Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE)** leveraged the CRF funding to expand their youth organizing work to Brooklyn Center, Minnesota and quickly discovered that it has “a very different youth organizing scene” than their home base Providence, said Ngan Nguyen, Deputy Director of Programs & Curricula. Because of the racial tensions that have been heightened locally by the police murder of George Floyd and nationally by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota ARISE youth cohort “had to learn more about what Asian and Black solidarity means and what anti-Blackness in Asian communities looks like.” Even though ARISE has operated with a

Black Liberation lens, Nguyen had to devise a new strategy to meet this localized political moment.

She explained, “The context of Providence is different because Providence is actually very small, tight-knit. And within the schools, everybody’s interacting with each other. They’re very diverse. I wouldn’t say anti-Blackness is not a problem there, but I think students are just more exposed and are friends with each other cross-racially more. In Brooklyn Center, it’s a little bit more, I would say, segregated, and they don’t explicitly learn about race and racism. Or they do learn about race and racism, but not in depth to the point where they understand exactly what racial solidarity means.” In early chapter meetings, these Asian American students shared that they are being called names like “Ching-Chong” by other young people of color. Nguyen continues, “And they [Asian American students] don’t know how to address it, or teachers don’t step in to address those kinds of things. So students feel like it’s okay to continue saying those things, and being mean to one another.”

In response to the racially-motivated bullying, ARISE youth leaders in one school developed a professional development seminar for teachers “to share their experiences as Asian American students” in Brooklyn Center. Nguyen explained, “The youth and I got together to come up with what we want the teachers to know. And they decided to create a two-hour professional development on the model minority myth. Then it ends with a panel of their experience of being Asian American students at BC. A common thread of experience that I

heard across the board from these students was, they can't make mistakes because they're Asians in this school, and they feel like there's a lot of pressure that teachers put on them to be the best, to be the example. But they didn't have the language to describe what they were experiencing. Then because the teachers have those expectations of them, they feel other students within the school also share that similar expectation. So they feel like they can't mess up, they can't do things that are wrong, or they can't speak up in a certain way because of those expectations and stereotypes.

"The youth utilized their learning from the workshops that I've conducted with them before, and put it together for the teachers. We received a lot of really positive feedback, because even though this school talks a lot about being student-centered, it really doesn't center student voices. The teachers said that it's always great to hear from students, and to actually hear what their experience has been, instead of just adults presenting."

Nguyen repeated a story one of the youth leaders shared at the seminar. She said, "They were working on an assignment in a science class. And there were two youth that were from the ARISE cohort, and one of them had just finished up their assignment, and then one of their friends in school said, 'Oh, of course you would finish it first, because you're Asian.' At this moment, they were just shocked. They didn't know how to respond. But then the other [ARISE] youth was there and said, 'No, that's not true. That's a false stereotype.' And they explained to this friend who said they finished first because

they're Asian, what the model minority stereotype is. And the friend was like, 'Oh, I didn't know about the model minority and what it means. I'm sorry that I said that to you.'"

Nguyen continued, "That story was significant because it demonstrates that one, they have the language to actually describe what they were experiencing. And the second is that they're actually utilizing what they're learning, to help support their peers in learning about how harmful stereotypes like that are."

In AA and NHPI contexts, youth organizing is often necessarily intergenerational organizing. Young people have to both challenge racism in the older generations in their community, especially anti-Black racism, and empathize with the trauma that makes it hard to examine this racism. **Mekong NYC** leverages storytelling as part of the intergenerational organizing. Their youth leaders have started a project in the past year where they interviewed a lot of elders about their experiences of coming here and are currently looking to self-publish these oral

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The youth and I got together to come up with what we want the teachers to know. And they decided to create a two-hour professional development on the model minority myth.

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– Ngan Nguyen, Deputy Director of Programs & Curricula at ARISE

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histories into a book. These intergenerational dialogues can either be foundational healing from that generational trauma or a strategy to build broader cross-racial solidarity and allyship in AA and NHPI communities (or both).

Sometimes, parents need their own space for reflection first. **Black Pacific Alliance (BPA)** plans to launch an affinity group for Pacific Islander parents of Black children, according to cofounder Jason Finau, “to talk and connect about raising Black sons and daughters in the US under the context of systemic racism.” As someone who is a mother and both Black and Pacific Islander,” Owoimaha-Church at **Empowered Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)** reflected, “There’s the in-between generations who were most likely born here, have been disconnected, growing up in diaspora, feel like we were forced to choose one identity over the other at some point, and are really deep in our healing and decolonial practices. A lot of us now have children and are really focused and sensitive around parenting through a liberation framework that centers our kids and their humanities and allows for them to be their whole selves all the time.”

In Chicago, the Coalition for a **Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC)** has also been experimenting with the scaffolding of these brave spaces to have difficult conversations across generations in Chinatown. The initial community dialogues that CBCAC facilitated around racism (Solidarity 1.0) were reserved for Cantonese-speaking adult parents. Executive Director Grace Chan McKibben explained, “We’ve always wanted to do intergenerational conversations, but the

reason for going with the parents first was that some of the more entrenched racist ideas and so on were with folks that are not exposed to American culture quite as much. The parents, particularly first-generation parents that are in Chinatown, tend to be fairly isolated from mainstream culture. I think that we do expect that their journey to catch up to more openness takes a little longer. [With Solidarity 2.0], youth in both English and Chinese were more open to speaking about racism or injustices that they themselves may have experienced or observed. It’s great to work with youth; they have a much wider spectrum of possibilities because when you’re young, everything is possible. It’s great to take that energy and support it.”

For many young people, Chan McKibben explained, language adds another barrier to having conversations with their parents about racism that is already difficult to begin with. She said, “Sometimes it is both a cultural divide and a language divide. They [young people] might have the concepts [about racism] but they don’t have the language. It’s not just the Chinese words, but the [cultural] context they need to relate to their parents, particularly in Asian families where there’s the first-generation, second-generation divide. It’s hard. They may not feel safe talking about this with their own parents or grandparents or their aunts and uncles. But in these structured multi-generational conversations where there’s a facilitator, they are more open to talking. Having people that are in their parents’ or grandparents’ age group [but not in their own families] be able to relate to them helps, because then they don’t feel so isolated or so alienated from people in the older generation. And it also gives them



vocabulary and language that they can use with their parents.”

In nearby Chicago, **HANA Center** also seized the political portal that was opened by the murder of George Floyd as an opportunity to confront the anti-Black racism in the adult Korean community, and youth played a key role in just being able to name it as something that the generations need to wrestle with. Executive Director Inhe Choi explained, “We began with listening sessions with the first-generation [Korean immigrants] after George Floyd [murder] and that whole racial justice uprising to hear, what are your questions? What do you think about? What are you feeling? What are you questioning? What are you fearing? What are you excited about? And we heard from a range of first-generation people, from ministers to business owners, to grandmas to mothers and fathers.

“And then we started to hold community meetings every other week for people to come and talk. And that whole work was inspired or even requested by second-generation people who say, ‘Our parent generation is anti-Black.’ They’re [the parent generation] saying stuff about what they’re seeing about the protests: ‘Yes, they have every right to be angry, but why do they loot? Then they are the violent people.’ They’d [the second generation] say, ‘I feel like I’m being harmed by my parents to hear just the ugly stuff that they talk about, how they talk about Black people.’ Their immediate thing was that their parents were anti-Black, but first-generations don’t even know what that means.”

Choi said one way to close the generation gap was to get the adults talking about “different situations where they felt their interactions with white people, like how they were treated at a store. They still remember these instances, but they didn’t even know that was racism.

They would say, ‘I think that happened because I don’t speak English, but I could see why that’s racism now.’” The older generation was also learning about racism “emotionally through understanding what younger people go through.” Choi added,

“They’d say, ‘Wow, I didn’t know that my daughter was experiencing that, and I feel so badly that I wasn’t there for her years ago.’ They’re slowly realizing experiences of racism, and they’re slowly naming them. It took them almost a year and a half to have that... Literally every other week conversation for them to even name it like that.”

HANA Center slowly integrated the younger generation into this space, and the younger people learned something about their parents and themselves as well. Choi recalled a young man who realized through these conversations, “My God, all these years I’ve been really ashamed of my dad because he spoke English with a heavy accent and I’m such an asshole.” “And that’s internalized racism,” Choi said.

The older generation was also learning about racism “emotionally through understanding what younger people go through.”

## RESOURCE SHARING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

She also recalled a mother who had come to the first conversations sharing that she and her son would keep getting into arguments during the George Floyd protests to the point where one time he actually got out of the car in the middle of the road and walked home instead of talking to her. “He couldn’t even look at her when he talked to her,” Choi said. “But because they could hear from the second generation really emotionally and honestly and vulnerably just sharing these stories and experiences, they were able to hear each other.” To Choi, examples like this show how these intergenerational dialogues are both difficult and necessary. And they take time.

She said, “We’re not even there where they could say, ‘Oh my God, I’m anti-Black.’ I’m describing that whole trajectory as a way to say sometimes our questions just take a really long time. When we took on this project, we were not going to have an end time. We’re not going to push them if they only want to talk about one little thing, seemingly for two hours. We’re going to let them. And it’s working. And we’re just going at it with much more patience.” Participants have been so moved by these dialogues that they have urged HANA Center to turn this into a curriculum to replicate throughout the broader community.

HANA Center calls this project of intergenerational community dialogues Geo Buk Gi Hakyo or The School of Tortoise, named after the fabled race between the tortoise and the hare, which the tortoise won through steady persistence. And the curriculum is called “The People’s Academy.”

Another way of holding space and building relationships with other communities of color is to invest in each other’s sustainability by sharing resources and building capacity, especially for emerging organizations. This is not an innovation. In fact, there is a long history of organizations in different communities of color supporting each other. Some grantees owe their origin as AA and NHPI organizations, as relative newcomers to the nonprofit landscape, to investment by allies in other communities of color. In implementing the solidarity work from this grant, younger staff at **Asian Health Services (AHS)** found out their collaborator West Oakland Health Center supported AHS “when it first started off as a clinic and became a federally qualified health center.” The knowledge of this history made the partnership even more meaningful.

In Los Angeles, Sissy Trinh also shared how **Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA)** in Chinatown and Los Angeles Community Action Network in Skid Row both depended on its neighbor Little Tokyo Service Center for its administrative capacity and fiscal sponsorship for a COVID relief project early on in the pandemic, another example of cross-racial solidarity that deepened the relationships among the three groups that had a long history of fighting Downtown gentrification together.

Mohamed Amin, Executive Director at **Caribbean Equality Project (CEP)**, said that coalition building is a key strategy for the organization because “we’re still not getting equity in resources to do our work.” Through its partnerships with the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CAACF) and Asian American Federation, Amin observed that CEP has been able to “lean on their expertise and resources to bring those conversations to our local communities,” and the organization grew not only in budget, but also in capacity. CAACF, for instance, supports small grassroots organizations like Caribbean Equality Project with training around legislative and budget advocacy. Amin added, “CAACF has been really instrumental in teaching myself and creating space for other small grassroots organizations to learn about issues like budget and legislative advocacy. What does a lobby day look like? What does text banking and phone banking look like to get a bill passed or to advocate for a budget item? Potentially in a coalition where if what we advocate gets approved, then all the coalition members will get a stake in that budget.” From these partnerships, CEP has been able to secure its own state contracts, which allowed them to hire more staff to work on not only the scope of work in those contracts, but also other equity issues important to CEP.

Jason Finau made a similar observation in Black Pacific Alliance (BPA)’s partnership with Empowered Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC), as BPA continued to transform from an affinity space for Black and Pacific Islander community members three years ago to a more public-facing organization with a clearer mission. Finau

credited EPIC’s former and current executive directors (Tavae Samuelu and Estella Owoimaha-Church, respectively) for connecting BPA to other organizations and funders (like National CAPACD). He said, “They’re very intentional about how they enter, participate and leave conversations about addressing anti-Blackness. They know you can’t talk about that without having Black folks in the room, even though you see that in many places, not just PI communities, where Black people are not looped in about these conversations to build programs and shift narratives. They [EPIC executive directors] know they don’t want to speak for anti-Blackness when there are people who are Black and Pacific Islander who can speak more authentically. They bring us into conversations with other organizations.”

Recognizing the power imbalance that can come from a better-resourced organization, EPIC’s leadership embraces a hands-off but supportive approach when it comes to BPA’s programming and strategic directions. Estella Owoimaha-Church said, “The outside world actually doesn’t know that EPIC is behind the scenes for BPA. That was intentional on Tavae’s [Samuelu, previous ED at EPIC] part, because this is a Black space for Black Pasifika and for Black leaders to decide what this space looks like. What EPIC’s role has been with BPA has been to function as all the technical parts of a nonprofit without them having to worry about those things, like Zoom access. We are in the process of bringing on staff to support digital content and social media efforts for BPA.”

Finau added that EPIC also immersed BPA in the specific ways that nonprofits think, talk and do things. He said, “We’re able to map out what we want BPA to look like in one, three and five years. If you had asked me that two years ago, I wouldn’t know how to answer you. But with EPIC’s support, we were able to visualize that. Sometimes I feel like we’re moving too slow or we’re not a viable option for funders. You know, the imposter’s syndrome. Working with EPIC and being introduced to other organizations really mediated that.”

Even though Owoimaha-Church is both Black and Samoan and has participated in BPA programs before her role at EPIC, she made a conscious and difficult choice of “taking a step back from being a BPA member” because she doesn’t want her presence to be taken as interference from EPIC. EPIC uses the same approach to work with other newer Pacific Islander organizations, such as Central Valley Pacific Islander Alliance in California. Owoimaha-Church admitted that the way EPIC navigated these capacity building relationships is partly based on lessons learned from being marginalized or tokenized by umbrella organizations that are supposed to be representing both Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

But these capacity building relationships are not unidirectional. BPA is a key partner in how EPIC is evolving to become a pro-Black organization. BPA leaders led workshops and provided consultations to EPIC staff and youth on how to address anti-Blackness in their organization, including how using Black vernaculars and mannerisms

could be the kind of cultural misappropriation that perpetuates anti-Blackness. In working with EPIC, BPA is honing a practice that can be used to work with other Pacific Islander organizations and hold them accountable.

**Friends of Little Sài Gòn (FLS)** in Seattle benefitted with its “tight” partnership with the older and larger Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation Development Authority (SCIDpda). Quynh Pham said, “We couldn’t do the work alone without working with the Chinatown ID [International District] side to really support some of that work. They oversee the larger neighborhood, and they were really intentional about making sure that Little Sài Gòn is also resourced, and has the capacity to do its own work, and have its own plan.” More than resources, the larger organization, where Pham was once a staff, also played a mentorship role. She added, “Seeing how they do their work really influenced how we shaped our strategies and our approach to community development.”

These relationships are often key when leaders like Pham have to negotiate the balance between advocating for their home communities and cultivating a more multiracial worldview. Pham offered the example of building a park, a much needed green space, in Little Sài Gòn. She said, “Although it’s called Little Sài Gòn, and has been recognized as a hub for the Vietnamese community, there are a lot of other cultural identities that came before us. The Black, Japanese, and the Native American communities still have a really strong presence in this area. And so when we were building



*Seattle CID Business Relief Team panel at FLS's community space and HQ, Little Saigon Creative*

this park and we started to think about names, my board members assumed, 'Okay, this is going to be a park with a Vietnamese name.' But our committee members that sat on this oversight committee to work through this park included the Indian Health Board and the

Nisei Veterans Hall. And they said, 'No, how do you acknowledge our cultures in this park, because we're going to use it, too?'" Pham diffused the situation by not "harping on the name" but by leading a more inclusive discussion about how to incorporate all the different cultures in every area in the park.

In FLS's case, the relationships from its history of sharing resources with different organizations allowed Pham to move between her board members and her partners and negotiate for a workable solution with credibility. She said, "There have been instances where I'm like, 'Should I be pushing more for the Vietnamese community in Little Sài Gòn?' I think it's a feeling of we don't want our own communities to be lost in all of this. But my sense is that even if I put my community aside for maybe just a little bit and compromise, I know that it will come back around eventually. Sometimes you do have to compromise a little bit to work towards this bigger picture."

In 2021, **Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)** started to co-sponsor programming by Black-led organizations for \$1,000 per event as a way to share resources and build relationships with that community. APANO staff recognized that these relationships of sharing resources and building capacity for emerging organization are not about patronage, but interdependence. They also have to be ethical and equitable. Development Manager Karen Katigbak said, "We are reevaluating how we can do this more equitably, and building more of a relationship based out of aligned work and real connections between organizations as opposed to just transactional sponsorships."

Particularly for emerging organizations, National CAPACD has played a capacity building role that promotes solidarity that are not only multiracial but also inclusive of marginalized communities within the pan-ethnic umbrella. Mohamed Amin at CEP said, “Oftentimes, you get funding resources from a funder and they just want you to write a report and send it back to them. A report doesn’t always capture what a conversation can about all the issues that your community is facing. And sometimes small groups like ours don’t necessarily have capacity to write such a very detailed report. And these conversations [for this evaluation] have made things so much more easy for us to just talk with each other, meet and learn about other cohort members nationally that are doing very similar work to heal their communities. With the narratives around Black and brown communities, oftentimes we are forced just to fit within those margins. And [National CAPACD] all have allowed us to step out of it and to say that we exist and here are our identities and how they play a role in how the world perceives us and how they value us. You’ve created a space for an organization like Caribbean Equality Project who doesn’t necessarily fit in a box.” Grantees also cautioned that the work of inclusion is not a one-off event and there is a lot more work to do to expand access to groups, like Pacific Islanders, that have either been superficially included or even ignored in the AA and NHPI tent.

## BRINGING IT TOGETHER: LINKING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ABOLITIONISM

Just as each organization has multiple origin stories for their racial equity work, they also deploy multiple liberatory practices in this work. With the rise of anti-Asian hate in the past several years, no issue has been more tested as a point of cross-racial solidarity, allyship, and healing than the issue of community safety. CRF grantees who explicitly embrace an abolitionist praxis deftly combine many of the liberatory practices discussed in this report to advance a more progressive agenda in AA and NHPI communities in solidarity with other communities of color. They address individual and community’s basic needs for safety, scaffold difficult conversations to support community members’ healing while broadening their understanding of the root causes of the violence, and share collective stories across generations for reconciliation, political education, and advocacy purposes, in collaboration with other communities of color. Young people are often at the forefront of these struggles.

Abolitionism is a response to the disproportionate surveillance and criminalization of Black and brown communities, including youth and trans people. Abolitionism targets the prison industrial complex (including law enforcement and the criminal justice systems that feed into it) that is often the default solution policymakers offer to social ills (despite the fact that it actually exacerbates those ills especially for low-income Black and brown people). Moreover, the proliferation

of prisons signifies the priority of the profit motive over people. In addition, according to [Dr. Ruth Wilson Gilmore](#), abolitionism “isn’t just about getting rid of buildings full of cages.” It is about reimagining alternative, more life-affirming models of restoring ourselves from harms and traumas.” As such, writes Dr. Gilmore, “it is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term strategy.”

During the pandemic, **Asian Health Services (AHS)** in Oakland created the Community Healing Unit, “in response to patients and staff experiencing different types of crimes and violence, and hate and racism,” said Ben Wang, who oversees this unit under the Department of Special Initiatives. He said, “There is such a deep level of trauma and fear for many of our community members, especially seniors, especially immigrants. So many have experienced not only recent violence firsthand in very traumatic ways, but there’s past trauma that may be more or less unaddressed. It crossed generations. I think it adds and compounds in a lot of ways in marginalized communities.”

Wang acknowledged the unique position of Asian Americans in the debate about community safety, just like any other “wedge issue.” He said, “Whenever it comes to issues of crime and violence, and police and law enforcement, and criminal justice, it can be very polarizing and dangerous, I think, especially in the context of the model minority myth and the ways that Asian Americans get used as a wedge in the politics of racial justice.

“There is a deep sense of wanting to hold the government accountable, that the government needs to do more than what it’s perceived to be doing now, whether that is more policing or more punishment. Some talking points around very specific laws that got some buzz through ethnic media are also fairly common messaging from Right Wing media.” Wang gave the example of [Proposition 47](#), which changed some nonviolent, low-level crimes from felonies to misdemeanors in California. Commonly referred to in the community as the \$950 law (because it “changed a robbery felony threshold from \$500 to \$950”), Prop 47 still punishes those who commit robberies of less than \$950, though with a lesser sentence. But the community perception, said Wang, “is that you can steal up to \$950 and nothing’s going to happen because the law is too lax.”

AHS and other CRF grantees recognized that such reactions stem not necessarily from conservative ideologies, but actual traumas from community violence that might be amplified in the ethnic media. In communities that lack public services and are often glossed over by public agencies, Wang understood “why it’s easy to feel cynical, that nobody cares and nothing is being done about any of this violence.”

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**There is such a deep level of trauma and fear for many of our community members, especially seniors, especially immigrants.**

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*– Ben Wang, Director of Special Initiatives at AHS*

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Instead of dismissing it, these organizations offer healing services, like the AHS's Community Healing Unit, to shift the narrative. This healing builds the trust and openness community members need to engage in conversations about the root causes of structural racism.

Wang observed that there is no research consensus on the correlation between law enforcement and community safety. In fact, what research has constantly shown, he said, is the effectiveness of community-based “victim-centered” interventions (if well invested) like the Community Healing Unit. Therefore, the narrative needs to shift from crime and punishment to public health. Furthermore, the call for more policing sometimes contradicts the negative interactions the Oakland immigrant Asian community has had with law enforcement. Wang considered this contradiction a sign of the community's desperation and the (perceived) lack of options.

When asked to elaborate on victim-centered approaches (as opposed to the more punitive ones), Wang added, “We know from many people that the criminal legal system is not victim-centered, and it can be very traumatic and re-traumatizing to go through the entire process from reporting [the crime] to the court system. While that may be something that is important to many people, and we'll try to help them navigate the best we can in terms of them understanding their rights and their options through the legal system, we also try to promote and encourage folks to really think about what is healing, what does healing look like for them, to focus on them rather than to focus on the perpetrator and the legal process singularly.” In addition

to the more traditional healing activities, like yoga and acupuncture, AHS is also exploring what a healing circle could look like for Asian survivors. On the prevention side, Wang cited studies that mental health and employment services are more effective in supporting individuals with high risk of committing harm. Wang emphasized the importance of working with these individuals before they fall through the cracks, noting that the incarceration experience actually exacerbates rather than ameliorates these risks after someone is released from prison.

Sometimes, a “victim-centered” approach allows the victims to heal by sharing their stories of trauma. Carolyn Chou, Co-Executive Director at **Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)**, shared her story about supporting an older immigrant woman who “experienced really traumatic gender and anti-Asian violence,” where the person who caused her harm was a Black man. Chou said that by creating space for this woman to share her trauma (in this case, over a dinner conversation), the woman “went from being ‘he needs to be locked up forever’ to ‘he has mental health issues and he needs to get support because him going to prison is not going to change whatever has happened.’” In this case, storytelling gave this victim peace that punishing and imprisoning the perpetrator could not. Chou added, “It's really about drawing out folks' personal experience and then connecting it to systems. I think when you ask folks what is their vision, what is justice, what does the future look like? People aren't just saying just, oh, throw away this person. They're talking about healing and support for the survivor.”



Nancy Nguyen at **VietLead** cited an example of restorative justice as a victim-centered approach. There was an incident two years ago where a Chinese American high school student was beaten on a SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) station. According to Nguyen, “It was wild how hyped it got. The DA [district attorney] basically arrested the kids who caused harm and then charged them within a day. It was so quick.” VietLead collaborated with a partner they had been working with in their “defund the police” movement called Youth Art and Self-Empowerment Project (YASP), which was a youth-led organization co-founded by four young people who were formerly incarcerated. They wanted to work with the victim and her family “to see if there’s any possible way that they are not going to push for maximum punishment for these girls [perpetrators].” YASP has a restorative justice diversion program with the DA office, and the Chinese American victim was willing to engage in this process. From this experience, YASP and VietLead were able to secure violence prevention funding from the state to replicate the restorative justice program not only at VietLead, but also at Juntos, which works with the Latinx community, and Asian Americans United. In these cases, healing processes like storytelling and restorative justice gave victims more closure than the criminal justice system did.

It is interesting to note that Wang never mentioned the word “abolition” in his interview, though the solutions that AHS is experimenting with, like community-based mental health interventions, are wholly consistent with its tenets. AARW and VietLead are explicit

internally about how abolitionism is an essential framework for their racial equity work — both organizations actively participate in a multiracial coalition to defund the police; yet they are strategic about how to frame it with more “mainstream” AA and NHPI organizations. For instance, VietLead called their “defund” work “community-led safety” in public. Chou added, “We’ve also seen [mental health] as a good narrative tool with more mainstream Asian organizations. Maybe when we talk about policing more broadly, they feel very uncomfortable. But the mental health piece is a good opening. There’s something that resonates for folks in a different way.” As Chou suggested, these strategies are about making an opening to a conversation to build up to a structural analysis consistent with abolitionism — “removing the emotional blockages,” in Nguyen’s words — and less about diluting the structural analysis itself.

**In these cases, healing processes like storytelling and restorative justice gave victims more closure than the criminal justice system did.**

In his work with Southeast Asians at risk of deportation, Kevin Lam, AARW's Co-Executive Director, understands this strategic framing. He said many people in the community are unfamiliar with the concept, but yet the abolitionist framework is extremely central to their political education in interrupting the school-to-prison-to-deportation pipeline. For this group, there is so much taboo around their history of incarceration, and now the threat of deportation, that Lam said it is necessary for them to be able to share their stories first with each other to destigmatize that identity. At VietLead, Nguyen observed the same stigma when working with this population, especially in the Vietnamese community. She said, "When we worked with Vietnamese folks and we tried to say, 'Mass incarceration, this is not just your fault,' there was just such a level of shame. 'I don't want anybody to know about my case. I want to be secret about it. My kid doesn't even know that I have a deportation order.'"

Part of the destigmatization process is to understand the larger forces — historical, social, and political — that contributed to their predicament, such as the resettlement of their refugee families in poverty-stricken neighborhoods, the lack of economic investments in these communities of color, the patterns of criminalization of poor people of color that feed into the prison industrial complex, etc. That could be a very long journey.

Lam described this process of organizing: "There's a lot of hesitation and anxiousness that folks have around being able to share what happened, I think, because of the stigma and taboo around just

having these issues and challenges that they're facing. We work through it in a way in which we want them to share at a pace that they feel comfortable with. And so okay, maybe they first share with me through a one-on-one and slowly opening up to a smaller intimate space with our members or other community folks that isn't as public. A lot of it then builds up to actions and rallies for larger systemic and structural change that we're trying to do around immigration and deportation. For us, it really feels important to move at a pace of trust where they trust us that we're going to hold that space for them and be by their side and walk them through that."

Connecting personal stories to structural inequalities is the basic approach to community organizing. It is no different with racial equity and solidarity work. That work pays off for AARW when these community members become public spokespeople and ambassadors to other communities of color. Chou shared the transformation of one such leader: "Lan, one of our leaders on the deportation work, was incarcerated. She's Vietnamese American and a refugee and now has a potential deportation order because of her criminal conviction. Her interest and what she's working on with us is engaging other Vietnamese community members who have deportation orders. She actually spoke at an action that this Black women-led organization called Families for Justice as Healing put on to talk about stopping a new women's prison in Massachusetts from being built. Lan has also been through some workshops and learned about not just the current conditions of Black and Asian communities, but the history of the civil rights movement. She

shared that she’s learned how Black folks were standing up against the [Vietnam] war when she was still in Vietnam. To watch her be able to connect her experience being incarcerated to the experience of so many Black women who’ve been incarcerated, I think, was really powerful. And [it was powerful] for the Black woman there to hear about the additional consequences Lan is facing because of her immigration status.”

The origin of **CAA AV: Organizing Asian Communities** was to address anti-Asian violence in New York. Executive Director Sasha Wijeyeratne explained, “It was around the time of Vincent Chin’s murder, and there was always an ethos of showing up in solidarity. Solidarity is baked into CAA AV’s DNA, because there’s always been a recognition that what we’re experiencing as Asian communities is being experienced by other communities, and specifically other working-class communities of color across the city.” This ethos of solidarity continues after CAA AV made a pivot recently to focus on housing and gentrification. Besides, housing and policing are interlocked issues. Wijeyeratne said, “We also had some success doing political ed around the size of the police budget. If we took even a third, or even a sixth of the police budget, how many repairs could you make in public housing? Trying to really make the numbers mean something, so that when you hear the NYPD has a \$6 billion budget, you’re aware of just how much you are sacrificing in your own day-to-day conditions and lives in order for the NYPD to have this budget.” Anti-gentrification strategies require some aspect of abolitionism, not to mention the role policing plays in pushing poor

people out of their neighborhood for redevelopment.

Whether it’s community violence and housing, Wijeyeratne believes that “members having actual relationships with Black people who they’ve fought with side by side helps to shake the ‘every Black person’s a robber’ stereotype because then you actually know and care about and have fought with Black people who have been your allies, or who you’ve been in solidarity with, who you see as sharing your own self-interests.” These personal relationships help, in Wijeyeratne’s words, “ground people in the bigger picture,” by “moving people to think about who their enemies actually are. Who’s actually stealing from you? Is it a random Black person on the street, or is it your boss, who’s withheld your wages all your life? Who’s actually got your back? If your landlord isn’t making your repairs and you call the police, what happens? Absolutely nothing, when actually, your landlord is stealing from you. They’re charging you rent and not providing you safe housing, livable housing, but that’s not the kind of theft that the police defend you against.”

Wijeyeratne understands that these are difficult conversations to have in the community during crisis moments. They said, “If someone has just been robbed or has just experienced violence, it’s not the time to say, ‘Well, let’s think about this bigger picture.’” CAA AV definitely had its learning moment about “a pace of trust” with the 2014 murder of Akai Gurley at the hands of the NYPD officers, one of whom was Chinese American. Recently, CRF grantees in Minnesota had to negotiate similar tensions in the local Asian American communities

because one of the police officers involved in the murder of George Floyd was Hmong American.

Some grantees acknowledge that generally older immigrants, partly for reasons that have to do with their own survival trauma, might not be ready to look at these issues with a structural lens, but instead resort to racial explanation that reinforces anti-Black racism. Young leaders organized by CRF grantees often challenge these viewpoints. It does not mean that the older generation will readily come to that shared understanding. In fact, these dialogues can trigger generational traumas and lead to frustrations, but yet grantees believe they are necessary in order for long-term repair in the community. And even if they cannot change their parents' mind immediately, it destabilizes the dominant and negative stereotypes they might have of other races.

This work also takes deliberate organizing because youth do not automatically come ready to talk about race. Chou at AARW explained, “A lot of [young people] have a lot of framing because there’s so much that’s accessible online. But where we’re trying to support them is, what does it mean to go from having an understanding of an issue from an Instagram slide or a TikTok to what does it mean to organize around it, what does it mean to build trust within our groups, but then also with other communities of color. We’ve been trying to do more workshops where folks are really having discussion and convening spaces, because I think that fills the gap. We’re trying to encourage folks to think, what does it look like

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**Our youth are really great. They’re always pushing different questions and conversations. They’re a big pushing force.**

*– Teline Tran, Development Coordinator at Mekong NYC*

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to talk to your own family about this, they are messengers... they’re navigating systems for their families who don’t speak English, they’re doing so much. For us, it’s building their agency. I don’t say whether they’re always the best messengers, but I think that they have a lot of appetite to be messengers in their families and communities.” In the case of **Mekong NYC**, their youth leaders actually pushed the staff to think bolder. Development Coordinator Teline Tran said, “Our youth are really great. They’re always pushing different questions and conversations. They’re a big pushing force.” Deputy Director Kim To added, “Like last year, we did a whole series on abolitionism. So they pushed us to learn more about it, to sit through at least four sessions of doing readings and discussions and conversations to also help us think through how does our anti-deportation work fall within the larger framework of abolitionism? Where do we personally fall?”

How do we talk about this with community members? They've been helpful in spurring us to make sure that we also keep up with our own political education."

Grantees like AARW and Mekong NYC intentionally incorporate cross-racial solidarity into their youth organizing and curate safe and brave spaces for these conversations to take place. Just as importantly, the counterpoint offered by these young leaders is key to these organizations in engaging multiracial coalitions to find more community-centered responses to violence, and these young people sometimes hold these relationships with other communities of color. In AARW's case, their youth organizing ground work has "evolved where we're an active member of a citywide youth justice coalition [in Boston] that is mostly black youth organizations and we're one of a few Asian orgs." At Mekong NYC, youth leaders are an active part of the Clemency Coalition on behalf of the organization. To said, "They'll come to our advocacy. So we've gone to Albany, with other coalition members, to talk with elected officials about the [Clemency Justice Act](#). Then we split up into different groups and we share our stories with the elected officials with each other and we get to know each other better. It definitely strengthens the relationships among the groups."

CRF grantees also cautioned against the collapsing of all types of community violence against AA and NHPI into "hate crimes." Ben Wang at AHS explained, "So much of anti-Asian hate is rooted in the hate crime narrative. Going back to the movement for Justice for

Vincent Chin, it was very focused on changing the legal system, the criminal justice system to prosecute. That has continued really to today, where, in response to anti-Asian hate, there's a lot of reliance upon the hate crime framing. In Oakland, with our clients who are experiencing violence so far, and knock on wood, there hasn't been the high-profile hate crimes, like the Atlanta spa shooting or the mass murders at a Sikh temple [in Wisconsin], or the FedEx shooting [in Indiana] targeting Sikhs where there's some documented white supremacists planning and there's a clear domestic terrorist campaign. We haven't seen that. What we're seeing more is these crimes of opportunity, or there's a mental health situation. Someone is clearly off their meds, and it doesn't mean that race is not part of that. I feel like hate and racism can be part of those things too. But to me, it's still a different category than those other examples of domestic terrorism hate crime. The framing oftentimes is, 'Oh, no, these are all anti-Asian hate crimes.' It gets mushed together." And missing the nuances lead to strategies that do not address the specific causes of the violence effectively.

In addition, the focus on hate crime legislation actually works against those populations of color that are over-policed. Carolyn Chou at AARW explained, "We've been trying to combat this hate crime legislation that's come up as a solution to anti-Asian violence because it actually just increases criminal penalties. We're trying to link that both to mass incarceration of Black folks and also the way in which our Southeast Asian community members with deportation orders all have been to prison. We're connecting those pieces to say we're

not going to accept that this supposed solution for our communities is going to end up disproportionately impacting Black folks.” While the framing of “anti-Asian violence” was “all over the place,” Chou believes intersectionality is a path through the quagmire. She said, “Moving forward, I do think there is so much opportunity to just keep linking the struggles. And I think the more we can link, we stay grounded with the people who are most impacted, the people who are on the margins in our own communities, like folks with deportation orders, and queer and trans folks, folks with mental health challenges, the more we’re able to really link with the issues that other communities of color face. And to me, that’s what builds the long-term solidarity.”

Kevin Lam at AARW added immigration as one of the intersectional opportunities. In recent decades, the US criminal justice system has started to treat many immigrant groups, whether they are undocumented or refugees, differently from citizens, often through detention and deportation. Immigration law and criminal law have mingled so much that [the term “crimmigration” has become mainstream](#). Immigration discourse (especially undocumented immigration) usually focuses on Latinx communities, whereas mass incarceration discourse concentrates on Black communities. The work that AARW does with Southeast Asians with deportation orders, Lam believes, provides a missing perspective that links the two.

Crimmigration is also why some CRF grantees believe that the immigration side of this dynamic also needs a bolder racial justice analysis. At **HANA Center**, Executive Director Inhe Choi explained, “At the national level, [the immigration discourse] really lacked a racial justice framework or analysis. It was just about we are Americans too. It’s that model minority way of saying, ‘We’re taxpaying, we’re hardworking, we should be a part of it.’ And I understand that, but it just really lacked what was happening. And it’s just narrowly pushing for immigration reform and getting legislation that didn’t push solidarity that could’ve made us stronger. We’re in this situation because of white supremacy. We’re in this situation because of structural racism.” In other words, the false good immigrant/bad immigrant dichotomy leaves out those who are most in need of support even in AA and NHPI communities, such as those who are undocumented or have deportation orders. “And what about our solidarity with Black communities? I think Trump kicked that need for people to come together even more and more exponentially. With our younger people, we didn’t even have to explain so much [the linkage between immigration and mass incarceration]. They all got it. They’re leading with it.”

## CONCLUSION

The liberatory practices embraced by CRF grantees illustrate the complexity of the work of cross-racial solidarity, allyship, and healing. It requires self-examination of both our communities' harm from structural racism and white supremacy, as well as our complicity in it. These conversations can only happen when there is enough trust, and the best way to build that trust, these grantees found, is to meaningfully address the trauma and basic needs in these communities that have experienced harm. Sharing stories is another disarming way to approach this difficult conversation, both within our communities and across communities of color. With political education and leadership development, young people are often key messengers in destabilizing dominant narratives about other races in our communities. Finally, cross-racial solidarity and allyship requires organizations in different communities to share resources and invest in each other's growth.

In laying out these strategies, CRF grantees emphasized the importance of creativity, persistence, and strategic thinking, not only in response to external events that make cross-racial solidarity, allyship, and healing difficult, but also to leverage those moments to push difficult conversations and build deeper relationships that will bear fruit in the long term.

While racial justice is still the dream yet unattained, CRF grantees are seeing some hopeful signs of progress. In Report #3, they highlighted different kinds of transformation that are the result of this hard work.

# GLOSSARY

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**ABOLITIONISM** Abolitionism is a response to the disproportionate surveillance and criminalization of Black and brown communities, including youth and trans people. Abolitionism targets the prison industrial complex (including law enforcement and the criminal justice systems that feed into it) that is often the default solution policymakers offer to social ills, despite the fact that it actually exacerbates those ills especially for low-income Black and brown communities.

**AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI)** AMI is the income of the middle household in a region. For instance, if a region has 99 households and we line up the households by order of their income, the AMI is the income of the 50th household (49 households making less than it and 49 making more). It is usually determined by county and household size. It recognizes that income might look different depending on where you live. AMI is used to determine someone's eligibility for affordable housing.

**ANTI-ASIAN HATE AND VIOLENCE** Anti-Asian hate and violence includes abusive incidents directed at an Asian person because of their racial identity. The perpetrator can also harbor hate against Asian people because of the victim's gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, and immigration status. Anti-Asian hate can reinforce the myth of Asian Americans as "perpetual foreigners" in the US. The abuse can be physical, emotional, or verbal and can have consequences in mental health, physical injuries, and death. The COVID-19 pandemic ignited anti-Asian sentiments among those who were misled to believe the pandemic was caused by Asians (including former President Trump who called it Kung Flu). The increase in anti-Asian hate incidents led to the formation of the Stop AAPI Hate movement.



**ANTI-BLACKNESS** Human rights organizer Janvive Williams Comrie and others define anti-Blackness as “the beliefs, attitudes, actions, practices, and behaviors of individuals and institutions that devalue, minimize, and marginalize the full participation of Black people — visibly (or perceived to be) of African descent. It is the systematic denial of Black humanity and dignity, which makes Black people effectively ineligible for full citizenship. The Anti-Blackness paradigm positions Blackness as inherently problematic, rather than recognizing the long, rich, and diverse history of Black people throughout the African diaspora, and acknowledging that Black communities across the United States (and the world) have been severely disadvantaged as a result of historical and contemporary systemic racism.” Anti-Blackness is a key foundation to white supremacy and is part of the racial conditioning in the US, even for people of color, which is why many name it specifically in order to combat white supremacy.

**ANTI-GENTRIFICATION** Gentrification refers to the phenomenon that occurs when wealthier individuals begin to move into low-income neighborhoods that have been mostly occupied by residents of color and renters. This is enabled by developments of housing and businesses that cater to the new wealthier residents, which drive up the cost of living in the neighborhoods. Gentrification often results in the displacement of these existing residents and the (often ethnic) businesses and services that serve them as they can no longer afford to live or operate in these neighborhoods. Gentrification is often justified by improvements to neighborhoods that have a long history of economic and political neglect, but often existing residents do not reap the benefits of these improvements because they are being pushed out. Anti-gentrification is any strategy that supports these existing residents to stay in the neighborhoods, which could include tenant organizing, affordable housing, community benefits agreements from new developments, and stopping overdevelopment altogether.

**ASIAN AMERICAN** Asian American is a political identity adopted by many in the US with ancestry that can be traced back to Asia, as well as immigrants from that continent. While any ethnic group can make up only a small percentage of US populations, this panethnic identity has a potential of consolidating the political power of many Asian ethnic groups. However, it can also marginalize and make invisible smaller ethnic groups or those that do not have as long a history in the US.

**BIPOC** BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and is often used to center Black and Indigenous people against the erasure of their experience in the US. This term is often used respectfully to acknowledge that racism and white supremacy of the US has its roots in the subjugation of Black people (through slavery) and Indigenous people (through genocide), and this acknowledgement is a basis for cross-racial solidarity.

**COLONIALISM** Colonialism typically refers to the dominance, occupation, and control of one country over another, often through military assaults, religious conversion, and corporate extraction. The colonizer extracts labor and resources from the colonized and takes away their self-determination. White supremacy and the perceived inferiority of other races are the justification for colonialism. Many also use this framework to describe the continuing legacy of colonization on people of color in the US, even its citizens.

**COMMUNITY-BASED “VICTIM-CENTERED” INTERVENTION** Community-based “victim-centered” intervention is one type of abolitionist strategy because it shifts the reliance of community safety away from law enforcement and criminal justice systems. Advocates believe that these systems are more interested in punishing the perpetrators than in their rehabilitation, and the interactions with police and courts can further re-traumatize the victims. Victim-centered interventions prioritize healing and wellness for the victims and their reintegration into their community.

**CREATIVE PLACEMAKING** Creative placemaking a community development and urban planning strategy that uses arts and culture to create a sense of place and belonging for diverse people who live, work, play, and worship in that shared geography, often to spur economic activities in that community. Creative placemaking can take different forms, such as development and promotion of ethnic businesses, public art that reflects different cultures or captures the history or distinctiveness of the neighborhood, and spaces where members from different communities can meet and interact with one another.

**CRIMMIGRATION** Up until the mid-1980s, the realms of immigration law and criminal law were fairly separate. But since then, xenophobic sentiments have led to unequal treatments of immigrants and refugees under the criminal justice system compared to citizens. This could mean longer incarceration and even deportation as a way to punish immigrants and refugees even for non-serious crimes. The deportation of Southeast Asian refugees based on old criminal records has led to the separation of families in those communities.

**CROSS-RACIAL SOLIDARITY, ALLYSHIP, AND HEALING** These are a suite of approaches that attempt to confront division and anti-Blackness in our communities, address trauma inflicted by white supremacy, and come up with solutions to bring the communities together. Racial solidarity is a commitment to stand with Black people and persons of color against injustice. Allyship is the practice of those from a group who are working towards ending oppression by supporting and advocating for those in marginalized and oppressed groups. Healing focuses on culturally-aligned emotional, spiritual, and psychological health and the processes that relieve stress, achieve acceptance, promote hope, and restore relationships.

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE** Culturally responsive refers to approaches, programs, and services that are developed and/or provided with the understanding and integration of how an individual’s cultural values, religion, intersectional identities, roles, customs, and community history impact the mental wellbeing of the individual, family, and community. Strategies are affirming and drawing on strengths from the culture, heritage, and traditions. This model is based on the idea that cultural competence is ever-evolving. Providers and services must continue to learn the changing culture and the differing values of each individual and family to improve the quality of care.

**ETHNIC MEDIA** Ethnic media refers to media outlets, such as newspapers and radio stations, in specific ethnic communities. In Asian American communities, these outlets are mostly in Asian languages and cater to immigrants, for whom this is likely to be their primary or exclusive source of news.

**FIRST GENERATION** First generation refers to adult immigrants, as in they are the first generation to be in the US. A child of immigrants who is born in the US is considered second-generation. A young person who came to the US may be considered 1.5-generation, as they split their formative years between the US and their country of birth. They may retain both cultures but be more acculturated to the US than their first-generation parents.

**LGBTQ+** LGBTQ+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (or trans), and queer. Some people also use LGBTQIA2S+ to include intersexual (I), asexual (A), and (2S) two-spirit. For others the Q also stands for questioning. The “plus” sign is meant to include other sexual and gender identities, such as pansexual, gender non-binary, etc., as these (and newer) identities continue to evolve quickly with better understanding and acceptance from mainstream society.

**MICROAGGRESSIONS** According to psychologist Kevin Nadal, microaggressions are “the everyday, subtle, intentional — and oftentimes unintentional — interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups. The difference between microaggressions and overt discrimination or macroaggressions, is that people who commit microaggressions might not even be aware of them.” For example, when someone compliments an Asian American for speaking English well, it can reinforce the myth of Asians as “perpetual foreigner” who can’t speak English or assimilate otherwise (and the person being complimented is the exception).

**MODEL MINORITY** Model minority is a myth that emphasizes certain supposed traits of Asians to the point of painting the community as a monolith. These traits might refer to work ethics, intelligence, and ability to withstand hardships without complaints, that led to the community's supposed success and resilience. Model minority is used to cast Asians as a wedge among people of color in order to refute the existence and continuing effects of racism and thereby delegitimize or even eliminate social policies that aim to lessen racism's impact. The model minority can also hurt Asian Americans by casting them as asexual, devoid of emotions, and incapable of leadership. Furthermore, the model minority myth also makes some populations within the panethnic Asian label invisible, especially those who don't fit into the myth.

**NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS (NHPI)** NHPI is a geopolitical identity that refers to any Indigenous Peoples of Oceania, including inhabitants and diaspora.

**PASIFIKA** A transliteration of a word meaning "Pacific," Pasifika has its roots in New Zealand, where government agencies created the term in the 1980s to describe growing communities of Indigenous migrants representing the Pacific diaspora – places like Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, the Cook Islands and other areas of Oceania. According to Brandon Fuamatu of United Territories of Pacific Islanders Alliance (UTOPIA), the word is a beacon signaling those who recognize and acknowledge Pacific Islander identity.

**SCAFFOLDING CONVERSATIONS** Scaffolding conversations is an approach to use dialogues to build shared understanding and relationship, by chronologizing a series of conversations that build on the previous ones and help participants to be ready and on the same page for subsequent ones, usually involving deeper exploration into more complex or uncomfortable subjects.

**SCHOOL-TO-PRISON-TO-DEPORTATION PIPELINE** Under-resourced schools, particularly in inner city neighborhoods with mostly students of color, often rely on punitive measures to discipline students, including for vague offenses that are not punishable in other schools. Studies have shown that students of color in these schools are surveilled by school police and administrators and have a higher rate of suspension and expulsion. Their further education opportunities are limited as a result of it, and they're more likely to become involved with the law enforcement and criminal justice systems, even while they are minors. These disciplinary policies and consequences constitute the school-to-prison pipeline. Because of crimmigration, students who are refugees and immigrants also become at risk of deportation. So for these students, the pipeline is extended from school to prison, and finally to deportation.

**STRUCTURAL OR ROOT-CAUSE ANALYSIS**

Structural or root-cause analysis is an approach to social problems by identifying the core and fundamental reasons why these problems exist, or root cause. These root causes tend to be structural or systemic issues that have been reified historically over time. Root causes are often less visible to conventional explanations about a social problem, but addressing a problem at its root cause is the only way to craft solutions to that problem in a permanent and sustainable way. For instance, a surface explanation to crime might point the finger at individual deficits (“bad people”), and the solution might involve punishments to individuals. A root-cause analysis might take into factors like economic conditions, such as how a community has been historically neglected. Crime might not subside even if we lock up the offenders, and we might end up spending more resources in keeping more people locked up. A root-cause analysis of poverty crime might require a solution, like better economic development, that can lift up an entire community rather than punishing individuals.

**TRUST-BASED PHILANTHROPY**

Trust-based philanthropy is a recent recognition by the philanthropic sector, after critiques from researchers and the nonprofit organizations that they support, that certain practices by philanthropy make it challenging for these organizations to fulfill their mission or to collaborate with other organizations. Many of these harmful practices display distrust of the grantee organizations. Trust-based philanthropy tries to address this unequal power dynamic while ensuring mutual and transparent accountability. Some of the trust-based philanthropy strategies include multi-year funding for general operating support, where grantee organizations can be nimble in how they deploy resources to emerging community needs.

**WHITEWASHING**

Whitewashing, in general, refers to any deliberate attempt to cover something that might be unpleasant or incriminating. In the context of racial equity discussion, people also use this term to specifically talk about the erasure of the history and experience of people of color to deny the existence or persistence of racism and white supremacy.

# METHODOLOGY

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The 21 CRF grantees implemented their cross-racial solidarity, allyship and healing work differently, each leveraging their unique strengths, relationships, and cultural competence, in their respective ethnic and geographic target populations. Because of the diversity, the evaluator decided to use a more grounded approach of storytelling to honor the spectrum and nuances of this work, rather than imposing a more traditional evaluation approach that focuses on predetermined outcomes and linear logic models to reach those outcomes.

Data sources used to develop this series of evaluation reports included: 1) Document review: At the beginning of the project, the evaluator reviewed grantee proposals and interim reports to gain a better understanding of the depth and complexity of the work by each grantee. Based on this document review, the evaluator developed a protocol for the next evaluation method; 2) Listening

sessions: Because of the open-endedness of the learning questions, the evaluator conducted three listening sessions with the grantees in March 2023 to lift up potential story ideas for the evaluation. Fourteen (14) staff from 12 grantee organizations participated in the listening sessions; 3) Key stakeholder interviews: After the listening sessions, the evaluator captured high-level themes and shared with all 21 grantees and invited each to participate in an interview to explore those themes that were the most relevant, meaningful and resonating with their work.

This evaluation captures many of the stories grantees shared during these interviews to illustrate the high-level themes. The evaluator conducted interviews with 18 grantees, representing 29 staff. The following table documents the participants in both the listening sessions and key stakeholder interviews by grantees.

GRANTEES	LISTENING SESSIONS	KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
<b>Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE)</b>	Ngan Nguyen, Deputy Director of Programs & Curricula	Ngan Nguyen, Deputy Director of Programs & Curricula
<b>Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)</b>	Carolyn Chou, Co-Executive Director	Carolyn Chou and Kevin Lam, Co-Executive Directors
<b>Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA)</b>	Va-Megn Thoj, Executive Director	Npau Baim Her, Arts & Culture Coordinator; Evie Mouacheupao, Arts & Culture Manager; and Va-Megn Thoj, Executive Director
<b>Asian Health Services</b>	Alana Sanchez-Prak, Stop the Hate Program Manager	Ben Wang, Director of Special Initiatives
<b>Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)</b>	Karen Katigbak, Development Manager and Kim Lepin, Co-Executive Director of Culture and Communications	Karen Katigbak, Development Manager; Kim Lepin, Co-Executive Director of Culture and Communications; Natalie Yap, Community Space Manager; and Maiyee Yuan, Culture, Equity & Integration Manager
<b>Athena's Warehouse</b>		Dia Parker, Executive Director
<b>CAAAY: Organizing Asian Communities</b>		Julie Chen, Institutional Giving Manager; and Sasha Wijeyeratne, Executive Director
<b>CAP-USA</b>		Mary Niedermeyer, Director of Operations; and Ekta Prakash, CEO
<b>Caribbean Equality Project (CEP)</b>	Mohamed Q. Amin, Executive Director	Mohamed Q. Amin, Executive Director
<b>Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC)</b>	Vivian Zhang, Advocacy Manager	Grace Chan McKibben, Executive Director
<b>Coalition for Asian American Leaders (CAAL)</b>	ThaoMee Xiong, Executive Network Director	ThaoMee Xiong, Executive Network Director

<b>Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC) and Black Pacific Alliance (BPA)</b>		Estella Owoimaha-Church, EPIC Executive Director; Jason Finau, BPA Cofounder
<b>Friends of Little Sài Gòn</b>		Quynh Pham, Executive Director
<b>HANA Center</b>		Inhe Choi, Executive Director; and Young Woon Han, Senior Organizing Manager
<b>Ka ‘Aha Lahui O ‘Olekona Hawaiian Civic Club of Oregon and SW Washington (KALO HCC)</b>	Leialoha Kaula, Executive Director	
<b>Mekong NYC</b>	Teline Tran, Development Coordinator; and Thida Virak, Director of Social Services	Kim To, Deputy Director; and Teline Tran, Development Coordinator
<b>Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA)</b>	Sissy Trinh, Executive Director	Sissy Trinh, Executive Director
<b>United Territories of Pacific Islander Alliance (UTOPIA)</b>	Amasai Jeke, Regional Community Organizer	Amasai Jeke, Regional Community Organizer
<b>VietLead</b>		Nancy Nguyen, Executive Director

Finally, the evaluator conducted one validation meeting with National CAPACD staff in July 2023 and another with CRF grantees in August 2023. The reports were then shared with grantee participants for their approval of the use of their stories and direct quotes.



## ABOUT NATIONAL CAPACD

The National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD) advances equity and creates vibrant, healthy neighborhoods by mobilizing and strengthening a powerful coalition of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander community-based organizations working in low-income communities.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Wat (he/him/his) documents the histories of and lessons from progressive movements through collective storytelling in the form of research and evaluation, organizational development, strategic facilitation, and leadership coaching. His recent evaluation work includes topics such as labor, COVID-19 education and prevention, language justice, and racial equity organizational development. He is a diversity, equity and inclusion coach for the Equity Learning Lab from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. His book *Love Your Asian Body: AIDS Activism in Los Angeles* (2022) won the Book Award in History at the Association of Asian American Studies, and his novel *SWIM* was a Los Angeles Times bestseller in December 2019.



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