

# POWER

Transforming health and communities  
with People Power

# Introduction

We envision a California where we have a robust, intergenerational ecosystem of organizations building power to advance health, justice, and racial equity.

A California where historically excluded people have voice, agency, and power in decision-making to close health equity gaps and eliminate structural racism.

A California where health destiny is not determined by a person's ZIP code, but by an intersectional, intergenerational movement of people power driving transformative changes in pursuit of health and wellness for all.

A California where the most impacted communities are empowered to lead the nation as a beacon for wellness, equity, and justice.

**This is our vision for the next 10 years.**

# IMPACT

What We've Learned

# Impact | What We've Learned

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## A Decade of Learning

Over the course of the last decade, our [Building Healthy Communities](#) initiative committed to funding and partnering with 14 sites across California. We supported grassroots organizations and statewide partners in some of the most marginalized communities in the state as they built power to transform the local, regional and state-level systems impacting them every day.

The past decade was a journey, filled with many victories by our partners. This work exceeded every expectation – ultimately contributing to more than 1,200 policy changes, system changes and tangible benefits for our communities. Broken down into campaigns, our partners earned 552 wins for our neighborhoods, 343 wins for our schools, and 125 wins for prevention across our 14 chosen sites. To learn more about these victories broken down by site, please [click here](#).

The past decade was also full of [learnings for all of us](#). Looking ahead, we are taking the following lessons from our last 10 years together and applying them to every aspect of our work moving forward:

- The power of youth and adult organizing to create significant changes in their communities and in Sacramento
- Power is both a tool for change and a source of transformation for those who wield it
- We must be intentional about investing in the full power ecosystem
- There is no health justice without racial justice
- We must look beyond policy wins to transforming whole systems to be more racially just
- We need to create a more integrated organizational approach to maximize impact

We often refer to our work with simple ABC's: Agency + Belonging = Change. When a person or group of people finds their agency, or voice, and when they belong to something bigger than themselves, they can create the structural change we all seek.

With this close to our hearts, we renew our commitment to transforming health and wellness in California with people power leading the way.

## **The Current Moment**

It's a tumultuous time for all Californians as the racial inequality our society is built upon has been laid bare. In the wake of COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), the systemic racism many of us experience every day has surfaced prominently – from state-sanctioned police brutality resulting in widespread protests to the devastating effects of perpetual climate injustice. These crises illuminate what we have long known to be true: systemic racism permeates the lives we live and the air we breathe. It underlies every aspect of our quality of life – from our jobs, our neighborhoods, our schools, our interactions with others, to our disproportionate health risk, and our lack of accessible care.

Yet this time has also spotlighted bravery and resilience– from profound and unrelenting Black Lives Matter protests to essential workers showing up day after day to care for each other in a system that has failed to care for them. The current moment, as well as what we've learned from our community leaders and grantees over the past 10 years, beckon us to address the root causes of inequity so we can build a truly just and healthy California that works for us all.

## **Thank You**

Shaped by the last decade of listening to and engaging with grassroots communities across our state, we understand that building power, at its core, must

be centered on the human beings and communities who have been most negatively impacted by the systems we seek to change.

You are the stewards of this work. You are our teachers as we disrupt dominant and harmful narratives and replace them with new, transformative ones. You are our guides as we shift the center of power away from the beltway and boardrooms and toward residents coming together to make our communities and our institutions just and healthy for all – not just the privileged few.

Thank you for continuing to be our leaders. We share your vision for what is possible when people have power, and we stand alongside you as you light the way.

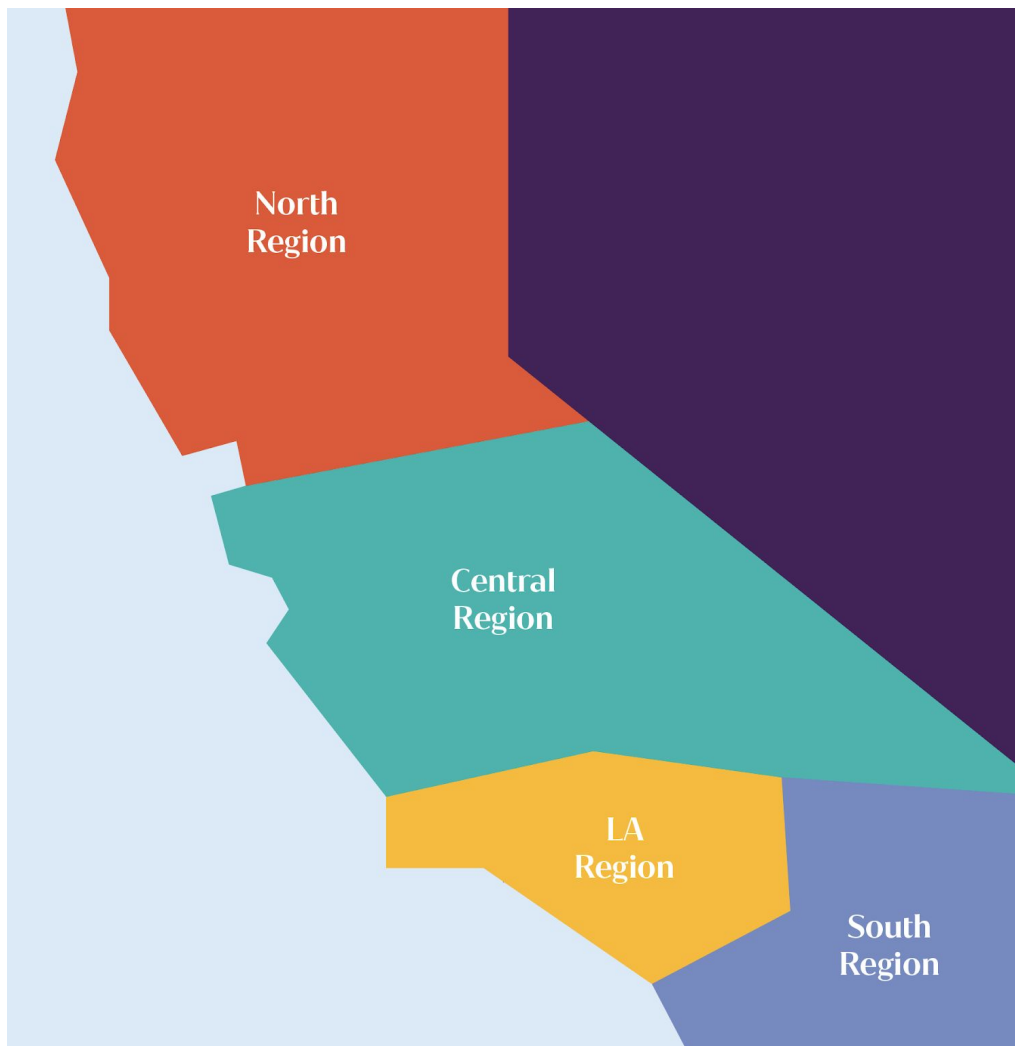
# Vision

Where We're Going

# Vision | Where We're Going

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As we grow from 14 sites into four regions comprising counties with the highest levels of health and racial disparities, people power will continue to build health equity across California.





## North Region

**Counties:** Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Humboldt, Sacramento, Shasta, Trinity

**Population:** 4,732,648 (12% of the California population)

### Average Demographics\*

- African American – 5.4%
- Native American – 4%
- API – 6.96%
- Latinx – 14.24%
- White – 73.3%
- Poverty rate – 16%

## Central Region

**Counties:** Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Monterey, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare

**Population:** 4,700,314 (12% of the California population)

### Average Demographics\*

- African American – 5.01%
- Native American – 2.79%
- API – 7.74%
- Latinx – 55.3%
- White – 80.91%
- Poverty rate – 18.6%

## Los Angeles Region

**Counties:** Los Angeles

**Population:** 10,039,107 (25% of the California population)

### Average Demographics\*

- African American – 9%
- Native American – 1.4%
- API – 15.8%
- Latinx – 48.6%
- White – 70.7%
- Poverty rate – 14.2%

## South Region

**Counties:** Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Imperial, San Diego

**Population:** 11,345,868 (29% of the California population)

### Average Demographics\*

- African American – 5.5%
- Native American – 8.8%
- API – 10.74%
- Latinx – 51.5%
- White – 78.58%
- Poverty rate – 14.2%

*\*Please note that many folks identify as more than one race, which leads the total demographics number to be greater than 100%.*

## Deepening Our Commitment to Power in Place

Power building, particularly among the communities in California that have been most harmed by structural racism, is a dynamic and ever-evolving movement and we must evolve with it.

We have learned much over the last decade about the tremendous power of being deeply committed to specific places. We also recognize that shifting demographics, compelling needs, and dynamic opportunities have arisen in other communities throughout California. Our commitment to power-building, particularly among communities facing high levels of inequality and resultant poor health outcomes, requires us to be cognizant and responsive to a changing policy environment and to how communities are organizing and building power within and across places, issues, and cultural and political identities.

Looking ahead, we will build out from the original 14 Building Healthy Communities sites to places within four broader regions with the most acute health and racial inequities and where power-building partners are leading transformational change. With this, we will work to align local, regional, and statewide grantmaking in order to provide ongoing and consistent support to an ecosystem of partners who are reshaping the power terrain in California.

This geographic expansion answers the call of our partners and the communities we've walked alongside the last 10 years to be both rooted in local community partnerships and responsive to new opportunities for growing the movement for health and justice for all; it's building a bigger "we" from the foundation we've laid together.

## How Will We Get There?

Systems of oppression held in place by existing power structures, deeply held cultural norms, and dominant narratives have enabled an unequal distribution of power and resources within our society. Through a system of laws, policies, cultural norms, and practices that profoundly shape opportunities, social and economic

conditions, and generational quality of life, certain groups are advantaged over others.

With this understanding of the root causes of injustice, we commit to centering our funding around a community-organizing approach – not on disconnected campaigns or policy wins. We also recognize that organizing and base building alone are insufficient to influence those who have the authority, resources, and power to make the kinds of decisions that will impact the lives of historically excluded people. The movement for health equity across California will take all of us working together to create a power-building ecosystem centered around, and working in support of, movement building led by people who have been most negatively impacted by the systems they are seeking to change.

This broader ecosystem of organizations with diverse capacities, skills, and expertise—and with reach from the local to regional to state levels—is required to move us toward the big goal of health and justice for all. Such an ecosystem centers organizing and base-building with a recognition that organizations with other strategies – like narrative change, advocacy, and research – are also central to an effective statewide power-building infrastructure.



## Moving Into the Next 10 Years

We will look to this ecosystem and continue to invest in power building – explicitly focused on racial justice and eliminating anti-Black racism. Together, we will strive toward the goal of ensuring that California has a robust, intergenerational power-building ecosystem for advancing health, justice, and racial equity by the year 2030.

We will achieve this by:

- **Expanding** the community-led advancement of systemic changes across the public and private sectors to promote racial equity, racial healing, and eliminate structural racism at local and statewide levels
- **Supporting** community organizing as a central approach, and related methods, that build a strong base for advancing transformative changes in political, economic, and cultural power in pursuit of health and wellness for all
- **Growing** an intergenerational, intersectional movement that supports the leadership and healing of young people and adults engaged in the fight for health equity and social justice
- **Building** the capacity of grassroots leaders and organizations, and the broader ecosystem, to create new, enduring narratives that reflect the experiences of and are voiced by people whose lives are most impacted by injustice, recognize our shared humanity, and move our society to undertake collective responsibility for health and justice for all

## Reimagining Our Institutions and Building

### A “Health For All” System

We acknowledge that our collective vision is ambitious – yet we are compelled to articulate a future that motivates us to reach beyond what may seem feasible from today’s vantage point. Indeed, these goals reflect a profound belief in the power of today’s movements for racial, economic, and social justice to reimagine what is

possible and translate that vision into strategies for transformation. The following goals for systems transformation build upon the last ten years of Building Healthy Communities and reflect our understanding of the root causes of health inequities in this country.

A primary root cause found in every system in California is racism and the system of white supremacy that continues to structure benefits and opportunities based on skin color. We acknowledge the imperative of more deliberately challenging this country's legacy of racial hierarchies if we are to achieve our mission of health for all. We understand too that systems of oppression and exclusion are intersectional and reinforcing. Thus, while we lead with race in our analysis, we intend to elevate community organizing approaches that embrace our interdependence and fight for all historically excluded people.

We also recognize that privatized market-based strategies have failed to equitably advance our collective well-being. We believe that our shared strengths, transformed into political power, can and will achieve appropriate publicly held solutions. These solutions aim to repair the harm of past and current policies, create the conditions for healing within and across communities, and bring about a greater investment in people to secure a better future for all Californians. Countering dominant narratives of hyper-individualism, exclusion, and privatized solutions to collective problems, we commit to working alongside our partners to reinforce the power of our democracy to move us toward a more perfect union.

## **Health**

Poor health outcomes result from a continuing legacy of policies and practices, both within communities and in the healthcare system itself, that discriminate, segregate, and exclude people from the resources and opportunities to be healthy. The system is fragmented and uncoordinated, lacks a holistic approach connecting healthcare with public health and other culturally appropriate community wellness resources, and has little accountability to patients or communities. The system's workforce is highly unrepresentative of the state's population, its financing is misaligned-

incentivizing volume over value or health outcomes – and a strong power imbalance exists between physicians and patients and communities.

**Goal:** *By 2030, as a result of organizing, advocacy, and civic participation, all Californians will reside in communities with an equity-focused health system that is accountable for achieving well-being and health for all, by advancing racial equity, prioritizing prevention, addressing community conditions, strengthening resident governance, and advancing economic justice through a culturally competent workforce.*

## Schools

Rather than serving as a driver for equitable outcomes, California’s public school system has consistently fallen short of its potential to create a more level playing field. The school system’s failure to recognize its roots in white supremacy culture and complicity in reproducing harm in communities of color has led to persistently inequitable outcomes over generations and left a debt owed to those communities most deeply harmed. Our unwillingness to fully invest in our education system to ensure that any child who walks through its doors has all the support and opportunities needed to thrive, has only compounded this debt. As a result, our schools are frequently misaligned with community priorities and spend their precious few resources on compliance and control, thus breaching their duty to adequately educate all of California’s children and fueling a school-to-prison and deportation pipeline.

**Goal:** *By 2030, as the result of power and leadership of students, families, and their allies, every public school student in California—regardless of race, income, identity, or neighborhood—will be educated in a racially-equitable, inclusive, healing-centered, learning environment that meets the full array of their social, emotional, and physical needs to prepare them for life-long health, well-being and civic leadership.*

## Justice

A growing body of research has proven that contact with the justice system has a deleterious, intergenerational impact on the social determinants of health of individuals, families and communities. Deeply entrenched structural racism has facilitated the disproportionate representation of people of color in the system and consequently their experience of harm from it. Yet, narratives that conflate systems of punishment and safety continue to shape the political, social and economic conditions that substantiate and incentivize increased public and private investment in the drivers of mass incarceration at the expense of prevention, restorative and health-promoting resources for communities with the greatest needs.

**Goal:** *By 2030, as a result of a powerful grassroots movement led by those most impacted by mass criminalization and incarceration, California will realize substantial, measurable progress in divesting from incarceration and immigration enforcement, and reallocating those resources toward health and well-being, by:*

- **Repairing** the racialized harms caused by systems of punishment and incarceration
- **Transforming** the justice system to reinvest in the health and well-being of historically excluded young people, adults, and communities
- **Supporting** the development of comprehensive, prevention-oriented, community-defined approaches to healing, safety, and justice

## Inclusive Community Development

The control and disposition of land, natural resources, labor, and capital intersect in place, and this conjuncture, as seminal drivers of community change, have resulted in gentrification, displacement,



over-investment/disinvestment, environmental degradation, undesirable land use, and increased health inequities across California. The growing conflict between the role of capital and its impact on the health of communities is rooted in the original atrocities of our country – slavery and genocide – committed in the name of economic advancement. To make progress toward systemic transformation that gets at these roots in the next 10 years, we must correctly and explicitly name this problem, and orient our efforts toward building enough power to ensure that human health and dignity and the sustainability of our planet are put before private profit.

**Goal:** *By 2030, as a result of a powerful grassroots movements of those most harmed by health inequities, California will achieve significant, measurable progress toward democratizing community and economic development in service of establishing fundamental rights regarding the health and resiliency of people and communities by:*

- **Strengthening** the capacity of community leaders to hold public and private institutions accountable for repairing the harm of community and economic development systems steeped in exclusion, exploitation and structural racism
- **Advancing** health-promoting, community-controlled development that honors and rebuilds cultural vibrancy, promotes environmental restoration, and prevents displacement
- **Preserving** and growing access to, and community ownership of healthy, safe and affordable housing, land, and water
- **Expanding** community-led housing, environmental, and climate justice movements to ensure access to housing, and clean air, land, and water for all

## What Happens Now?

In order to move forward with people power at the helm, in the spring of 2021 we will invite our grantees and community leaders to share their collective knowledge and ideas with us through a community-engagement process. This input will allow us to refine the thinking we have put forward here, shape our understanding of new places for our work, and inform the strategies that will move us forward on the path to racial and health justice in California at a deliberate and judicious pace.

Meanwhile, The California Endowment is committed to creating an internal structure that facilitates our alignment in support of our grantees and partners. We have nearly completed an internal restructuring that will allow us to be more integrated across our local, regional, and statewide work and to strengthen our own racial-equity practices. More to come as we move forward toward justice together.

**Ultimately, no force is as strong as the power of people united in their vision for change. Thank you for joining us on this journey so far, and for leading the way as we work by your side to transform systems, lift all voices, and create a California where justice and health go hand in hand – no matter who you are or where you live.**

