

IP #6: SACNetwork “RISE-UP” AMBASSADOR CORPS FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

PROBLEM STATEMENT: COVID-19 revealed an alarming truth, homeless kids became the pandemic’s invisible population where nowhere is safe as they scramble to find food, shelter and a sense of safety. Beyond the ravaging impacts of COVID-19, California, as the world’s 5th largest economy, cannot camouflage the most pernicious crisis in our midst—the ultimate manifestation of poverty: homelessness. California is struggling to ensure proper housing, healing, and humane treatment for so many of its own people.

Pre-COVID-19, the count of homeless individuals in California totaled over 150,000. We need to answer the Governor’s 2019-20 call to focus on one part of the homeless population and address it with intentionality.

We propose to shift homelessness at its origin—the children—where all change is possible and all futures are open roads to be explored.

BACKGROUND: Every day, the California Dream is dimmed by the wrenching reality of families, children and seniors, unfed and sleeping on a concrete bed. Military veterans who wore the uniform of our country in a foreign land are abandoned here at home. LGBTQ youth are fleeing abuse and rejection from their families and communities. These faces of despair are failed by our country’s leaders and our nation’s institutions. As Californians, we pride ourselves on our unwavering sense of compassion and justice for humankind—but there’s nothing compassionate about allowing fellow Californians to live on the streets, huddled in cars or makeshift encampments. And there’s no justice when sidewalks and street corners aren’t safe and clean for everybody.

The COVID-19 pandemic has renewed the urgency of this pursuit to homeless children as it has driven them underground; if not in school, where are they? This is a question we should not have to ask as most of us “shelter-in-place” in homes that are warm and safe. Yes, we each have real challenges to face, but we have food to eat and, in many cases, jobs to return to as well as public resources to support our pathway of return. None of this is a truth for these homeless children.

INNOVATION PRIORITY GOAL: Through the guidance and support of the Cal-IPGCA Association and with SACNetwork as the nucleus, to development the “RiseUp Ambassador Corp” for homeless and at-risk children and youth. The RiseUp Ambassador Corp will develop an integrated, holistic whole systems approach to provide mentors, (including young adults, compelled advocates, seniors, etc.), and networks that span communities and create ports of entry for wrap-around social services to be administered. RiseUp Ambassadors will encourage these children to step past, “what is” in their world, to see “what can be.”

“Most of us know that it’s a matter of choice to collaborate and synergize, but our conscious actions often succumb to the ‘default thinking’ that takes us back to us vs. them, right or wrong, black or white, and, of course, winners and losers. As we understand our inclinations and endeavor to discard this kind of thinking, we appreciate that collaboration is the journey, not the destination.”

Rebekah Christensen,
Cal-IPGCA Chair



IP #8: BEYOND RACISM: ONE SYSTEM, ONE STATE, ONE WORLD, ONE PEOPLE

PROBLEM STATEMENT: In January 2019, an article in the Smithsonian National Museum for Natural History titled “One Species, Living Worldwide,” stated, the DNA of all human beings living today is 99.9% alike. We all have roots that extend back 300,000 years to the emergence of the first modernistic humans in Africa.

Constructing the Root Cause of Racism:

- Since we cannot assign specific physiological attributes to racial inequality, to define this concept we must look to today’s hierarchical structures that continue to perpetrate a class system that has endured for thousands of years. Hierarchy as an institution can be traced back to ancient Rome.
- Hierarchy is defined as a ranking of positions of authority, often associated with a chain of command and control. In modern societies, whether or not we are aware of it, hierarchical organizations pervade all aspects of our lives.
- If there are no effective checks on society’s leaders, hierarchy easily and inevitably breeds inequality. Sociologists even have a name for this—the Iron Law of Oligarchy.
- Webster defines oligarchy: “a small group of people having control of a country, an organization or institution.”
- The Racial Equity Institute states: “Social and institutional power combined with race and prejudice is a system of advantage for those considered white, and of oppression for those who are not considered white.”
~ Racial Equality Institute
- The Government Alliance on Racial Equity states: “Racial equity is realized when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved” ~ Government Alliance on Racial Equity
- “We have a role to play within the Natural Resources Agency to make things better. We have to be part of the solution, so we are not inadvertently perpetuating the problem. Simply put, we need to bring the change that we want to see in this country into our own institution.”
~ Secretary Wade Crowfoot,
California Natural Resources Agency, June 5, 2020

BACKGROUND:

- Wesley Morris, writing in The New York Times, put it this way: “This country manufactures only one product powerful enough to interrupt the greatest health and economic crisis it’s probably ever faced. We make racism the American virus and the underlying condition of black woe. And the rage against it is strong enough to compel people to risk catching one disease in order to combat the other.”¹
- Citylab’s, Teresa Mathew states in “Mapping Racial Disparities in the Golden State,” published November 12, 2017, “The common denominator was high concentrations of people of color and yet discussions were about zip codes and socio economic status—not race. Not having the discussion of race at the table meant key dynamics and factors for change were not discussed.”

A tipping point occurs when a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change to occur. This then causes a cultural paradigm shift in attitudes, behaviors and actions. Not just nationally, but globally, the George Floyd incident was the tipping point where the human outcry for equality for all has become a united voice, across all cultures, heard and actioned world-wide.

INNOVATION PRIORITY GOAL: Through the guidance and support of the Cal-IPGCA Association and with SACNetwork as the nucleus, we have determined the “emergency response” public benefit purpose of all Cohort 2020-21 Innovation Priorities is to address systemic racism at a depth of “root cause.” This call for emergency response requires an action plan that insists on tangible change.

The intent: To create a literal “movement” that harnesses a wave of racial integration uniting the diverse cultures of California as One System, One State, One World!

1. More broadly, relating to systemic collaboration: “They (participants) must be willing to transcend organizational boundaries and bureaucratic inertia to pursue such change.” (Guidebook for Multi-Agency Collaboration for Sustainability and Resilience, AASHTO, Standard Committee for Planning–February 2020).