

University of California Santa Cruz

Regent's Lecture

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## **Movement Matters: Potentials for Transformative Change**

**By Surina Khan**

I want to thank the faculty and staff of the Community Studies Department for nominating me for this Regents' Lectureship. It's a wonderful opportunity for me, and a real honor to be here in this capacity. I thank you for giving me this privilege to think more deeply about movement building.

I titled my talk *Movement Matters* because I want to do two things with it: first, to look at effective strategies for movement building, and secondly to offer my critique about the social justice movement and look at where there may be opportunities to do things differently. My talk is focused on one central question, what do we mean by transformative change, and what are the different ways we can get there?

I think there are two fundamental principles to achieving transformative change: first, that those closest to the problems in their communities are best equipped to create solutions and secondly, that linking issues and building constituencies across issues, sectors, and movements recognizes that our lives are affected by a range of issues and experiences, and that each of us have much to offer and contribute, whether we are activists, philanthropists, academics, researchers, artists, or media makers.

My work over the last twenty years has been focused on addressing the root causes of problems we face in our communities and in our broader culture and society, which involves engaging people to build our movements. To that end, I'll explore a range of themes that center on how we engage people: how we use language; the use of multiple strategies; supporting multi-issue work; telling the stories of people who are at the center of the work; looking at the role of philanthropy; addressing power dynamics within movements,

organizations and across sectors; and looking for leadership from people and communities who are experiencing problems and by necessity, coming up with solutions on a daily basis.

### Say What?

Last month I had lunch with a woman named Eveline Shen. Eveline is the executive director of Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ), an organization that has done terrific work on articulating a multi-issue approach for the reproductive health, rights and justice movement.

Reproductive Justice is a framework that has emerged over the last five years that looks at all the issues surrounding reproductive freedom and expands the conversation from one that has been focused on choice and the right to an abortion, to including family supporting jobs and supporting women to have and parent healthy babies.

Eveline told me they ACRJ is making shifts in the way they talk about their work. She and the staff find that they spend a lot of time explaining the concept of reproductive justice, and that people still have a hard time grasping it.

Reproductive Justice as defined by ACRJ in their paper, *A New Vision: Advancing Our Movement for Reproductive Health, Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice*. As they note, it is “the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, economic, and social well-being of women and girls, and will be achieved when women and girls have the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, sexuality and reproduction for ourselves, our families and our communities in all areas of our lives.”

While ACRJ’s definition is comprehensive, it’s a lot to digest, and what does it really mean? Eveline told me that ACRJ spends too much of their time explaining this definition, but she said, “When I talk about healthy and strong families, people immediately relate to what I am saying.”

We went through a similar process at the Women’s Foundation of California a few years ago. We found ourselves trying to explain our work in reproductive justice, environmental health

and justice, economic justice and youth leadership. By the time I had said justice for the third time, eyes glazed over and no one had any idea what I was actually talking about. One donor asked me what I meant my justice. She thought it had to do with the judicial system. Her comment was a good reminder that the language we use is critical, especially as we think about ways to engage and involve more people in our efforts.

I come from a large family. I'm the youngest of six kids. My siblings have very little interest in the kind of social change work that I do. They don't get it, and I think it actually bores them. So I use them as a testing ground of sorts. If they can understand what I am saying, it's likely to resonate with more people. When I tell my sister that the work I do supports communities to be healthy, safe, and economically prosperous, she is engaged and interested. After all who doesn't want to be healthy, safe and economically prosperous?

This doesn't mean we have abandoned issues to do with reproductive justice, environmental justice, economic justice, gender justice, and racial justice. A justice framework is very much at the heart of our work, but we no longer assume people know those frameworks and we try and describe our work in a way that resonates with a range of people on the political and economic spectrum while staying true to our values and principles.

### **Follow the Leader**

In the book *Built to Last*, the authors, Jim Collins and Jerry Porras note that "The one universal requirement of effective leadership is to catalyze a clear and shared picture of the organization and to secure commitment to and vigorous pursuit of that vision."

A vision can be many things and a good one includes:

1. a compelling image of the future.
2. a credible and attractive view of what's possible
3. an organizing and unifying guide to what an organization or leader wants to become
4. and an inspirational focal point for those working towards that vision

Our vision, at the Women's Foundation of California, is a California in which all communities are healthy, safe, and economically prosperous. I think this both simple *and*

bold, particularly in these economic times where many of us are operating with less. To achieve our vision, we've developed a unique model for driving systemic change focused on four key areas: strategic grantmaking, movement building, strengthening organizations and policy advocacy. We believe where these areas intersect, *change happens and it happens faster*.

I live in a low-income neighborhood in Long Beach. People in my neighborhood work 2-3 jobs, their kids attend substandard public schools. In recent months people have been murdered by gangs in our neighborhood. The pollution from the trucks going in and out of the Port of Long Beach and Los Angeles, the largest ports in the country and among the largest in the world, cause a thick black layer of dust in our homes and in the air we breath causing the children in the neighborhood to be plagued with asthma.

I think our vision at the Women's Foundation speaks to my neighbors. I'm sure any one of my neighbors would agree with me that we want communities to be healthy, safe and economically prosperous. Healthy from the pollution from the ports, safe from gang violence, and economically prosperous so that multiple or numerous families are not crammed into a small one bedroom apartment, or worse yet, a garage, as I know many in my neighborhood are.

### **Strategies for Change**

Our first strategy is **strategic grantmaking**. We make grants to organizations that are working towards systemic change, or to change the systems that are causing people to live in poverty, that do not allow for access to health care, or clean water exposure from pesticides, for example. We partner with larger foundations and donors to make about \$2 million a year in grants. All and all a modest sum which means we have to be strategic with every dollar we spend.

In our early years we were founded on the principle that activists and donors needed to be in partnership with each other. In more recent years we have moved away from this vision, and I believe we need to get back to it and expand it to include academics, artists, and media makers, when appropriate. We have returned to this value and are increasingly finding ways to bring these different sectors together. In particular, I think there are numerous

opportunities for collaboration with academia and just in the brief time that I have been at UCSC this week, I have seen multiple possibilities for collaborations. This week, I was fortunate to view a number of projects from the Social Documentation Program and engage with students from the Community Studies Department. There are a number of opportunities in both these programs to bolster and connect with activist organizations and I am eager to participate in making those connections.

Our second strategy is **strengthening organizations**. In working with the organizations we fund, we want to make sure that they are sustainable for the long-term. We work with them to build capacity in the areas of board development, fundraising, financial management, or how to build effective alliances and strengthen their community organizing skills.

Our third strategy is **policy advocacy**. We think policy advocacy is an important strategy and to that end we run a Women's Policy Institute that trains community-based leaders, grassroots organizers as well as donors and academics the ins and outs of the public policy process in California. We have five main goals with the Women's Policy Institute. We want to:

- Increase the number of policies in California that reflect the needs and realities of low-income women and families;
- Increase and support the leadership, advocacy and public policy knowledge of Women's Policy Institute fellows that can be applied to local, state and national issues;
- Strengthen links between grassroots leaders and organizations with those who influence and make policy;
- Encourage lasting relationships between grassroots women leaders across California; and;
- Increase the number of community-based women involved in the policy making process who understand and work for issues concerning women and girls.

The Women's Policy Institute is a year-long program in which Institute fellows work in self-selected teams to develop and implement specific policy advocacy projects of their choosing. We hire mentors for each of the teams, we provide them with trainings on messaging, on

how to conduct research, on how to work with the opposition and all the basics about how a bill becomes a law.

We're about to go into our eighth year and in that time we have had eleven bills passed into law. Five have made it to the Governor's desk and been vetoed and we even see those as a success since they made it through both houses and the fellows learned the policy process.

Some examples of the successes of the Women's Policy Institute include:

**SB 1639 - Education Works! (Alarcón) Signed into law on September 22, 2004.**

This bill improves access to education to community college for CalWORKs students whose primary language is not English and increases access to higher education for foster care youth by requiring that they receive information about educational opportunities. The bill also establishes the intent of the Legislature to enable residents to reach self-sufficiency, to develop a Student Parent Scholar grant program to assist low-income parents with postsecondary education, increase access to higher education for foster care youth and ensure that programs operated with federal TANF funds promote education and training for jobs that offer self-sufficient wages.

**SB 484 - Safe Cosmetics (Migden) signed into law on October 7, 2005.**

This bill establishes the California Safe Cosmetics Act of 2005 and requires cosmetics manufacturers to disclose to the Department of Health Services (DHS) a list of ingredients in their products that are chemicals that have been identified to cause cancer or reproductive harm.

**SB 1441 - Domestic Violence Victims Services (Kuehl) signed into law on July 15, 2004.**

This bill provides that a victim of domestic violence or abuse has the right to have a domestic violence counselor and a support person of his or her choosing present at any interview by law enforcement authorities, district attorneys or defense attorneys.

Lastly our **movement building strategy** brings together community leaders across issues and sectors. In the last two years we have brought together leaders from the Reproductive Justice Movement and the Environmental Justice movements together to explore tensions where they might disagree on strategy as well as opportunities for collaboration.

### **California, Women, and Philanthropy**

The Women's Foundation began in 1979 as a response to inequities in philanthropy:

- At that time only 1% of all philanthropic dollars were going specifically to women and girls.
- Today about 8% of giving is going to women and girls. While we've certainly made progress, women's issues are still largely marginalized and women's funds are under-resourced.

I am interested in exploring our role in the larger philanthropic landscape which in many ways, as a direct role of women's funds and other progressive public foundations, are increasingly using a social justice framework for their funding strategies. This is good and it causes me some concern. Larger Foundations are not able to reach emerging organizations—many of which are led by people of color and partnering with smaller foundations like us will be critical in building a movement that is reflective of the constituencies that are most impacted.

We are among 155 women's funds across the world. 135 of us are based in the US and we each have our own context. As a statewide organization, we are working in a state that has its own set of challenges.

- California is the eighth largest economy in the world.
- By 2030, the population of California will increase from 37 million to 50 million, fueled primarily by Latina/os and Asian Pacific Islanders.
- 37% of single mothers and 25% of children live in poverty
- One in six women remains uninsured, and 71% of the uninsured are women of color

- Women are concentrated in low-wage jobs where the average annual salary is only \$14,040
- California has the largest female prison population in the world.

Our theory of change rests on a key belief and value that by focusing our work on marginalized communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color, we will increase the well-being of all women and girls and ultimately their families and communities. Because low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by health and economic disparities, the Foundation has always prioritized supporting organizations in these communities, understanding that those most impacted by problems also hold solutions to those issues because of their proximity to and experience with the problem.

We shifted our work from direct services to multiple, integrated strategies and long-term institutional/systemic change to get at the root causes of problems.

For many years we saw that women's issues were mainly being addressed through direct services; there was a lack of representation of women in decision-making and public policy and there was a major disconnect between women's realities and the way systems worked.

In response to this, we adopted an intersectional approach realizing the inextricable links among gender, race, class, sexuality, immigration, ageing and also started to move toward linking issues, such as environmental justice and reproductive justice. Our overarching goal shifted to encompass a broader vision of creating a society where women and girls lead and thrive. Our original goal of increasing the amount of giving directed to women and girls has become one strategy. And our use of a gender analysis is now positioned within a broader intersectional and social justice framework which asks the following questions:

- Are we addressing the root causes of social injustice? Services are important and often life-saving for people, providing food, shelter and counseling in a time of great needs. But unless we address the root causes of problems those same people will seek the same services year after year.



- Are we advocating for enduring and lasting change?
- Are those who are most affected by problems in their communities developing solutions?
- Are we investing in institutions and leaders who will work for social justice change over decades?

### **Show Me the Money**

As we all know, California is in crisis. We are in the worst recession we have seen since the great depression. This is going to have a great impact on the non-profit sector and social change efforts.

The governor recently released his revision to the state budget. He proposes completely eliminating CalWORKS, California's welfare-to-work program, along with all child-care assistance.

CalWORKS has had a life-changing effect for people. I think of Deborha Valarde for example. A single mother of two, she is a full-time student at Chabot College, where she is working on her degree in human services. CalWORKS assistance has helped her to get her education, provided critical supports so that she can hold down a job, and put her on the path to self-sufficiency.

The California Budget Project, with support from the Women's Foundation released a gender analysis of the CA budget. The report is titled, "How the Other Half Fared: The Impact of the Great Recession on Women," and it finds that from 2006-2009, the unemployment rate for California's women doubled from 5 percent to 10 percent -- its highest level in a generation.

California's single mothers were hit particularly hard, with their unemployment rate rising to 15 percent. In addition, job losses among men meant that married women, whose incomes were often secondary and smaller than their partners, increasingly became the sole breadwinners for their families.

So where can these families turn? California's safety net is already shredded. While the recession has cast millions into prolonged unemployment, the social services and cash assistance that provided critical lifelines to those who have lost their salaries and health insurance have been steadily cut.

Women make up more than 3 out of 5 adults enrolled in the major safety-net programs -- CalWORKs, the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP), and In--Home Supportive Services (IHSS) -- programs that help low-income women support their families, find jobs and help those who are elderly or have disabilities remain safely in their homes. Cuts to these programs are already taking a toll.

We've heard from our partners throughout the state of a rise in homelessness, increased situations where more than one family lives in an apartment, women who report that they do not eat so that their children have food, and the many women who defer dental and medical care because they can't afford it.

The governor's May budget revise eliminates CalWORKS and state-supported child care in one fell swoop. And what are the cost savings? The state saves \$1.6 billion, but loses \$2.8 billion in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families money in 2010, and then loses the \$3.7 billion federal block grant funding every year thereafter.

Cuts to these vital services will only increase the number of people without health insurance; diminish our workforce's capacity for years to come; and further strain local governments and service providers.

We need a balanced and fair approach to budgeting. The budget must include reductions in spending, but it must also include additional revenues through continuing the temporary tax increases, delaying corporate tax breaks and increasing taxes on oil drilling.

The state should also prioritize maximizing federal dollars. That's the only way to ensure that we're rebuilding our state and leaving a healthy, safe and economically prosperous California for generations to come.

And, I think the non-profit community in California and across the country can coalesce as an economic force. In California we make up 10 percent of the workforce but we don't really have any kind of association or mechanism to organize ourselves to advocate in a unified way on the kinds of governance reform that California needs.

### **National Economic Context**

It's also important to understand the national context. Past programs and policies have not done enough to help low-income women move out of poverty. To avoid repeating those mistakes, the current national focus on job creation, training and education must include a discussion about how to develop new and different opportunities.

The Women's Foundation of California is collaborating with three other women's funds across the country in a campaign called the Women's Economic Security Campaign. My colleagues from Chicago, Memphis and DC and I are working together in collaboration with the Women's Funding Network to improve economic security for women and girls. Earlier this month, WESC released the second in a series of policy reports, [Aiming Higher: Removing Barriers to Education, Training and Jobs for Low-Income Women](#), which focuses on job creation, training and supports for low-income women.

With both Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Workforce Investment Act due for reauthorization, Congress has an opportunity to strengthen two of the nation's largest programs for low-income women and their families. Specifically, the emphasis of these programs should be on helping women improve their skills and education rather than being pushed into any available job—no matter how low-paying or lacking in career potential. Additionally, federal efforts should support programs that combine on-the-job experience with services that help low-income women overcome barriers to employment, including the need for child care, lack of transportation and tenuous housing.

Philanthropic and private entities have key roles to play. Through our work with women's foundations in our communities, we know what strategies work best locally and could be replicated nationally.

### **LIFETIME Example**

Programs that are led by those that are most affected can be highly effective. For example, another one of our grant partners works with low-income women to navigate the obstacles to higher education. LIFETIME, a San Leandro-based community organization, provides counseling to women who want to obtain college degrees and who are receiving public assistance through CalWORKS, the state's TANF program.

LIFETIME's peer counselors work one-on-one to help their clients qualify to stay in school despite resistance from caseworkers who typically press them to take any job, regardless of pay and growth potential. Under the law, however, women can also qualify to fulfill their welfare-to-work requirements through education and training—a fact most caseworkers know little about, according to Diana Spatz, executive director and founder of LIFETIME, who like most of the organization's staff and peer counselors completed her college degree while receiving public assistance.

The peer counselors become advocates for LIFETIME's clients, calling or meeting with caseworkers who are threatening to take away their benefits. But LIFETIME also trains the women how to advocate for themselves and understand their legal rights, including requesting a state appeals hearing if necessary.

When Renita Pitts first came to LIFETIME more than 12 years ago she was facing just such a problem. Her caseworker told her she couldn't go to school, and Renita felt powerless to challenge her. At the time, Renita was a single mother of five children who was attending Laney Community College in Oakland.

She felt powerless to challenge her caseworker noting that these are people who give you money to pay your bills and feed your children. If they tell you that you can't go to school, you feel you can't take the risk of not listening to them.

The staff at LIFETIME, however, assured Pitts that she had every right to attend school while on public assistance. With LIFETIME's guidance, Pitts learned to stand up for herself. and went on to receive a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley. Today, the 49-year-old grandmother works for Laney as a math coordinator, training students in the school's

electronic textbook system.

LIFETIME has seen hundreds of similar success stories. Ninety percent of the mothers who go through the program graduate from college and land jobs in their field of study, earning between \$18 and \$55 per hour. At least five have earned master's degrees, including one mom who won the prestigious Truman Fellowship, and four more will start master's degree programs in the fall. One LIFETIME client earned a PhD and is now a professor; two others are currently in PhD programs.

For most of these women the path to post-secondary education and a stable career takes many years of juggling part time jobs, school work and families, while barely making ends meet. For example, Renita took 10 years to complete her education at Laney and Berkeley. Without significant support services, few low-income women would graduate from post-secondary programs.

A study of students attending community colleges found that nearly 60 percent of respondents reported they could not have continued their educations without child care services, and 95 percent reported that child care was crucial in making their decision to increase their college class load. In order to improve the economy, we will need to make sure we are addressing the context of people's lives that allow them to advance economically, which ultimately will benefit the entire economy.

The Women's Economic Security Campaign offers the following strategies:

- **Connect people, and women in particular, to programs and services that make education or employment possible.** Supports in areas like child care, transportation, housing and health services are critical for single, low-income mothers struggling to balance work, training or education, and family responsibilities. When these supports fall through, low-income students and workers are likely to drop out of school or quit their jobs.

- **Provide women with more work and training opportunities.** Limited previous work experience and opportunities for on-the-job training pose a major barrier to low-income women hoping to improve their future employment options.
- **Increase opportunity by focusing on employer needs.** In order to increase economic security, we need to support programs that tie training and education to actual jobs. More and better jobs are also needed in the low-income neighborhoods where these women live so they are not forced to rely on complicated transportation and child-care arrangements to hold down jobs many miles from home.

We all need to do more when it comes to improving our communities. It is not enough to create programs and services if we do not provide the guidance and support people need to access them. We cannot simply funnel women off of public assistance and into low-paying, dead-end jobs with no hope for a better future.

Other examples of systems that are broken.

- The prison system
- Central Valley, pesticide exposure, contaminated water

As we emerge from the worst economic crisis in generations, we have a chance to rethink the status quo and develop policies that will put us on a more promising path. Government leaders, as well as the philanthropic community and private entities can help lead the way to fix these broken systems by supporting community based leaders.

## **Recruitment**

As we engage people to join us is our quest to improve conditions for all communities it's important, I think to tell our stories and the stories of others as a way to make this work tangible. And so in that spirit, I offer you my own story.

I am very much a product of movement building. My family migrated from Pakistan to the US for political reasons in the early 70s. I describe them as liberal by Pakistani standards and

conservative by American standards. My mother was active in the Republican Party in Connecticut where I grew up. She supported George Bush Sr., in the Republican primaries against Ronald Reagan in 1980, and even hosted a fundraiser for him at our home in Connecticut. When Ronald Reagan was elected she and my father traveled to DC to attend his inauguration.

When I was old enough to vote in a presidential election, I cast my ballot for George H. W. Bush. My family was Republican and I was comfortably following in their foot steps. At the time, I was sheltered by my family's privileged status, and I was not particularly concerned with issues of poverty or racism. When I came out as a lesbian, I became more politicized and in my early twenties, I changed my party affiliation. I like to tell people that I voted for Bush in 1988 because it is just one example of how a person can change and be drawn in to social movements.

Certainly people are drawn into movements on either side of the political spectrum, and I think it is important for us to consider the successful movement building we see happening on the Right evidenced by the anti-immigration law in Arizona and the growth of the Tea Party movement. And how we understand these movements and respond to them so that we can develop more effective strategies to recruit people into social justice movements.

As Chip Berlet, Senior Analyst at Political Research Associates wrote in the February issue of the *Progressive Magazine*, liberal pundits, Democratic Party strategists, and fundraisers describe the growing Tea Party movement as “radical right,” “crackpots,” or “wing-nuts.” In some ways it is easier for many of us to dismiss them as the “lunatic fringe” of the Republican Party. This may be a good fundraising strategy but it really only serves the Tea Party Movement to dismiss them.

As Chip and my friends at PRA point out regularly, the anger that people are feeling is real and it's increasing among white working people. If we dismiss them all, we not only slight the genuine grievances they have. We also push them into the welcoming arms of actual and dangerous far rightists.

It helps to recognize that the grievances they have are legitimate. People are losing their jobs while Wall Street gets bailed out with trillions of dollars. People see their wages stagnate. The safety net is being pulled out from underneath people as they lose critical supports. They worry that their children will be even less well off than they are. They sense that Washington doesn't really care about them. On top of that, many are distraught about seeing their sons and daughters coming home in wheelchairs or body bags.

So, how can a social justice movement offer a vision that will compel people to join us? Movement building is about people, about reaching them and compelling them towards a vision of the kind of world we want to live in. We need to recruit people.

I have moved from the right to the left and it is the social justice movement that moved me, and continues to move me. I'm motivated by the fact that we can address the causes of inequity and that we engage people who are most affected by problems in their communities to develop solutions. And I think we need to use everything we can to recruit people which I believe involves partnerships across movements and compelling multimedia platforms for engagement.

### **Multi-Issue Movement Building**

The other night I was talking with a friend who works for a national LGBT organization that works to get LGBT people elected to public office. They have an approach that is single issue and one that does not value local leadership. "I don't have confidence that they know what they are doing," she said to me speaking of the local people in various parts of the country. I was trying to underscore for her the importance of partnering with local communities who I believe have the expertise in identifying problems and solutions and potential candidates.

"They don't know how to run campaigns," she said. I wondered if their single issue approach was not compelling to local communities. Maybe they want a local candidate to be more than just LGB or T. Maybe they want this person to have some experience in issues of economic security or environmental health, or creating jobs. I asked her if their strategy been successful?" Is a top down strategy the way to go? Managing local people instead of looking



for leadership from the local community? “Have you achieved your goals, won your campaigns?” I asked. And she responded that they hadn’t. “Well,” I offered, “If you let the local folks define what is most important you might get to your goals faster.” I told my friend.

I recognize and believe that a multi-issue approach will get us to our goals faster. But I also remember that I became politicized around a single issue: my own sexuality. So while I am interested in a multi-issue approach, I recognize that we need to meet people where they are and over time move them to a multi-issue approach, understanding that they may be motivated by one issue or one problem.

When leaders and organizations are successful in building broader coalitions—with labor, with environmental health and justice groups and other movements that have historically not worked together, we achieve our goals faster. And when these efforts are led by those who are most affected by the problems they seek to solve, we are more strategic, more authentic, and more relevant because we address a range of issue that are central to people’s lives.

California provides us with a good example. We’ve had three parental notification initiatives in the last four years.

The campaigns that defeated these measures included traditional advocates for reproductive health like Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, NARAL, ACLU-NC, NOW and members of the statewide coalition, CCRF.

The important work of these campaigns is well documented. What is less known is the work that WOC-led RJ organizations did within the campaign and within their own communities to guarantee that their constituencies were informed by media messages, voter education efforts, and other electoral strategies.

In 2005 the campaign leadership was primarily drawn from reproductive rights organizations, In 2006 the leadership body was expanded to include reproductive justice

groups led by WOC which helped defeat the second parental notification initiative proposition by a wider margin than the previous year.

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, the Dolores Huerta Foundation and Khmer Girls in Action shaped message development and voter education for their communities. Dolores Huerta was integral in bringing labor leaders to the campaign. They were also successful in bringing other influential leaders to oppose the initiative like LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. These endorsements, English and Spanish speaking advertisements and voter education strategies produced successful results.

In the 2008 election, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice took a visible position against proposition 4, the parental notification initiative; proposition 6 which would have required teens to be sent to adult prisons for gang related convictions and imposing harsher criminal penalties, which was also defeated. Meanwhile in the same election, Proposition 8, the anti-same sex marriage proposition, passed.

And there were serious differences in the organizing strategies. The successful campaigns engaged constituencies across issues and movements, they had language translation in multiple languages and they organized, door to door, person by person. The LGBT organizers opposing Proposition 8 did not adequately use these strategies, though their right wing opponents did.

We can learn from the defeat of Proposition 8 in California. The No on 8 campaign led a valiant effort and we have certainly made progress in gaining support for same-sex marriage and rights for LGBT people. However, a closer look at the campaign reveals a single-issue strategy that did not organize in communities of color nor raise other issues that are relevant to communities of color like poverty, access to health care, pollution, and substandard schools.

These strategic and innovative organizing efforts, primarily by people of color led efforts for base building and public education work is directly linked to policy wins, and yet organizations led by women and men of color receive disproportionately less funding than

mainstream groups. And too often, these mainstream groups have not thoughtfully included people of color groups or even individuals in the leadership of their organizations.

### Looking Ahead

The current political and economic climate presents opportunities and challenges. Social change organizations and funders are poised to make meaningful changes to improve conditions for communities. There is significant opportunity for foundations to nurture community-based change when we go beyond traditional grantmaking strategies by supporting organizations' infrastructures and facilitating the ability of their leaders and constituents to share ideas and resources and combine efforts. As we seriously consider our role in building coalitions and the capacity of community-based organizations, we see that we can act in a way that is both conducive to long-term change and cost-effective.

Work positioned at the intersections of social justice sectors generates stronger movements and social change outcomes. This work:

- Generates a shared vision and framework that can lead to deeper change in policy, communications, messaging and public thought.
- Unifies and aligns segments of the social justice movement for greater impact.
- Connects constituents across movements and builds a broader base.
- Supports linkages across movements and builds leadership.
- Creates campaigns and outcomes that better reflect communities lived experiences.
- Allows for collaborative funding streams which are more agile and break out of single-issue agendas.

We can create opportunities for leaders across sectors and movements to come together and identify allies; deepen existing relationships; and learn from each other by sharing lessons and comparing strategies for policy advocacy, public education, community organizing and coalition-building. The Foundation's experience with the formation of a cohort of leaders across RJ and EJ illustrates the strength of the cross-issue approach.

In facilitating cross-issue movement building, we've learned a few things.

1. **Funders can support stronger movements through facilitating and convening leaders working across multiple issues.** In convening some of the leading activists and strategic thinkers in environmental and reproductive justice from around California, the Foundation facilitated a process in which key leaders from two movements were able to engage in deeper conversations, build relationships, broaden their network of allies, learn about conditions faced by communities in other parts of the state – particularly in rural communities – have time for reflection, share resources and strategies, explore opportunities for collaborations and coalition building across movements and talk about frustrations and failures as well as successes and strategies.
2. **Community-based solutions are necessary in policy advocacy efforts.** Policy priorities and frameworks that center on the experiences of disenfranchised communities are poised to identify systemic conditions and effective policy solutions. Without the engagement and leadership of these communities, advocates often propose policies that fail to address the priorities of the communities in greatest need or that lack the community involvement needed to ensure implementation.
3. **Multiple forms of participation foster longevity.** The Foundation was sensitive and flexible to the needs of participating organizations. Participants were able to make choices about their participation throughout the collaboration which allowed them to sustain their participation. The level of participation varied through the course of the collaboration depending on many factors including parental leave, shifting work priorities and staff transitions.
4. **Relationship-building is worth the time.** Agendas were developed with ample time for relationship and trust building. When EJ/RJ Collaborative members were able to learn more about each other's interests and strengths they were better able to build on those. In-person convenings were critical in establishing and strengthening these bonds.

5. **A Focus on specific outcomes can be counterproductive.** An attachment to outcome is often what causes the most stress during collaboration. The EJ/RJ Collaborative has a strong sense of alignment of purpose and values, which allowed the Foundation and Collaborative members to consider innovative ideas for movement building.
6. **Reflection and evaluation are integral to the process.** Taking time for reflection at the beginning of each meeting enabled the EJ/RJ Collaborative to make course-corrections in real time. Building an evaluation process at the end of each meeting allowed us to make improvements along the way.
7. **Power dynamics need to be identified and addressed.** In bringing the EJ/RJ Collaborative together, it was important for the Foundation to recognize our position as a funder. By hiring a professional meeting facilitator, we strategically and intentionally addressed potential areas of tension and fostered trust and accountability, especially between large and small organizations.
8. **The cross-issue collaborative model is replicable in other social justice movements.** Bringing reproductive and environmental advocates together for exploration and a series of conversations offered the Foundation an opportunity to understand how such a collaborative can serve as a model for bringing different social justice movements together to identify linkages and shared strategies that support social change and capacity building on a broad scale.
9. **Positive outcomes result from trust in the collaborative process.** In considering the value of the EJ/RJ Collaborative experience, nearly everyone notes that there was a surprisingly high degree of comfort and trust in the room from the beginning. They attribute this to the prior relationships that many had – a point which highlights the importance of the Foundation’s careful survey of the field. By sharing case studies in a space carefully designed for dialogue, Collaborative members had an opportunity to take the time to discuss topics of importance; learn about tactics, strategies and perspectives of other successful organizations, advocacy and organizing efforts and talk candidly about frustrations and failures as well as successes.

There were many positive outcomes to this experience, including broadening the network of potential allies while simultaneously solidifying relationships with leaders they know but rarely see, broadening and deepening their own work by grappling with the cross-over elements of issues and focusing with greater intentionality and clarity on connections across movements.

As we move toward possibilities for meaningful and lasting change I offer the following concluding thoughts.

We must focus on systemic change, focusing on the long-term change we are trying to achieve, even if this change or outcome/output is not immediately measurable. Long-term change takes time, progress is incremental and we need to be focused on the long-term results and not immediate outcomes that can be easily measurable. After all, what do we mean by transformative change? By great results? Or shifts in people's lives and conditions?

We need to think clearly and rigorously which means separating activities and inputs from change and outcomes and outputs. I think foundations may have to change some of their language. We may just be too focused on measurable outcomes and not long-term change. And our language has also become increasingly difficult for organizations to make sense of. We have inputs and outputs, objectives, goals, outcomes, shifts in definition. Even I have a hard time making sense of it all and I am a professional foundation staff. At the same time, we do need to assemble evidence that we are making progress.

As a social justice community, if I can call it that, we will need to address and embrace power: power of inclusion, power of language, power of shared interests, power of coalition, power of collaboration, power of articulating shared values. Power is all around us, and we have to figure out how to access it. Our job is not to empower as if we are providing someone with power, but to work to make sure that all people can access their power.

In these economic times, we are operating with a scarcity of resources. Organizations and institutions are closing down, and we have to pay very careful attention that we are taking a

values-based approach to our work and the organizational and leadership transitions before us. Some community organizations and institutions may need to close their doors, but how we close those doors is equally important. Boards of Directors and those in leadership positions need to carefully engage stakeholders as we manage the transitions before us. We can manage from fear or we can manage from hope.

We must cultivate leadership. You can take many approaches—you can make others do what you want. Or you can cultivate the ability to convince and inspire people to want things you want, based on shared public values. It's about working with people, not working on them.

And philanthropy will have to do things differently. Too many Foundations continue to give project and program funding rather than general operating support which allows organizations flexibility to do their work in the way that makes the most sense given the context in which they are operating. We tend to favor programmatic funding, not building great organizations poised to be nimble, flexible and able to make transformative change.

We should allocate resources to research institutions that can provide the analysis that social justice organizations need to make meaning of their local context and the conservative backlash we are facing. Here's one place we can learn from right wing institutions and funders. They have prioritized resourcing research institutions and think tanks and that investment has led to shifts in policies. Policies that are anti-immigrant, and that have negatively affected the working class in his country.

Recently an executive director of an organization that I am on the board of told a story. The organization, like many others, is in a fragile financial state. Some of my fellow board members were at a loss about how to move forward having been in crisis mode for a number of months if not years. They began talking about shutting the organization down, without engaging the staff and other stakeholders of the organization. We need to be careful not to use fatigue as an excuse to do things badly. How we go about our work is as equally important as what we set out to do. The executive director of this organization told us a story that is very clarifying. He said, his father in law is a pilot and when he wanted to learn to ride a motor cycle, his father in law gave him some advice. He said, "when you encounter a

dangerous situation, it's important to look at the danger and understand it. And then look where you want to go.”

Thank you.

### **Examples of Organizing**

- Kettleman City has a population of one thousand people. Chemical waste plant in town and high percentage of babies being born with cleft palate
- Plainview has nitrates in the water. Communities pay for water they can't use.
- San Diego youth measuring particulate matter in the air.
- Women's Policy Institute as an experiential leadership program.