

Beyond Equity: Seeking Liberation, Autonomy and Justice in Orange County



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Sincere gratitude to the Advisory Committee and additional practitioners who participated in the OC Equity listening sessions providing their unique perspectives, expertise, and insight.

This report has been resourced by the St. Joseph Community Partnership Fund and the California Endowment.

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Executive Summary

The root causes of inequity cannot be understood nor the pathways for addressing it be successful without examining the historical and cultural context that gave rise to it. For example, we cannot understand housing inequity in Orange County without knowing the historical context of the original theft of land from the Tongva and Acjachemen and other indigenous peoples, of redlining, and restrictive covenants. We cannot fully grasp education inequity without examining the historical context of school segregation right here in Orange County as well as the systematic efforts to overturn policies meant to remedy past discrimination.

This report aims to expose key actions and motivations that helped pave the way for modern-day inequities in property and housing, labor, education, and migration and diaspora. It builds upon the OC Equity Profile, the 2019 report sponsored by OC Grantmakers that used data to document inequity in our region across a wide range of issues and indicators. The Equity Profile provided a valuable disaggregated look at key issues by demographics, however, it did not include the root causes of disparities. It also did not disaggregate data beyond the standard Census classifications of race and ethnicity, which aggregate Asian and Pacific Islanders, for example. This report does present some data in the same categories because it is the data that is available, and this report also recognizes that a better system would be one that disaggregated data from the API and possible other communities further. To pursue this is a local, state and national issue. This report goes beyond the traditional concept of equity and expands to include justice, liberation, and autonomy for BIPOC.

Grounded in a brief review of academic literature on equity and inequity, this report provides an overview of the systemic causes of inequity in property and housing, labor, education, and migration and diaspora. It highlights historical and cultural examples of structural racism and oppression, white supremacy, and settler colonialism, from the first contact of Europeans with the Tongva and Acjachemen peoples, through the present day – finding common threads of discriminatory policies and practices as well as community-based movements fighting for equity and justice across all four of these thematic areas. It also highlights community-based successes in the pursuit of autonomy, liberation and justice.

To connect the historical context of inequity with lived experience from the present day, this report also shares findings from listening sessions with local community leaders and equity practitioners. It concludes with a set of recommendations for systems leaders in our region, including philanthropic leaders to:

1. Integrate an understanding of historical and cultural context into efforts to analyze and address regional inequity.
2. Ensure that marginalized population groups are represented in the collection, compilation, and presentation of data on regional inequity.
3. Support policy, systems change, and direct services, understanding that they are interrelated and historically oppressed communities cannot advocate if their basic needs are not met.
4. Incorporate principles of equity, justice, and liberation into decision-making processes for policy, grants, and budgeting.
5. Honor and respect the history of communities that have experienced injustice in the region and pursue healing, especially those, such as Native Nations, that have been rendered invisible by oppression.
6. Build infrastructure to support processes and outcomes that are just and equitable.

This report embraces the core principle that equitable outcomes cannot be achieved without equitable processes that embrace and seek justice, liberation, and autonomy. Ultimately, it aims to advance an ongoing dialogue about equity in our region, widen the circle of who can participate in this important dialogue, and spur more effective investment in strategies that address the root causes of inequity.

Background and Purpose of Report

Why and how did we get here? The inequities experienced by BIPOC are rooted in systems of racism and oppression. Several recent reports and timelines have recounted exploitative and oppressive trends of white supremacy, the regional struggle for racial and economic justice and civil rights, as well as the disparities that these communities continue to face in the county today.¹

Moreover, what is the solution? How do we advance equity in this context? This report does not purport to present a single, unified strategy or method. However, in agreement with the literature on social justice and equity, it is clear that to advance equity, racist and oppressive systems must be changed, historically oppressed communities must be heard, and they must find liberation and autonomy. The report pursues a local understanding of equity that includes historical context, that seeks justice, liberation² and autonomy³.

It is critical to understand that it is part of ongoing dialogue and efforts to advance equity in the county. It is not exhaustive. It is an invitation to continue this conversation and this work. Indigenous scholars⁴ have presented their own nuanced experiences of oppression as well as recommendations for moving forward, as have scholars and stakeholders serving and representing specific racial/ethnic communities such as Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders⁵, and immigrants⁶ in Orange County. This report builds on and is in conversation with those preceding documents.

The report is organized in the following sections. First, it is a literature review of key conceptual texts on justice, liberation and autonomy, and moving beyond inclusion/collaboration, as well as practical inter-disciplinary texts and scholarly articles related to equity.⁷ Next, is a section on methodology of engagement with equity practitioners and Advisory Committee members. Then the report presents historical explorations of four thematic areas – property and housing, education, labor, and migration/diaspora – that illustrate some of the discriminatory systems and practices responsible for current day inequities. It also highlights community-based mobilizations for justice, liberation, and autonomy. As with the report itself, the four issue areas explored are a starting point, not an exhaustive review of historical creation of inequitable systems and relationships. Some areas that demand further exploration include environmental justice, water, health, and civic engagement and representation. Next, as a response to the historical backdrop, the report presents high level findings from listening sessions with local practitioners related to equity. Finally, the report concludes with a set of recommendations for how to continue the pursuit of equity in Orange County based on the foregoing context.

¹ An Equity Profile of Orange County (2019) (<https://blog.providence.org/st-joseph-community-partnership-fund-2/orange-county-equity-report-full-2/>); "The State of Orange County: An Analysis of Orange County's Policies on Immigration and a Blueprint for an Immigrant Inclusive Future" (Resilience Orange County, 2019) <https://resilienceoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-OC-Report.pdf>; "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing *Kuuyam* as a Decolonial Possibility" (Sepulveda, 2018) <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/30384>; "Transforming Orange County: Assets and Needs of Asian Americans & Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders." (AAAJ OC, 2014) <https://transformingoc.advancingjustice-oc.org/>; Orange County Civil Rights: A History of an Enduring Struggle for Equality" (OCHR, 2014) https://www.ochumanrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CivRightsPosters_7-14-16.pdf; ; Orange County on the Cusp of Change (UCI, UCLA 2014) http://www.ochealthertothether.org/content/sites/ochca/OC_on_the_Cusp_of_Change_2014.pdf;

² The notion of "liberation" is from field of social justice, not to be confused with cooptation of the term in recent months. It is the progression toward or the conscious or unconscious state of being in which one can freely exist, think, dream, and thrive in a way which operates outside of traditional systems of oppression. Liberation acknowledges history, but does not bind any person to disparate systems or outcomes. Liberation is a culture of solidarity, respect, and dignity. (Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

³ This report largely chooses to discuss autonomy, but in a future iteration could also focus more squarely on abolition. Patrisse Cullors defines "abolition as a praxis that roots itself in the following principles: people's power; love, healing, and transformative justice; Black liberation; internationalism; anti-imperialism; dismantling structures; and practice, practice, practice." <https://harvardlawreview.org/2019/04/abolition-and-reparations-histories-of-resistance-transformative-justice-and-accountability/>. Other examples of literature on abolition include, Cara Page (focus on healing justice), Mia Mingus (focus on disability justice, Mariame Kaba (researcher in residence at Barnard Social Justice Institute), Ruthie Gilmore, and Andrea Richie.

⁴ Sepulveda, Charles, (2018). "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing *Kuuyam* as a Decolonial Possibility".

⁵ Vo, Linda Trinh, and Lauren D. Hom. 2018. "Transforming Orange County: Assets and Needs of Asian Americans & Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders." Orange County, CA: Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Orange County.

⁶ "The State of Orange County: An Analysis of Orange County's Policies on Immigration and a Blueprint for an Immigrant Inclusive Future" (Resilience Orange County, 2019) <https://resilienceoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-OC-Report.pdf>

⁷ This presents a selection of texts recommended by members of the OC Equity Advisory Committee, and could not be exhaustive, but offers a representative review of the main points in the advancing equity and justice conversation.

Toward Justice, Liberty and Autonomy: Major Theoretical Underpinnings

When policy makers, community-based organizations, and others pursue equitable outcomes, their work is grounded in a long history of academic literature on justice, liberation, and autonomy. These concepts are explored in very brief here.

According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy, justice is “the process required to move us from an unfair, unequal, or inequitable state to one which is fair, equal, or equitable, depending on the specific content”⁸. Whether we see justice as a goal or a process, or both, it is about fairness and correcting harm that has been done to oppressed groups. In the United States, and in particular Orange County, California, BIPOC have experienced the brunt of systemic oppression. Equity and justice are inextricably related



The Santa Ana Artist(a) Coalition

Oppression is the primary barrier to justice. To achieve justice, those who are oppressed must become free from oppression. Systems must be free and balanced, and cannot depend upon, allow, or reinforce the oppression of certain groups. Equity will not be achieved by simply ensuring equitable access to services or resources, but instead it is crucial for those who seek equity to include marginalized groups.⁹

According to feminist scholar Iris Young, the “five faces of oppression” include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.¹⁰ Young argues that in order to move the concept of social justice beyond simple redistributive justice, it needs

to address oppression and dominance directly, and that the diversity of experience and power among marginal and excluded gender, economic, and racial/ethnic groups must be affirmed to achieve justice.¹¹ One type of common oppression stems from the criminal justice system. Dr. Kelly Lytle Hernandez of UCLA and the Million Dollar Hoods Project illustrate the disproportionate funding invested in criminalizing and incarcerating people from specific neighborhoods, populated predominantly by BIPOC.¹²

Liberation and Autonomy

It is also crucial in the face of oppression that marginalized groups find liberation and autonomy. Liberation, according to the Center for the Study of Social Policy is “the progression toward or the conscious or unconscious state of being in which one can freely exist, think, dream, and thrive in a way which operates outside of traditional systems of oppression. [It] acknowledges history but does not bind any person to disparate systems or outcomes. Liberation is a culture of solidarity, respect, and dignity.”¹³ When an

⁸ Center for the Study of Social Policy, “KEY EQUITY TERMS & CONCEPTS: A Glossary for Shared Understanding” at <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

⁹ Drawing on the works of early justice scholars such as John Rawls, as well as Young, Susan Fainstein

¹⁰ Young, Iris. “Five Faces of Oppression”. The article was originally a chapter in *Oppression, Privilege, & Resistance* edited by Lisa Heldke and Peg O’Connor (published by McGraw Hill in Boston, (2004), p. 4.

¹¹ Young, Iris. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (2015).

¹² <https://history.ucla.edu/faculty/kelly-lytle-hernandez/>; <https://milliondollarhoods.pre.ss.ucla.edu/>

¹³ <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

individual or a group is oppressed, their freedom of thought and action is constrained by the oppressor's systems and frameworks. Liberation is the process in which those systems and frameworks lose their power and the path toward equity and justice begins.

In their anthology on diversity and social justice, Maurianne Adams, et al explore racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism, and strategies of liberation through conscientization, demilitarization, decolonization, and mobilization as methods to counter these "isms".¹⁴ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor¹⁵ and Angela Davis¹⁶ argue that colonialism and capitalism are intertwined with racism, which leads to the militarized oppression and structural violence that racialized and transnational social movements face. In order for social movements seeking justice for oppressed groups to succeed, they need to address these connections.

Moving Beyond Inclusion and Collaboration Toward Justice

Further, prominent conceptual literature covers the radical social justice movements from minoritized persons, LGBT, and feminist communities.¹⁷ Carruthers argues for the importance of principled struggle, healing justice, and leadership development in effective social justice efforts. Similarly, she points to the importance of long-term commitment, cultural sensitivity, creative strategizing, and multiple cross-group alliances, in what has been called "the Chicago model of activism". Pulido presents a comparative study of radical African American, Chicano/a, and Japanese American social movements in Los Angeles. In comparing these movements, she finds similarities and differences between them; however, the formation of collective racial identity, how that identity intersects with class and gender, and how it relates to the racial identity and interests of other groups are all important to their outcomes.

In Pursuit of Anti-Racist Planning¹⁸

The urban planning literature explores the history of equity planning, or urban planning strategies to advance equity. It explores the goals as well as the means to advancing equity. All equity planning models have some assumptions about justice, five of which are outlined by Dadashpoor and Alvandipour¹⁹ as well as assumptions about political or economic ideology including neoliberalism, redistribution, and redevelopment.²⁰

Much of the literature builds on Norman Krumholz's model of equity planning, which has the goal to adopt policies, administrative practices, and resource allocations that expand choices and opportunities for those who have the least²¹. Another vein of equity planning, the advocacy planning model, pursues equity by representing marginalized input into planning processes and policy proposals.²²

The literature highlights positive outcomes from equity planning, as well as caveats and critiques. Some examples follow. Equity and opportunity atlases are sometimes used in regional equity planning to engage communities and influence public policy. These can be useful but also have costs and caveats.²³ Data maps such as these require a level of technical expertise to access, interpret and use. While they have stimulated

¹⁴ Adams, Maurianne, et al. *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Sexism, Anti-Semitism, Heterosexism, Classism, and Ableism* (2010)

¹⁵ Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*. (2016).

¹⁶ Davis, Angela. *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*. (2016)

¹⁷ Carruthers, Charlene. *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements*. (2016); Pulido, Laura. *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles*. (2016).

¹⁸ As some active members of the Advisory Committee see this work through the Urban Planning lens and have that academic formation, this section largely reflects their recommended literature review. Many other disciplines explore how to achieve equity and justice as well.

¹⁹ Dadashpoor, Hashem & Alvandipour, Nina (2020). "A Genealogy of the Five Schools of Justice in Planning Thought".

²⁰ Brand, Livia Anna. (2015). "The Politics of Defining and Building Equity in the Twenty-First Century"

²¹ Zapata, Marisa & Lisa Bates. (2015). "Equity Planning Revisited".

²² Davidoff, Paul. (1965). "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning".

²³ Finio, Nicolas, et al. (2020). "Equity, Opportunity, Community Engagement, and Regional Planning Process: Data and Mapping in Five U.S. Metropolitan Areas".

new conversations, local actions, and regional plans, “without clear attention to the purposes and potential harms of these tools, these maps and databases can be used to push forward policies that blindly support the dispersal of poverty, without also addressing the potential harms that they may cause to community development efforts in low-income neighborhoods”²⁴

Conceptually, there is concern that ideologies such as neoliberalism and capitalism are roadblocks to equity (Brand 2015). Essentially, her recommendation that follows from this understanding is that equity planning in the twenty-first century must go beyond simple redistributive measures to consider and address the role of racial inequality.

With these caveats and potential unintended effects in mind, other literature points to promising alternatives.²⁵ Among the three main variants of regional equity – community development regionalism, policy change regionalism, and social movement regionalism – social movement regionalism, which the focus is on mobilizing communities for collective action at a regional level, shows the most promise. While all variants have a role, social movement regionalism can be more effective in addressing tensions, conflicts, and the role of race. Zapata and Bates (2015) reiterate that what matters to minoritized persons should matter to planners, and that effective equity planners are everywhere (not just working in municipal planning departments). Another example of promising equity planning efforts is the use of mutual benefits strategy in which a focus on intergenerational mutual benefits in a racially diverse context is helpful in garnering a broader base of support for social equity.²⁶ Another strategy that has shown promise is scaling up from local activism to national level agendas and equity efforts makes it more likely that groups will achieve policy change that promotes equity.²⁷ The idea of scaling up has substantial support (Davis 2016, Pastor 2011). At the regional level, it is important for planners to collaborate widely, engage in (principled) conflict, and community building to advance equity.²⁸

In sum, community organizing, collaboration, and scaling-up are strategies within equity planning that show promise. It is key that these strategies do not focus on simple redistribution or redevelopment strategies and that they intentionally grapple with racial injustice. The involvement of the most marginalized community members in planning efforts is key, and this can and should occur within municipal planning efforts, but also in community level efforts and beyond.

Very simply put, the schools of thought explored here insist upon doing things in planning, in organizing, and in all areas of work that impacts community, in a different way – in a way where historically oppressed voices are uplifted and transform oppressive systems.

²⁴ (Finio et al 2020, 10).

²⁵ Pastor, Manuel. (2011) “For What it’s Worth: Regional Equity, Community Organizing, and Metropolitan America”<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15575330.2010.532877>

²⁶ Myers, Dowell. (2015). “Mutual Benefits and Equity amid Racial Diversity: A Generational Strategy for Growing a Broader Base of Support for Social Equity”.

²⁷ Doussard, Marc. (2015). “Equity Planning Outside City Hall: Rescaling Advocacy to Confront the Sources of Urban Problems”; Collaboration, Conflict, and Community Building at the Regional Scale: Implications for Advocacy (2015)

²⁸ Orange County Human Relations Timeline (2014); An Equity Profile of Orange County (2019); Orange County on the Cusp of Change (UCI, UCLA 2014).

Methodology

Developed over an 18-month period, this report aims to provide historical and cultural context for inequity in Orange County. It builds upon the 2019 OC Equity Profile that documented inequity in our region across a wide range of issues and indicators. To incorporate multiple perspectives on equity and inequity, the project manager recruited and facilitated an Advisory Committee²⁹ of academic, community, and nonprofit leaders with experience working for equity, justice, and liberation in Orange County as well as knowledge of the historical and cultural context for inequity in this region. Through a series of facilitated discussions supplemented by the work of individual members, the Advisory Committee developed a framework for the report and guided the understanding of equity, justice, liberation, and autonomy that is expressed in the foregoing literature review. Its initial framing and guidance were expanded through listening sessions with a larger group of equity practitioners. Case studies were drawn from an equity timeline compiled by Advisory Committee members and based on input from nonprofit and community leaders as well as existing reference materials.

This report was funded by grants from the St. Joseph Community Partnership Fund and The California Endowment, and staffed by Eric Altman Consulting, which managed the project and facilitated the Advisory Committee, Charitable Ventures, which also served as fiscal sponsor, and Deborah Phares Consulting & Coaching, which provided additional facilitation for the listening sessions.

While the Advisory Committee included individuals who have experience working with Black, Korean, Latinx, Middle Eastern (this includes Iranian, Arab and other ethnic identities), and Vietnamese communities as well as Native Nations, these are not the only communities that experience structural racism and oppression in Orange County, and experience working with a community does not equate to representation. For example, the Committee did not include anyone from the Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino communities, all of which have a long history in this region, and the Committee member with the most knowledge of Black community history was not Black. Moreover, some Advisory Committee members did not engage with the project for its full duration due to other commitments, insufficient compensation, and/or other reasons. For example, the two members with the most knowledge of Native American history left the Advisory Committee prior to the production of this report. The listening sessions resulted in participation from 30 more individuals, mostly equity practitioners, but some communities were still underrepresented in the process of developing this report. To include additional perspectives, the project is utilizing an open review and comment process prior to the release of a final report, and all comments received will be incorporated into that document.

Listening Sessions

To expand the dialogue on equity beyond the Advisory Committee, two listening sessions were held in March 2021.

Participants were invited to explore past experiences with funders, share examples of effective equity work, and propose ideas for what strategies systems leaders could implement to pursue equity. They discussed what works, what does not, and their ideas for improvements. High-level findings from these sessions are presented later in the report.

²⁹ Appendix B: List of Advisory Committee Members



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At the start of each the listening session, facilitators shared the following assumptions about equity drawn from *An Equity Profile of Orange County* (2019) and the Advisory Committee’s discussions:

- “Ensuring full inclusion of the entire region’s residents in the economic, social, and political life of the region, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, neighborhood of residence, or other characteristic.”³⁰
- Addressing inequities requires understanding historical and cultural context, and addressing root causes, including systemic racism, dominant narrative and ideology, and systems/policies.
- To achieve equitable outcomes, we must move beyond inclusion to liberation, justice, and autonomy.

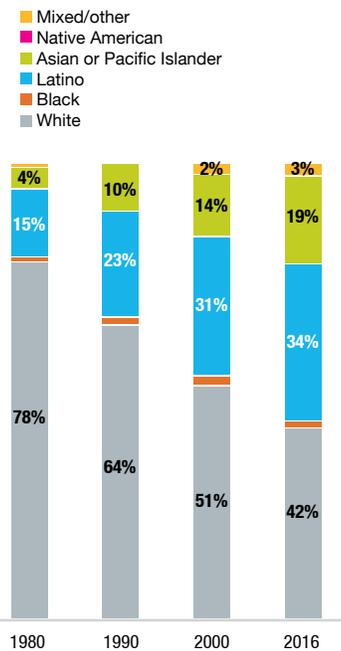
³⁰ An Equity Profile of Orange County (2019).

Inequity in Orange County

Recent research has documented and explored the history and current state of equity in Orange County.³¹ Here are just a few examples of things we know about inequity. Today in Orange County, there is high income inequality exacerbated by growth in low-income jobs. BIPOC are the majority in the county, but they face disproportionate levels of poverty, language isolation, and educational attainment challenges, and barriers to equitable civic engagement. These communities also face disproportionate policing and the negative impact of environmental degradation. This report takes these examples of inequity and looks at them through a historical lens. They did not just happen. They were created by racist norms and systems, and to resolve them, those norms and systems must be healed and reformed.³²

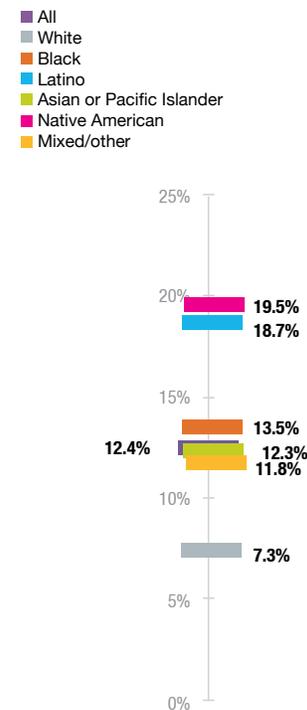
In reviewing the following data, it is important to note that often used Census categories can limit our understanding of racial and ethnic diversity. There is no such thing as “Hispanic” or “White” or “Asian.” For example, there are no “Asians” in Japan, Korea, or Vietnam, and there are no “white” people in Europe. Moreover, the Census category of “white” encompasses Middle Eastern and Muslim populations in addition to people of European descent and thus obscures populations that have a historical and cultural presence on this region. These aggregations as well as the confounding of “race” with “ethnicity” and “ancestry” and “nationality” can render communities invisible and create an “us” vs “them” competition for resources and power. The experience of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is extremely diverse, with income, education, health and other experiences varying dramatically by ethnic groups county wide.³³ One recent example is the disproportionate negative impact that COVID-19 has had on the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) community.³⁴

The population has become more diverse
5. Racial/Ethnic Composition, 1980 to 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.
Note: Data for 2016 represent a 2012 through 2016 average.

Poverty is highest for Latinos and Native Americans
36. Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 2016



³¹ An Equity Profile of Orange County (2019). Orange County Human Relations Timeline (2014); An Equity Profile of Orange County (2019); Orange County on the Cusp of Change (UCI, UCLA 2014); Vo, Linda Trinh, and Lauren D. Hom. 2018. “Transforming Orange County: Assets and Needs of Asian Americans & Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.” Orange County, CA: Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Orange County.

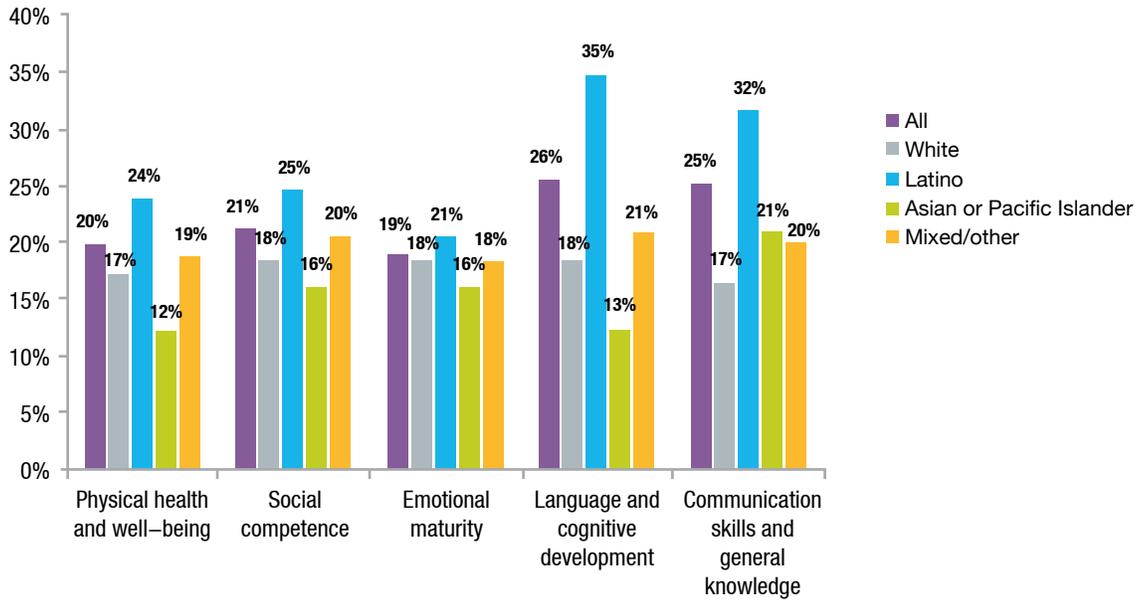
³² The data presented in the OC Equity profile, specifically API data may perpetuate inequities faced by Asian American and Pacific Islander groups. This is not the intention of the report, and it is a realization and invitation that further disaggregation is a goal and call to action. Linda Trinh, and Lauren D. Hom. 2018. “Transforming Orange County: Assets and Needs of Asian Americans & Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.” Orange County, CA: Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Orange County.

³³ http://assets.thehcn.net/content/sites/ochca/OC_AAPI_Demographic_Report_2014.pdf

³⁴ <https://calmatters.org/california-divide/ca-divide-health/2020/05/california-pacific-islanders-hit-hard-coronavirus-overlooked/>

Latino youth are vulnerable or at risk across multiple domains

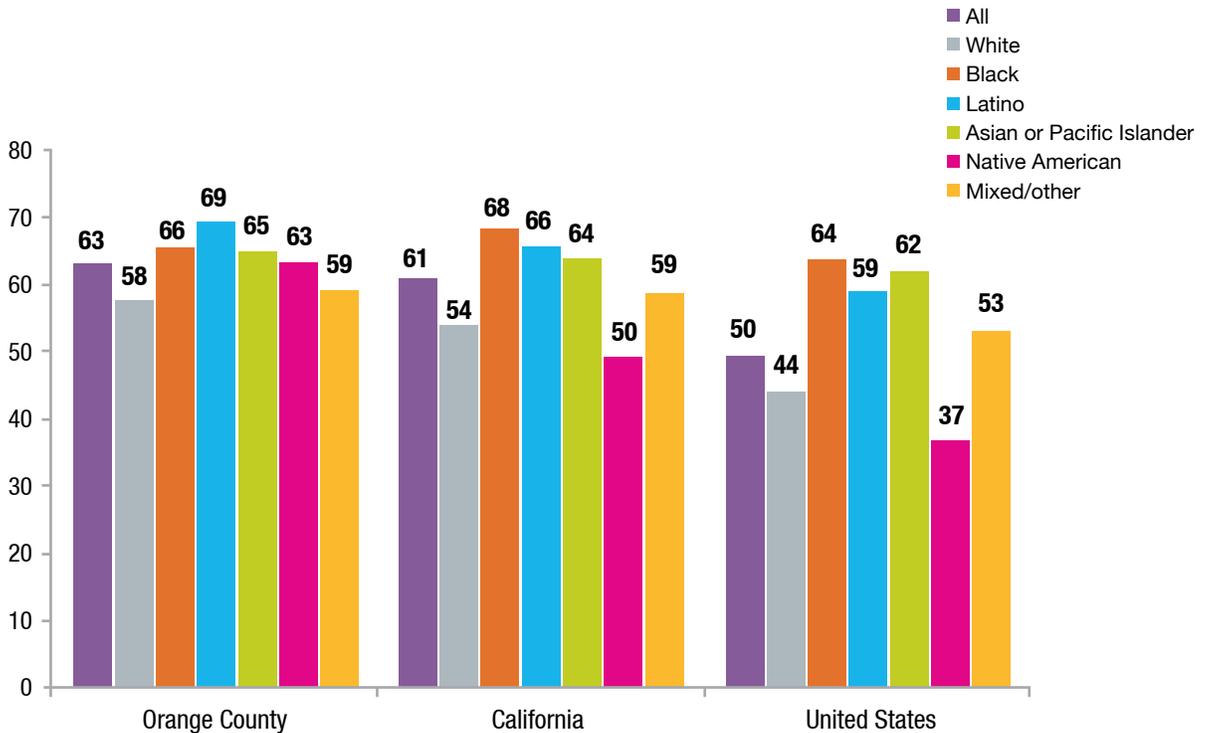
55. Vulnerable or At-Risk Students by EDI Domain and Race/Ethnicity, 2018



Source: 2018 Early Development Index Data, Orange County Children and Families Commission. Universe Includes all public schools that have a kindergarten population, although not all children at these schools participated.

Latinos have the highest air pollution exposure index in Orange County

88. Air Pollution Exposure Index by Race/Ethnicity, Cancer and Non-Cancer Risk, 2015



Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2011 National Air Toxics Assessment; U.S. Census Bureau. Universe Includes all persons not in group quarters. Note: While data on people by race/ethnicity and poverty status reflect a 2011 through 2015 average, data on air pollution are from 2011. See the “Data and methods” section for details on the pollution exposure index calculations.

Credit: Charts from OCEP, 2019

Why is this the case? The reason is that our county is a place steeped in a history of explicit and implicit, systematic and interpersonal othering, of racism, xenophobia, oppression, and erasure of peoples and cultures. The pursuit of equity without recognizing the root causes of inequity is futile.

Just a few examples of racism serve as a reminder of the context from which BIPOC live and aim to thrive. In 1906, anti-Asian hate triggered the burning of China Town in Santa Ana under the guise of protection from leprosy outbreak.³⁵ Just last year, in 2020, anti-Asian hate crimes were again committed as groups blamed API for COVID-19.³⁶ In 1924, members of the Ku Klux Klan were elected to Anaheim local government. In later years, white supremacist and anti-immigrant groups have proliferated and found shelter here.

The following section of this report illustrates Orange County’s history of systemic racism and oppression in four key thematic areas – property and housing, education, labor, and migration/diaspora. As mentioned in the introduction, these are not the only areas where systemic racism and oppression have affected BIPOC in this region, but these four areas can serve as a starting point for demonstrating how inequity was created and has been perpetuated by racist and oppressive systems. They also show how positive, systemic change has resulted from community-based movements.

Property and Housing

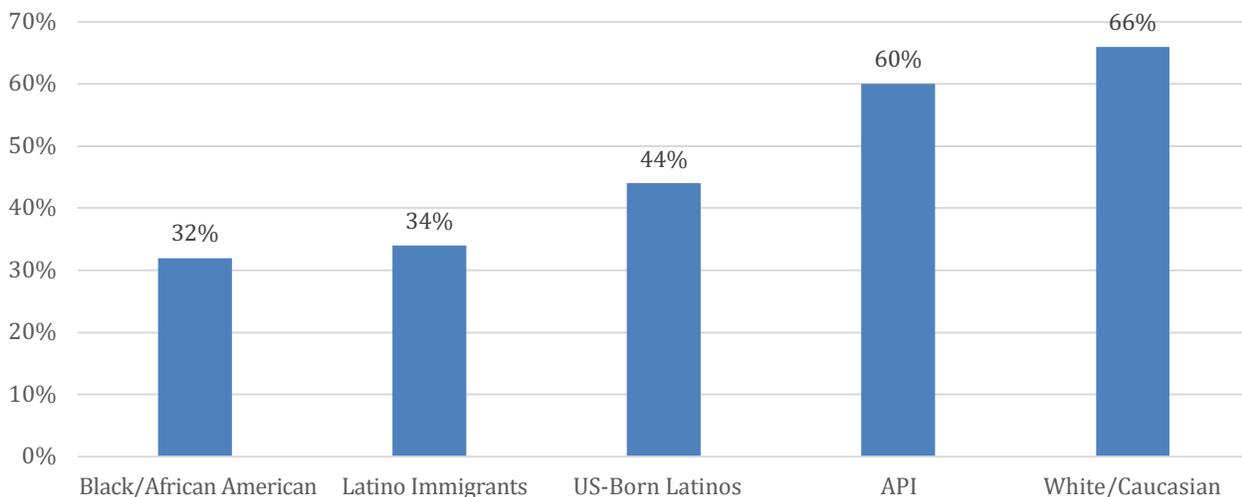
Orange County Today

In public health circles, it is widely known that one of the best predictors of one’s health and wellness is their zip code. It is important to note that the correlation between zip codes, neighborhood conditions, and race, is not happenstance, but rather the result of intentional systems imposed by a dominant group of oppressive individuals. The marginalized groups who are disproportionately affected have varied over time.

The disparities in access to property and housing in Orange County – specifically across race/ethnic groups – are well known.

The Orange County Equity Profile (2019, p. 82-85) found that only 32% of African Americans, 34% Latino immigrants, and 44% US-born Latinos are homeowners, compared with 60% API³⁷ and 66% White. African

Percent Homeowners



³⁵ <https://newsantaana.com/remembersantaana-chinatown/>

³⁶ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-09-17/hate-crime-incident-report-in-orange-county>

³⁷ Future data exploration would benefit from disaggregation since the experiences of these race/ethnic groups are not adequately presented by these categories.

“ Spanish colonialism marked the first period of indigenous oppression, erasure, and transformation of place and property. The network of missions, oppressive labor structures, conversion to Catholicism, Spanish cultural norms, and sexual violence in “monjerios” transformed indigenous property ownership and existence. ”



Americans and Latinos face higher housing-cost burdens than white populations, with Latino being the most rent-burdened and Latino and African Americans homeowners being the most burdened by housing costs. These groups also face higher overcrowding than White residents. Finally, a disproportionate number of African Americans are impacted by homelessness in Orange County (while only 2% of the total population, they make up 13% of the homeless population).

OC History

In capitalist economies, the importance of property ownership to household wealth accumulation during one’s lifetime and across generations is immense. In order to address and understand the current disparities and barriers to financial stability that minoritized persons face in Orange County, it is important to understand the deep history of disenfranchisement beginning with Spanish colonialism, genocide and attempted erasure of indigenous communities and continuing with discriminatory policies and cultural norms blocking BIPOC communities from property ownership and residence. The place-based story in Orange County is a story of oppression of one group followed by another.

The period of Spanish colonialism, which initiated a time of violent takeover of existing indigenous ownership and livelihoods, began in the mid-1500s as the Spanish colonial army entered San Diego Bay and named the area “Alta California”. In 1769, the permanent colonial settlement of the Presidio at San Diego was established along with 21 California missions established by Father Junipero Serra. In the late 1700s, the Portola expedition passed through present day Orange County, founding San Juan Capistrano in 1775, and the first Spanish land grants were made. In 1784, Manuel Nieto granted grazing rights on land between the Santa Ana and San Gabriel rivers, which were key elements of the local indigenous way of life (Sepulveda 2018). Spanish colonialism marked the first period of indigenous oppression, erasure, and transformation of place and property. The network of missions, oppressive labor structures, conversion to Catholicism, Spanish cultural norms, and sexual violence in “monjerios” transformed indigenous property ownership and existence.



1795 c. – Mapa de la Nueva California al exmo Señor Principe De La Paz” (2017). Pre-1824 Maps. 47. https://digitalcommons.csusb.edu/hornbeck_spa_1_a/47

In 1821, when Mexico gained independence from Spain, ownership was transferred to Mexico. Large Mexican landholders such as Jose Sepulveda, Juan Pacifico Ontiveros, Joaquín Ruiz, Jose Serrano, Jose Avila, Santiago Rios, Teodocio Yorba and others, largely dominated property ownership in the “post-colonial” period from 1821 to 1850.



Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, California

In the mid to late 1800s California territory, and the land that would become Orange County in particular moved into a post-Mexican territory transition, in which wealthy white US settlers quickly dominated land, policy, and industry. In 1848, Mexico and the United States signed a treaty that ended the Mexican war, and California became a state. Some landowners of Spanish, Mexican, and indigenous descent who did not have paper records of ownership effectively lost their land at this time. In 1868, vast areas on either side of the Santa Ana River were placed on the market, and the towns of Santa Ana, Tustin, Orange, Westminster, and Garden Grove were soon founded. That same year, James Irvine purchased 1/5th of what would be Orange County. Later, in 1889, Assemblyman E.E. Edwards introduced a bill to create the County of Orange, which was officially formed that same year in August.



David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

“ Today, organizations and resident groups continue mobilizing in demand of improvements to conditions and access. Some of these efforts are formal Community Based Organizations, while others are resident organized efforts to change systems. ”



Despite this success, systemic racial discrimination in housing was certainly not eliminated. The 1950s through the present reflect a persistent fight for rights and justice on behalf of oppressed groups to overturn and limit the damage of damaging systems. In 1958, Proposition 10 was passed, which limits public housing, and requires a vote every time public housing is built. This effectively makes it easier to prevent the development of affordable housing. Then, in 1963, the California Legislature passed the Rumford Fair Housing Act. This law intended to end racial discrimination of property owners and landlords who refused to rent to people of color. The very next year, Proposition 14 repealed the Fair Housing Act, drawing criticism from civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and many community groups.

Highly publicized incidents of racially motivated housing discrimination followed. For example, in 1950, Olympian Sammy Lee was denied housing in Garden Grove based on his Korean descent. In 1963, the Santa Ana Board of Realtors, Craig Development Co., Meredith Construction Company, and Mrs. Esau Smith were named as defendants in discrimination lawsuit against a Black home buyer. In 1966, Black Angels baseball players were unable to find adequate housing in Anaheim. Later, in 1968 Black students at CSUF found it nearly impossible to find off campus housing.

Three years after its repeal, in 1967, Dorothy and Lincoln Mulkey challenged the constitutionality of Proposition 14 in the Supreme Court case *Mulkey v. Reitman* after being denied housing for being Black. The Mulkeys won their case.

From the late 1970s onward, systems regulating the quality and affordability of housing have continued flip-flopping between oppression and resistance, with the overall housing ecosystem continuing to be largely inequitable based on race. Proposition 13 (1978) changed the taxable value of property, effectively limiting property taxes, which also had some unintended consequences of reducing accessibility and quality. Other laws, such as Mello Roos legislation (1982), aim to provide larger tax bases; however, they can also be excessive and make access for low-income communities difficult.

In the pursuit of affordable housing, when community input is not substantively incorporated into the planning process, language and goals that are not compatible with equity and can and have created gentrification and displacement.³⁸ Community based, and grassroots, resident-based organizations and groups have mobilized effectively in demand of improved conditions and housing affordability. In 1985, Santa Ana residents, many of whom were undocumented immigrants, successfully demanded improvements at their homes through the Santa Ana Rent Strike. They leveraged partnerships and let their voices be heard in order to achieve their goals. Today, organizations and resident groups continue mobilizing in demand of improvements to conditions and access. Some of these efforts are formal Community Based Organizations, while others are resident organized efforts to change systems.

Labor

Orange County Today

The Orange County Equity Profile³⁹ notes that despite stronger economic vitality in Orange County compared to the nation as a whole, inequality by race persists. From 1979 to 2016, jobs grew by 116% in Orange County compared to 71% in the nation as a whole. Moreover, Gross Regional Product (GRP) grew

³⁸ Sarmiento, Carolina and J. Level Sims. (2015) "Facades of Equitable Development: Santa Ana and the Affordable Housing Complex".

³⁹ OC Equity Profile (2019, p. 33-39)

by 209% in Orange County during the same period, compared to 118% growth in the nation as a whole. That growth, while noteworthy, was unequal, and unemployment and poverty are higher for people of color. During this period (1979-2016)⁴⁰:

- Unemployment is highest for Native Americans (10%), followed by African American (8%), Latino (6%) and then API (5%) and White (5%)
- Income inequality increased in Orange County from .36 Gini Coefficient to .47
- Wage growth for top income earners increased by 24% and for fell by 26% for lowest income workers

From 2000 to 2016, wage growth was uneven across racial/ethnic groups. “The median wage increased for white, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and mixed-race workers, while wages for Black and Latino workers stagnated”⁴¹.

Orange County History

The labor history of Orange County is one piece of the puzzle that explains current day inequities. During the Spanish Colonial period (1500s to 1700s), labor structures and wealth accumulation were tied to land ownership, management, and race.⁴² Spanish missionaries and soldiers oppressed indigenous communities, requiring them to provide labor.⁴³ By the late 1800s, with the development of irrigation systems, commercial ships entering Newport Bay, and the Southern California rail boom, the economy transitioned into an agricultural hub, where wealthy white landowners dominated.



Francisco Torres, Lehmann, Walter., creator

Blood Orange: The 1936 Citrus Strike in Orange County

For more than a century to follow, this economy has depended on a steady supply of low-wage workers, often from BIPOC, to succeed. Several acts of historical protest and oppression stand out in the labor history of Orange County. Systemic racism is evident in events such as the lynching of Francisco Torres and the 1936 Citrus Strikes in which law enforcement and white resident violence appeared to collude. In 1892, Mexican laborer of the Modjeska Ranch, Francisco Torres, had an argument with ranch

foreman, William McKelvey, over a weekly poll tax deducted from his wages. McKelvey was later murdered. Torres was captured by San Diego Sheriff and turned over to Sheriff Lacy in Santa Ana. He was dragged out by a mob and lynched at Fourth and Sycamore Streets in Santa Ana.⁴⁴ The root of the argument that spiraled was Torres' opposition to a deduction from already meager wages. In 1919 and 1920, laborers engaged in major oil strikes in Placentia and Huntington Beach. Later, in 1936, laborers participated in the Citrus Strike. Laborers demanded a raise to their low wages, which sparked violent conflict between the strikers and the Sheriff. The Sheriff ordered law enforcement to “shoot to kill” any trespassers at the orange groves. Eventually, this conflict subsided when laborers were offered some concessions including a 20 cent per hour raise.

Entrepreneurs and business owners from BIPOC were not encouraged to start businesses in Orange County. Throughout the twentieth century, Sundown Towns existed in some Orange County cities.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ It is worth noting that this is the pre-COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of the pandemic exacerbated these conditions.

⁴¹ OC Equity Profile. (2019, p. 42)

⁴² See property and housing case study.

⁴³ Newson, Linda A. “Indian Population Patterns in Colonial Spanish America”. *Latin American Research Review* Vol, No. 3 (1985) 41-74 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2503469>, 20.

⁴⁴ OC Human Rights Council, “Orange County Civil Rights: A History of an Enduring Struggle for Equality”.

⁴⁵ “A Brief History of Orange County”, https://www.orangecountyhistory.org/wp/?page_id=38.

“ Throughout the twentieth century, Sundown Towns existed in some Orange County cities. Sundown Towns were towns that allowed people of color in their boundaries to work, but not to live; they had to leave by sundown. The message was clear – you can be an employee, a wage earner here during the day, but you can’t flourish here, can’t own here, and can’t live here. ”

“ From the 1960s to the present, individuals, nonprofits, and unions have continued to advocate for improved conditions and pay for low-wage workers in Orange County, who are disproportionately from minoritized communities. ”



Sundown Towns were towns that allowed people of color in their boundaries to work, but not to live; they had to leave by sundown. The message was clear – you can be an employee, a wage earner here during the day, but you can’t flourish here, can’t own here, and can’t live here. In 1940, the first black owned business in the county – Red Cap Shoe Repair – was established on 4th St. in Santa Ana.

The Fight for Equity and Justice

BIPOC – often immigrant populations – were and continue to comprise a large percentage of the low wage, local labor force that is key to the local economy, including agriculture. Belonging to this labor segment has meant navigating the push and pull of policy and facing incredible challenges in social mobility over time, especially when coupled with inequity in education, housing, and other areas. Some examples of the policy push and pull include the following. In 1943, representatives from Orange County packinghouses met to discuss hiring seasonal laborers from Mexico to alleviate the wartime labor shortage. In 1951, the Bracero program, which brought Mexican labor into the US, became public law. In 1961, Farm officials and the state Department of Employment claimed that discontinuing the Bracero Program would cripple Orange County agriculture, while many domestic workers disagreed. Groups such as the National Farm Labor Union, the AFL-CIO, Agricultural Workers Association (AWA), the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), founded by Dolores Huerta, and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) founded by Cesar Chavez, advocated for farmworker rights and well-being. Groups such as these pushed for the end of the Bracero program, which did end in 1963.

From the 1960s to the present, individuals, nonprofits, and unions have continued to advocate for improved conditions and pay for low-wage workers in Orange County, who are disproportionately from minoritized communities. One example was in 1965 when 100 protesters picketed the Thriftymart Market for their policy not to hire African Americans. Five of those protesters were arrested.⁴⁶ Another example was in 2014 when 400 Private-Sector Trash Sorters, Teamsters Local 396, and Community Members successfully organized and demanded improved conditions for employees.⁴⁷



teamster.org/2020/10/a-summer-streak-for-sanitation-workers/

⁴⁶ Loewen, James W. (2016). *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*.

⁴⁷ "Shouting from the Margins: Black Orange County, 1960-1979", <https://www.lahistoryarchive.org/resources/SHOUTING/resources/timeline.html>

“ In 1947, *Mendez v. Westminster*, a landmark legal case brought by Orange County resident Silvia Mendez and other students, resulted in the end of Mexican schools in California and served as a key precedent for *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court case that heralded the end of school segregation in the United States. ”

Education

Orange County Today

In a section headlined “educational inequities threaten the region’s future,” the Orange County Equity Profile (OC Equity Profile, Executive Summary, p. 9) found that:

Orange County ranks high (27th) among the 150 largest regions in terms of the share of residents with an associate’s degree or higher, but Latinos, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and African Americans are much less likely than whites to have this level of education. At the same time, the county ranks even higher (19th) in terms of the share of residents who lack a high school diploma. Latino immigrants are the most likely to have less than a high school diploma, followed by U.S.-born Latinos and Asian immigrants.

More specifically, OCEP documented the following inequities:

- “Racial economic gaps persist across education levels” (p.48)
- “Education gaps for Latinos and Native Americans” (p. 61)
- “More youth are getting high school diplomas, but racial/ethnic gaps remain” (p. 62)
- “Many youth remain disconnected from work or school” (p. 63)
- “Inequality in kindergarten readiness across the county” (p. 64)

Orange County History

Examining the historical context of systemic racism in education – including school segregation, post-segregation discrimination, and reactionary ballot measures – illuminates how and why these conditions exist in present-day Orange County, while learning from the activism and resilience of impacted communities – including community organizing, advocacy, and litigation – points to steps that can be taken to address those current conditions.

White Americans may be inclined to think of school segregation as an artifact of the Jim Crow South enshrined by the “separate but equal” doctrine from the Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, but segregation of Asian, Black, and Native American students was legal in California for significant portions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although California law never specifically

authorized separate schools for students of Mexican ancestry, numerous school districts across the state established separate schools and classrooms in the early 1900s, such that 85% of schools were segregating Mexican students by 1931, including several districts in Orange County. In 1947, Mendez v. Westminster, a landmark legal case brought by Orange County resident Silvia Mendez and other students, resulted in the end of Mexican schools in California and served as a key precedent for Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court case that heralded the end of school segregation in the United States.⁴⁸

In Orange County, as in the rest of the United States, racial discrimination in public school systems persisted despite the legal end of segregation, and impacted communities again responded with resilience and leadership. In 1963, Barbara Hill became the first Black teacher in Orange County, subsequently changing her name to Quila Roder due to racial discrimination and harassment from fellow teachers and community members. “It was in 1976, when she was transferring to another school, that Hill got the notion that by changing her name she could to some degree shield the two young sons she was raising alone. But before she retire[d], she plan[ed] to change it back.”⁴⁹ In 1968, the Mexican American Political Association accused Santa Ana schools of placing Mexican American students in “classes for the retarded,”⁵⁰ and residents pressured the school board to accept federal funding after the district “passed on \$1.27 million in available Title I federal funds for culturally disadvantaged youth, even though the district had the highest minority group enrollment (34.4%) and the lowest reading proficiency in the county.” In 1969, twelve school districts in Orange County were asked to correct for racial and ethnic imbalances in 42 schools.

As state and federal law began to offer remedies for racial discrimination, opponents turned to the ballot box, advancing a series of state ballot measures to restrict these remedies. Many of these restrictive ballot measures were authored, co-sponsored, or funded by Orange County residents. In 1986, voters approved Proposition 63, making English the official language of California, and in 1994, voters passed anti-immigrant Proposition 187, which was co-authored by Orange County resident Ron Prince.⁵¹ In 1996, Proposition 209 banned affirmative action, including in public education – it was funded in part by \$350,000 in donations from OC businessman Howard Ahmanson Jr.⁵² In 1998, Proposition 227 banned bilingual education – it was “spearheaded” by millionaire Ron Unz and co-sponsored by Santa Ana teacher Gloria Matta Tuchman, among others.⁵³

The Fight for Equity and Justice

Today, issues of oppression continue, surfacing as the “school-to-prison”⁵⁴ and “school-to-prison-to-deportation” pipeline, and backlash against campaigns for introducing ethnic studies into public schools. The ACLU describes the “school to prison pipeline as a “disturbing national trend” in which youth,



The Sylvia Mendez Learning Pavilion Mural, artist Chuck Adame.

⁴⁸ (<https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-23-2-c-mendez-v-westminster-paving-the-way-to-school-desegregation>)

⁴⁹ “Teacher Stands Out in Class of Her Own : Trailblazer: Barbara Lawrence Hill is a Santa Ana Unified pioneer. She plans to retire this year”, Feb. 5, 1995. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-02-05-mn-28436-story.html>

⁵⁰ “Shouting from the Margins: Black Orange County, 1960-1979”, <https://www.lahistoryarchive.org/resources/SHOUTING/resources/timeline.html>

⁵¹ “The State of Orange County: An Analysis of Orange County’s Policies on Immigration and a Blueprint for an Immigrant Inclusive Future”. (2019), 2.

⁵² Gibbs and Bankhead, Preserving Privilege: California Politics, Propositions, and People of Color, (2001).

⁵³ “Latina Teacher Pushes Fight Against Bilingual Education”, Oct. 20, 1997 accessed at <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-oct-20-me-44845-story.html>

⁵⁴ American Civil Liberties Union. (n.d.) School-to-prison pipeline. <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline>

“ As such forces have pushed and pulled diverse communities into the county, instances of explicit and organized white supremacy in civil society, local politics and systems have pushed back, creating fear and barriers to equity for immigrants. ”

disproportionately students of color, out of the school system through punitive discipline including suspension and expulsion⁵⁵ and into the justice system⁵⁶. Local organizations such as Orange County Human Relations (OCHR)⁵⁷ and Resilience Orange County⁵⁸ have been working the harmful trajectory through youth leadership development and restorative justice interventions.

Migration and Diaspora

Orange County Today

Although 58% of Orange County's 3.13 million residents are people of color (OCEP 2019) and nearly one third are immigrants (State of OC Report 2019), racist and anti-immigrant cultural forces and systems have led to inequitable outcomes for many in those communities.

One of Orange County immigrants' most critical challenges is the criminalization, detention and deportation of immigrants and collusion between Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local law enforcement. In June 2019, 187 legal permanent residents were detained by ICE.⁵⁹

The causes of migration and diaspora in Orange County are numerous, including multiple instances of war, genocide, other local violence, economic forces, and family unification, to name a few. As such forces have pushed and pulled diverse communities into the county, instances of explicit and organized white supremacy in civil society, local politics and systems have pushed back, creating fear and barriers to equity for immigrants.

Orange County History



Staff Sergeant Kazuo "Kaz" Masuda Courtesy of the United States Department of Defense

From the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited immigration of Chinese laborers to the introduction of Public Charge in 2019, anti-immigrant policies have imposed systems of oppression upon immigrants for centuries in Orange County and the United States. Tides of oppression have often resulted in response to growing power or perceived threat of immigrant groups. In 1942, the federal Executive order ordering Japanese removal and internment camps emboldened anti-Japanese American beliefs and actions. Shortly after, in 1948, Kazuo Masuda, US armed service member of Japanese ancestry was initially denied burial in Westminster because of his heritage. In the 1950s-1960s, the Bracero program brought many Mexican immigrants to the United States for labor. Shortly later, in 1958, the John Birch Society was founded in Massachusetts, and soon took off and gained popularity locally. Another instance of racist community organizing was in 1965, when "segregationist John Ortman

⁵⁵ Losen, D. J. & Martin, K. (2018). The unequal impact of suspension on the opportunity to learn in California: What the 2016-17 rates tell us about progress. UCLA, The Civil Rights Project.

⁵⁶ Losen & Martin, 2018; Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks, M. P., III. & Booth, E. A. (2011). Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement. Council of State Governments Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute.

⁵⁷ <https://www.ochumanrelations.org/programs/youth-and-education-programs/bridges/restorative-schools-program/>

⁵⁸ <https://resilienceoc.org/>; https://www.shfcenter.org/assets/PYJI/PYJI_Disrupting_SPP_Brief_December_2019_Web.pdf

⁵⁹ Source: <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/detention/>

“ To be an immigrant, especially an undocumented immigrant, in Orange County, has often meant living in fear of discrimination, deportation and restricted access to livelihood, property, health, education, and more. ”



of Yorba Linda sought to create a Citizens' Council in Orange County, affiliated with the Citizens' Council of America.” Another example occurred in 1986, when voters declared English the state's official language with Proposition 63 in response to the growing need for services and systems in multiple languages other than English as a result of a changing population. Later, in 1993, California became one of the first states in the nation to restrict access to drivers' licenses on the basis of immigration status. Many other actions and policies, including the passage of Prop 187 in 1994, the advent of the Minutemen Project of the early 2000s, the suspension of DACA in 2017 and mass deportations have been directly targeted at migrants and refugees as enemies of the state, making their lives in the United States all but impossible.

The State of Orange County Report explores the historical collusion between Federal ICE agents and local law enforcement and history of detention centers in Orange County and beyond to criminalize immigrants and refugees in the county.⁶⁰

The 1970s were a period of increased immigration from Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern (this includes Iranian, Arab and other ethnic identities) countries coming out of war and genocide, some of which included the United States as a key player. In 1975, the end of the Vietnam War created increased Vietnamese refugees/migration to the US (mostly southern California). The second “mass migration” of Vietnamese refugees occurred in 1980, with thousands settling specifically in Santa Ana, Huntington Beach, and Garden Grove. In 1981, at least 1,000 Vietnamese refugees were settling in Orange County a month. In May 1981, 105 Westminster residents petitioned the Westminster City Council to block business licenses to Vietnamese immigrants. The council denied the request, but racial tensions mounted. In October, Garden Grove Mayor Elerth Erickson called an emergency news conference, at which he alleged that local refugees had caused an outbreak of tuberculosis and leprosy. In 1979, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 prompted increased asylum seekers and refugees to the US. Also in 1979, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and US bombing of Cambodia led to the US accepting approximately 160,000 Cambodian asylum seekers to the US, many of whom were subsequently deported in the 2000s due to lack of programs.

Each group of immigrants and refugees has faced its own unique, as well as shared, secondary trauma as “out-groups” in Orange County. In 1985, Alex Odeh, Arab-American anti-discrimination activist and proponent of peaceful resolution of the Palestine-Israeli conflict was assassinated at Santa Ana office on E. 17th St. In 1986, Vietnamese gangs, mostly youth, started forming as a response to racism, lack of resources and support for monolingual-speaking refugees, and poverty. In 1988, then Mayor of Westminster, Frank Fry, said to Vietnamese refugees, “If you want to be South Vietnamese, go back to South Vietnam.” These racist remarks from elected officials were the catalyst that encouraged Tony Lam to run for city council, who later became the first Vietnamese to be elected to office in the U.S.

To be an immigrant, especially an undocumented immigrant, in Orange County, has often meant living in fear of discrimination, deportation⁶¹ and restricted access to livelihood, property, health, education, and more. The 2019 OC Equity Profile refers to the “readiness” and “connectedness” of immigrants in the county, referring to how ready immigrants are via education to climb the ladder of social mobility, and how connected they are linguistically and civically to systems to be able to access resources and exercise power. The report finds that 8% of households in Orange County are linguistically isolated, many of which are in Santa Ana and Garden Grove (87). In terms of readiness, only 9 percent of Latino immigrants have

⁶⁰ State of Orange County, 2019, <https://resilienceoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-OC-Report.pdf>.

⁶¹ “The State of Orange County: An Analysis of Orange County's Policies on Immigration and a Blueprint for an Immigrant Inclusive Future” (Resilience Orange County, 2019, p5-6) <https://resilienceoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-OC-Report.pdf>.

“ Many local organizations and resident groups lead the forefront of systems change work coupled with critical service delivery today. ”



a bachelor's degree or higher, while 53 percent have less than a high school degree (58). On the other side of the spectrum, only 11 percent of Asian American immigrants lack a high school diploma, and Asian American immigrants also have one of the highest percentages of those with a bachelor's degree or higher. Finally, the report states that there are over 180,000 adult immigrants in Orange County who are eligible to naturalize but have not yet done so. 61 percent of those are Latino and 26% are Asian American/Pacific Islander. Naturalization offers security and the power to vote, among other benefits.

The Fight for Equity and Justice

Although there is much work to be done, in the face of discriminatory cultural forces, policies, and systems, advocates have organized and had many wins and advancing equity for immigrants. The creation, expansion, and protection of DACA from 2012 to 2021, overcoming hurdles from 2017 to 2020, has created avenues for young immigrants to thrive. The Trust (2014), Truth (2017) and Values (2017) Acts are part of the successful effort to disentangle local police from federal ICE operations and reduce the fear and criminalization of being undocumented. Also, in 2021, rescission of public charge has reduced the fear of undocumented immigrants to access needed resources to live healthfully and with dignity.

The resident groups and nonprofit sector in Orange County have been at the forefront of the pursuit of improved conditions for immigrant populations. Many local organizations and resident groups lead the forefront of systems change work coupled with critical service delivery today. As the years pass, the collaboration between service providing groups has deepened and the pursuit of lasting, systems level changes has become an increasingly central focus.

“ Funding capacity-building that strengthens our collective equity work, especially when tapping into local strengths and peer-exchange models” ”

“ One participant described a destructive practice as “refusal or resistance to invite community members to planning and decision-making tables” ”



Insights From Listening Sessions

In this context of historical oppression and community efforts of resistance, it is crucial to center the voices of those in impacted communities and those engaged in equity work. Thus, in addition to the engagement of the Advisory Committee, practitioners in the work of equity were invited to participate in one of two listening sessions to provide further insight from the field on what things harm the pursuit of equity and what things elevate and support it. Some feedback from those sessions are shared here.

What helps in the pursuit of equity? Participants shared that their experiences with grant makers that have helped in the pursuit of equity are those that reflect trust and respect. Insights emerged around how, who and what to fund and how to work with and in community in order to build equity. While the insights are not all encompassing and should not be prescriptive, they include the following. For one, flexibility in application and funding processes is important. When it comes to who and what to fund, participants were clear that it is necessary to prioritize the lived experiences of impacted communities and to fund community organizing, power-building, strategy, and systems change - not only services. Practices such as funding unrestricted grants, core expenses, long-term projects, and funding collaboration are also key. One participant shared that “funding capacity-building that strengthens our collective equity work, especially when tapping into local strengths and peer-exchange models”. Sincere relationship-building between grant makers and grantees is critical to the successful pursuit of equity and power dynamics are relevant in how relationships between grant makers and grantees are forged. Sincere relationships and trust are built through open conversations, hiring BIPOC staff and having BIPOC in positions of leadership, and listening to BIPOC and impacted communities at every step of the way in strategizing and implementing grant programs. Another aspect of this relationship building includes the creation and dissemination of disaggregated data that reveals inequities impacting these communities.

What undermines the pursuit of equity? Participants shared examples of processes and relationships with grant makers that undermine equity work. Relational issues and grant making processes that erode equity are in many ways rooted in the power that grant makers hold and how they exercise that power. Some of the trends that undermine the pursuit of equity include disconnected grant makers who do not form relationships with those they fund, superficial engagement and/or tokenization, unrecognized white privilege, and lack of honesty and transparency. One participant described a destructive practice as “refusal or resistance to invite community members to planning and decision-making tables”. Inflexible, prescriptive grant making processes also undermine the pursuit of equity. Similarly, grant-making processes are damaging when they impose strategies at odds with organizations’ strategies or are framed as charity rather than investment in systems and policy change.

“ Commit to authentic community engagement, co-design/co-lead with the community/CBOs/those they fund ”



Participants shared advice for systems leaders, including those in philanthropy and in the public sector, as to how they can push equity forward. Generally, the recommendations centered around power sharing. One participant invited leaders to “reflect on and understand your own privilege and how it impacts your lens on the issue facing the communities you represent”. Leaders should ensure that impacted communities are trusted and centered in decisions and processes. This means that BIPOC i should be at the table and in leadership and decision-making roles as well as engaged in listening sessions and strategic planning. Community-led strategies should be trusted. One participant invited leaders to “commit to authentic community engagement, co-design/co-lead with the community/CBOs/those they fund”. Participants advise that funders should invest in flexible, long-term, collaborative efforts aimed at systems and policy change, and that they should be comfortable with risk and politics, since these are required for liberation.

Recommendations

Taking into account the perspectives and advice of local practitioners and inter-disciplinary theory on the pursuit of equity as well as the forgoing case studies, the following six recommendations aim to support the region in the next phase of liberation and justice.

- 1. Integrate an understanding of historical and cultural context into efforts to analyze and address regional inequity.** Orange County has benefited from efforts to compile and share data on regional inequity, including An Equity Profile of Orange County (2019) and the Orange County Equity Map launched in 2021. While this valuable data may help to measure progress toward a more just and equitable region, it does not illuminate the causes of inequity or the strategies that can be used to address it. For example, data that shows inequity in housing cannot be understood without the historical context of redlining, restrictive covenants, and the original theft of land from the Tongva and Acjachemen peoples. Data on education inequity cannot be understood without the historical context of school segregation in all of its forms as well as the efforts to overturn policies meant to remedy such discriminatory policies. With appropriate funding, indigenous and community-based organizations can be an important and underutilized resource to increase understanding of historical and cultural context. Tools such as an interactive, searchable timeline would also help.
- 2. Ensure that marginalized population groups are represented in the collection, compilation, and presentation of data on regional inequity.** Through outreach for the most recent decennial Census, important progress was made in collecting data from so-called “hard-to-count” populations, but the manner in which data is compiled and presented can erase the presence of smaller population groups. For example, Middle Eastern people (Iranian, Arab and other ethnic identities) are typically aggregated into the “White” Census category, thus rendering them invisible to data analysis, and groups such as Blacks and Native Americans, which have smaller populations in this region, are often aggregated into the “Other” category when data is presented, thus statistically “othering” them. In addition, data aggregated at the city or county level can obscure inequity within those jurisdictions especially in places like Anaheim or South Orange County, where socio-economic groups are separated by distance or geographic features.
- 3. Support policy and systems change and direct services.** Since the history of this region shows that current inequity was created or perpetuated by policies and systems, efforts to address regional inequity must include policy and systems change at the local, state, and national level. Except for a handful of initiatives, grant funding has been scarce for organizations that are dedicated to policy and systems change advocacy or that wish to add advocacy to their existing service models. Continued funding for direct services is vital to address immediate needs because it is unjust to expect people in need to advocate. It is important to consider the need for systems change and direct services in relation to one another.
- 4. Incorporate principles of equity, justice, and liberation into decision-making processes for policy, grants, and budgeting.** As evidenced by the listening sessions conducted for this report, equity practitioners in this region do not feel consistently seen, heard, and trusted by systems leaders in philanthropy or the public sector. This disconnection undermines the impact and success of strategies designed to address regional inequity. Just and equitable outcomes are difficult or impossible to achieve without a just and equitable process that meaningfully engages the people and communities who are intended to benefit from them.

- 5. Honor and respect the history of communities that have experienced injustice in the region and pursue healing, especially those, such as Native Nations, that have been rendered invisible by oppression.** As the original inhabitants of this region, the Tongva and Acjachemen Nations, have a unique experience of oppression and colonialism. Their culture, their sovereignty and ancestral stewardship of the land in this region calls for a profound shift in perspective among non-Indigenous people and a distinctive approach to engagement. In his article *Our Sacred Waters*, Charles Sepulveda puts forward the concept of Kuuyam, “guests” in the Tongva language, as a way to “disrupt settler colonialism” in the present day: “Settlers in California, and elsewhere, can be guests on the lands they live on. Kuuyam to the local Indigenous peoples, but more importantly, to the land itself which contains spirit and is willing to provide.”
- 6. Build infrastructure to support processes and outcomes that are just and equitable.** This report’s brief review of the historical and cultural context for inequity in this region has documented examples of structural inequity, systemic racism, and other forms of discrimination, and it has also attempted to uplift examples of resistance and resilience among people and communities who lived through this history. Over the long term, such resilience and resistance can be nurtured through the development of supportive infrastructure owned by those communities. This includes leadership development, training and technical assistance, business and property ownership, and space for dialogue and strategy within and among different communities.

Appendix A: Summary of Terms:

Capitalism: An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Conscientization: A neologism that conveys the idea of developing, strengthening, and changing consciousness. It was created in the field of education, specifically of adult education, in the early 1960s (e.g. Brazilian pedagogue and theorist, Paulo Freire), producing at the same time a new conception of consciousness

Gini Coefficient: In economics, the Gini coefficient, sometimes called the Gini index or Gini ratio, is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income inequality or wealth inequality within a nation or any other group of people. It was developed by the Italian statistician and sociologist Corrado Gini.

Liberation: The progression toward or the conscious or unconscious state of being in which one can freely exist, think, dream, and thrive in a way which operates outside of traditional systems of oppression. Liberation acknowledges history but does not bind any person to disparate systems or outcomes. Liberation is a culture of solidarity, respect, and dignity. (Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>)

Mello Roos: Special districts established by local governments in California as a means of obtaining additional public funding. Counties, cities, special districts, joint powers authority, and school districts in California use these financing districts to pay for public works and some public services.

Minoritized persons: To be minoritized means to be pushed to the margins often by means out of your own control (Paniagua, 2015). It is not due to the lack of representative numbers that disenfranchises people of marginalized experiences, rather the socio-cultural hierarchies and policies that negatively impact them. For example, white billionaire women who independently gained their financial success are a minority within the United States. However, their experience in the world is not minoritized nor disenfranchised given that their race and economic status holds power. However, using this term is not a perfect perspective as it centers the power of white culture instead of honoring the identities of these communities.

Neoliberalism: The ideology and policy model that emphasizes the value of free market competition. Although there is considerable debate as to the defining features of neoliberal thought and practice, it is most commonly associated with laissez-faire economics. In particular, neoliberalism is often characterized in terms of its belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve human progress, its confidence in free markets as the most-efficient allocation of resources, its emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs, and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital.

Redlining: The systematic denial of various services to residents of specific, most often racially associated, neighborhoods or communities, either explicitly or through the selective raising of prices.

Sundown Towns: Sundown towns, also known as sunset towns, gray towns, or sundowner towns, are all-white municipalities or neighborhoods in the United States that practice a form of racial segregation by excluding non-whites via some combination of discriminatory local laws, intimidation, or violence.

Appendix B: Advisors

Advisory Committee

Current Members

Carlos Perea
Founder and Executive Director
Harbor Institute for Immigrant and Economic Justice

Carolina Sarmiento
Assistant Professor
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Erualdo Gonzalez
Professor
California State University – Fullerton

Kevin Cabrera
Museum Director
College Park Aviation Museum (*Formerly Executive Director at the Heritage Museum of Orange County*)

Manny Escamilla
City Planner
City of Oakland (*Formerly Librarian and Archivist with the City of Santa Ana*)

Mojgan Sami
Assistant Professor
California State University – Fullerton

Rigo Rodriguez
Associate Professor
Cal State Long Beach

Tracy La
Executive Director
VietRISE

Past Members

Adonia Lugo
Professor and Interim Chair of Urban Sustainability
Antioch University

Angela Mooney D’Arcy
Founder and Executive Director
Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples

Jennifer Koh
Associate Professor
Pepperdine Caruso Law (*Formerly Visiting Professor at University of California – Irvine School of Law*)

Jonathan Paik
Executive Director
Orange County Civic Engagement Table

Philanthropic Advisors

Jason Lacsamana,
Director of Programs and Partnerships
St. Joseph Community Partnership Fund

Sandy Chiang
Senior Program Manager
The California Endowment

Appendix C: Summary of Public Comments

From December 15 to January 15, equity practitioners were invited to review the final draft of the forgoing report and offer, comments, questions, feedback and/or corrections through an open public comment period. Efforts were made to circulate the invitation to public comment widely, and openly. The invitation to comment could be circulated further by those contacted. Below is a summary of statements made and changes made to the report. The report development team is grateful for all engagement with the report.

1. Comment 1

Name of the person submitting comment: unknown

Date of comment: Dec. 18, 2021

Full text of comment: "I am dismayed at an equity report that aggregates Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the reporting of data. The aggregate API category is meaningless, and hides inequities faced by specific AA and PI groups. Please do not perpetuate this useless classification in a report on equity!"

Brief summary of report revisions: In presenting existing aggregate data, the report does not intend to make invisible the varied experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. However, knowing that this is the case, the report encourages readers to review cited data points from the OC Equity Profile with that understanding in mind. Disaggregation of data in the "API" Census category is a goal and call to action. The experience of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is extremely diverse, with income, education, health and other experiences varying dramatically by ethnic groups county wide. (Source: http://assets.thehcn.net/content/sites/ochca/OC_AAPIO_Demographic_Report_2014.pdf) One recent example is the disproportionate negative impact of COVID-19 on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. (Source: <https://calmatters.org/california-divide/ca-divide-health/2020/05/california-pacific-islanders-hit-hard-coronavirus-overlooked/>). Revisions and footnotes were added on pages 3 and 11 to this effect. Further work is needed.

2. Comment 2

Name of the person submitting comment: Sabrina Rivera, Orange County Justice Fund

Date of comment: Jan. 5, 2022

Full text of comment: "There should be data related to deportations of Orange County residents and the history of immigration detention centers in the county."

Brief summary of report revisions: On pages 22 and 23, the following additions were made. "One of Orange County immigrants' most critical challenges is the criminalization, detention and deportation of immigrants and collusion between Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local law enforcement. In June 2019, 187 legal permanent residents were detained by ICE. (Footnote: Source: <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/detention/>). The State of Orange County Report explores the historical collusion between Federal ICE agents and local law enforcement and history of detention centers in Orange County and beyond to criminalize immigrants and refugees in the county. (Add footnote: State of Orange County, 2019, <https://resilienceoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/State-of-OC-Report.pdf>).