

Contra Costa County Racial Justice Coalition Platform Report

Who We Are

We are a broad coalition of organizations and individuals committed to eliminating racial inequalities in Contra Costa County.

Why We Do This Work

Communities of color are driving growth in the Bay Area region, including in suburban communities in our county. Contra Costa County experienced population growth of 11% in the period from 2000 to 2010, while the people-of-color population grew 37%, more than any other Bay Area County.¹ But while Contra Costa County becomes increasingly racially diverse, rampant inequity exists in our community. Stratification and social cleavages go beyond individual level interactions. Prejudice and discrimination continue to be expressed institutionally, structurally and politically.

We believe there is strength in our diversity, in all forms. We recognize the impact of racism on our quality of life individually and collectively. Let us neither act in allegiance exclusively with those with whom we identify, nor attempt to erase the differences between us. Rather, let us recognize our collective needs, and work together towards building strengthened communities.

We believe it is incumbent upon our elected officials to invest in safety net services and other resources for our communities. While we want solutions to be community driven, our government needs to be held accountable, at a systemic level, in supporting our shared vision.

A society that is truly inclusive is one in which the most marginalized feel they belong and are able to participate in multiple public domains. It is our government's responsibility to provide access and accommodations to resources and institutions. We have a shared vision of racial justice and reinvestment in our communities. Our work is driven by compassion, respect and love for one another.

Our Agenda

Our collective concern about our criminal justice system and lack of public investment in our community resulted in the formation of the Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition. For a long time, the institutions that should be supporting us have prioritized and profited from shackles, walls, and jails in communities of color. Reinvestment means rejecting these priorities and advancing solutions that create opportunity. Too often, the people who have been most harmed by disinvestment, criminalization, and incarceration do not have the opportunity to shape the policies and realities of their lives, which is why increased civic participation is a critical goal of our coalition.

The Racial Justice Coalition will address disparities and injustices in the criminal justice system, move resources away from punishment, and engage people most impacted by racial and economic injustice in advancing reinvestment in long-term solutions that create opportunity for communities.

¹ From [An Equity Profile of the San Francisco Bay Area Region](#), 2015, PolicyLink and PERE, the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California.

Goals

- Decriminalize people of color and reduce the jail population.
- Fully incorporate community members into society.
- Invest in safety net and community services.

Platform Development

To inform our platform development, the Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition engaged over 300 residents in discussion of our county's priorities for racial justice and reinvestment. Over the course of four community forums held across the county (in Kensington, Antioch, Bay Point and Richmond), the following issues emerged as priorities:

- **Criminal Justice**

We advocate for:

- Reduce the number of people of color who are incarcerated
- Prevent future jail expansions. Rather than funding incarceration, invest in community services
- Eliminate inequitable fine and fee structures
- Implement mechanisms for police accountability

- **Housing**

We advocate for:

- Create pathways to homeownership for low and middle income families
- Increase affordable housing stock
- Support increased funding for housing vouchers and subsidized housing programs
- Address discriminatory housing policies.

- **Mental Health and Addiction**

We advocate for:

- Invest in prevention and early intervention
- Establish a full service, acute care, public hospitals in West Contra Costa County
- Utilize Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment (DSST) (or other evidence-based clinical approaches that serve people with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders)
- Reduce homelessness by investing in transitional, supportive and permanent housing
- Ensure equitable access to affordable and quality health and mental care throughout the county. Services need to be inclusive for all and responsive to the health care access barriers face by residents.

Additionally, our recognition of the harms and inequities caused by exclusion of marginalized community members from public and political processes warranted the addition of a final area of focus:

- **Civic Participation**

We advocate for:

- Restore voting rights for individuals on parole and individuals in prison
- Extend voting rights to residents, regardless of immigration status
- Expand infrastructure to better accommodate potential jurors, to ensure juries are representative of our diverse county

And while our focus is on racial justice, we recognize the intersectionality of class, gender, religion, ability and sexual orientation. Our identities are complex and multi-faceted. And we recognize our interconnectedness with other marginalized communities. In an acknowledgement of this interconnectedness, we will work in solidarity with allied regional, national and global advocacy efforts.