

SFBRA Environmental Justice Panel Notes

Participants

- Douglas Mundo
- Phoenix Armenta
- Anthony Khalil

- Douglas Mundo, Canal Welcome Center and Co-Director of Shore-Up Marin
 - Terrie Green, Co-Director of Shore-Up Marin
 - **Shore-Up Marin:** multi-racial environmental justice (EJ) coalition advocating of equitable inclusion of LIC in planning and community preparedness focused on Marin City and County
 - Emergency preparedness, sea-level rise, climate adaptation
 - Water, air, soil quality
 - Social equity
 - Started as EJ coalition because there was a gap in Marin (mostly environmental organizations)
 - Support local agencies and governmental institutions that want to do something for our communities
 - Try to find common ground to help each other (government and EJ) accomplish respective missions

- Phoenix Love Armenta, Coordinator for Resilient Communities Initiative
 - **Resilient Communities Initiative:** multicultural social justice coalition to develop climate resiliency plan for communities most vulnerable
 - To address climate change, we must start with most vulnerable
 - Includes Shore-Up Marin, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, Breakthrough Communities, Rooted in Resilience etc.
 - Past experience
 - Hiroshima, Japan experience with folks impacted by radiation
 - Folks living next to uranium mines in India
 - Started working locally as a community organizer, homeless advocate; involved in politics working for a city council member
 - You're most powerful working outside the system as an advocate

- Anthony Khalil, Literacy for Environmental Justice
 - Bayview Hunter's Point: rich story on how communities prepare and prevent impacts from climate change
 - Hidden history of Bayview Hunter's Point: Indigenous ancestors who were original stewards of land
 - Resilience is about creating, not just bouncing back or adapting
 - Particulate matter map
 - Community-based assessment on contaminants adjacent to waterways that communities are a part of

- Era of ecological restoration and climate preparedness
- How to measure success
 - Workforce development
 - Environmental stewardship
 - Ecological literacy
- **Example: The Eco-Center at Heron's Head Park**
 - Legacy persists today
 - There is no longer power plant here and a thriving wetland
 - Greenest building in all of SF
 - Traditional ecological knowledge
 - Make resilience relevant
- Yosemite Slough – largest wetland restoration program known currently in SF
- Future stewards and advocates
- We are faced with the largest redevelopment ever in the City. Opportunities for workforce development and other community benefits
- Strategic Growth Council Urban Greening Grant: economic development doesn't always translate to benefits for EJ communities
- **Question: What does a strong EJ community component look like in a Measure AA grant?**
 - Douglas
 - Authentic community engagement process does not always happen
 - Planning to succeed, not failing to plan. Failing to include EJ communities is failure
 - Resilient by Design efforts had too short a time to adequately engage diverse communities
 - Marin Audubon Society project: local projects with more time support deeper community engagement
 - Need to shift paradigm, be consistent and persistent to engage communities to establish a foundation of partnership, trust, and empowerment
 - Empowerment means capacity-building for underserved communities; those that haven't been in planning processes. Offer tools that they need to help transform communities where we live, work, and play
 - Business as usual needs to change towards a transformative process
 - Phoenix
 - California Adaptation Forum experience where RCI folks were only EJ representatives raised their hands as equity as part of their job
 - WE ALL operate in inequitable paradigms all the time
 - How many black folks are represented on the SFBRA Advisory Committee? None. This was brought up last year but has not been rectified

- We all need to adopt an equity framework and everyone in power to adopt
- Is meeting accessible to folks with disabilities? Are materials being translated?
- RCI Equity Checklist is an important first step
- Do you have power to change that disparity and inequities that exist within projects?
- Approach needs to go deeply into the communities that are most impacted
- Anthony
 - Bay Area Air Quality Management District has made progress and a step forward for programming and projects that seek to take lead from and are informed by local constituents
 - Matter of life and premature death
 - CalEnviroScreen 3.0 shows our communities are communities at risk
 - How do you measure awareness? How do you measure resilience?
 - Inequitable life expectancy – ecological restoration is a form of reparations
 - Ability to invest in communities of color is a form of reparations of environmental burdens we've had to bear
 - Lens of funded projects: has to be through allocating capacity. **How do we build capacity?**
 - Power and jurisdiction over land use and sites: mandate local decision-makers and agencies and local institutions pursue funding through SFBRA. By the time that certain agencies get with it and the value of restoring habitats, the Board can create a lot more efforts to influence agencies to pursue those funding opportunities
 - Agencies think they need to engage community-based organizations and small non-profits because there is an impetus in a transactional way, but need to value habitat restoration and need encouragement to do so.
 - Only way meetings are accessible is if the meetings come to communities in their own neighborhoods. With Resilient by Design, there was disconnect, but there was exchange in a safe, trusted space
 - Allocation of funds: larger institutions can get out capital projects quicker. Mechanisms can be backed into proposal process that funding is not dependent on certain activities, but build on trust that most impacted communities get to determine the projects that get funded
 - This body can convene stakeholders and diverse coalitions: when a well-respected body weaves the right community folks together it builds trust

- Transparency, equity, and inclusion can be achieved through mechanisms like a “stakeholder matchmaker”
 - Phoenix
 - Communications is rarely invested in and how you communicate to people in terms of framing message, the way things look, and the distribution channels you get the message out
 - Application looked very grueling. Need for applicant to visualize and aspects of project very early on
 - RCI coordinates various organizations and supports organizations to write grants. Phoenix is fundraising to just apply for grants
 - We are asked all the time to review papers and free EJ consultation
 - Technical assistance is needed, too
 - Douglas
 - Ownership, power, authority has been mentioned
 - Partnership with key stakeholders
 - Any project we are interested in implemented needs cultivation of buy-in of community. The community won't endorse an initiative if they don't see themselves as key stakeholders.
 - Require community endorsement to ensure community buy-in happens and ensure you are reaching out to real community leaders
 - Douglas has been working in community for 17 years but has not heard of over 100 groups that have identified they want to do something for his community
 - Communities are under stress and people are worried about housing and other survival issues, so it is challenging to make restoration projects relevant to them.
 - Communities will ask, “How is a project going to impact my life and my community?”
 - A restoration project that involves beautification could have unintended consequences that might accelerate gentrification and displacement
 - Building partnerships with the right organizations is key recommendation
- Questions/Comments
 - Need to diversify workforce of agencies so that agencies are not always asking for outside expertise. Thoughts?
 - Project labor agreements requirement: the unions need to be first at the door during grants
 - What does PLA really mean? Does it mean resources for engaging community in the process?
 - Douglas fully in support to bring diversity in the projects. Opportunities for employment and getting engaged and ownership and feel like they were able to co-create a restoration project and benefit the community for sea level rise etc.

- We have construction workers, gardeners, etc. How do the job opportunities go to disadvantaged communities?
- Special admissions in career pathways is critical to diversify workforce.
- Communities need to be paid for every contribution and minute of their time they contribute through stipends, etc.
- Programming and projects need to focus and prioritize career and educational pathways.
 - Pollution mapping project with Air Board is working with scientists as principal investigators, technical know-how to navigate and demystify the process of entering with these organizations
 - Special admissions: track for folks that are not just gifted, but those that are most engaged in local constituency. Residency happens back in the neighborhood you come from
- Technical assistance to apply for a grant: what could that look like? Mentorship opportunities?
 - More time to apply for grants. 2 months is not enough. More lead time is key. Reach out to EJ organizations and share opportunities for grants
 - Need support working through the process e.g. budget process for Proposition 1 and work with Nahal who sat with Phoenix to go through it
 - Grant application process is cumbersome: Pre-proposal approach can lessen the application preparation burden. This can tone down the proposal process
 - Understanding the need for general capacity and EJ groups may be starting a little bit behind
 - Front-loading the funding and general funding for capacity-building
- Community engagement vs. projects. Community stakeholder matchmaker idea is interesting and is that something missing from the Measure AA process?
 - Measure AA implementation could create a pipeline for job creation for environmental restoration skills, get into government, do policy work
 - It's not just about pipeline, but people of color often have difficulty adapting to work environments that have different cultural norms.
 - Community engagement specialists can connect to communities.