

# A Health Equity Framework: Racial Justice and Power-building



California Local Health Jurisdictions Equity Convening

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**Human Impact Partners** transforms the field of public health to center equity and builds collective power with social justice movements.

Policy & Organizing



Bridging Partnerships & Strategies



Capacity Building



# Level Setting + Grounding

- To offer an analysis of the root causes of inequities
- To articulate the intersection of racial justice, power-building, and health equity practice
- To offer a framework for what it will take to advance health equity



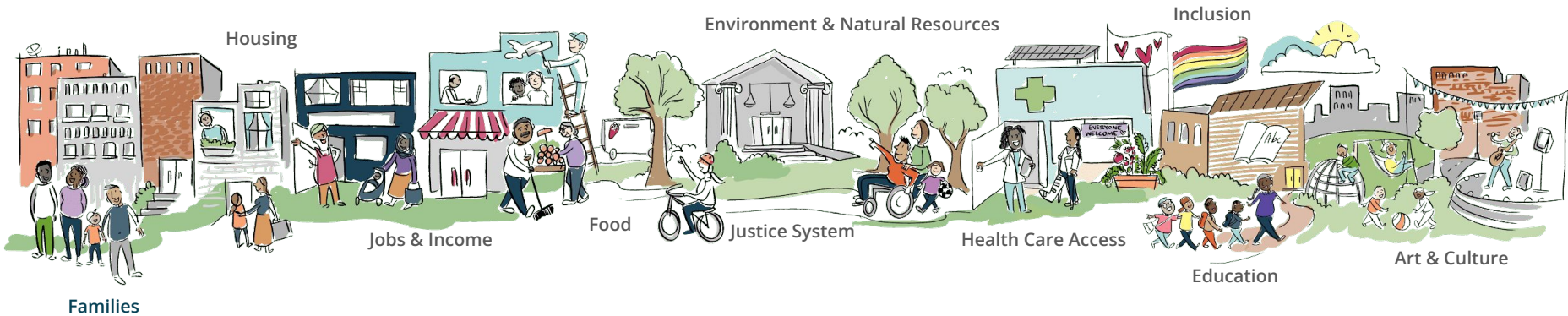
# Health equity

“ Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. To achieve this, we must remove obstacles to health: ”

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Deep power imbalances

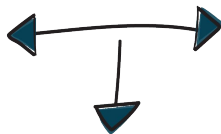
*Adapted by Human Impact Partners from Paula Braverman and colleagues in the RWJF commissioned paper, "What is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?"*

# HIP's Theory of Change



**Power Imbalances**

**Structural Oppression**



Families Separated



Diminished Housing Access



Food Security Threatened



Income Inequality Worsens



Justice Denied



Health Care Denied



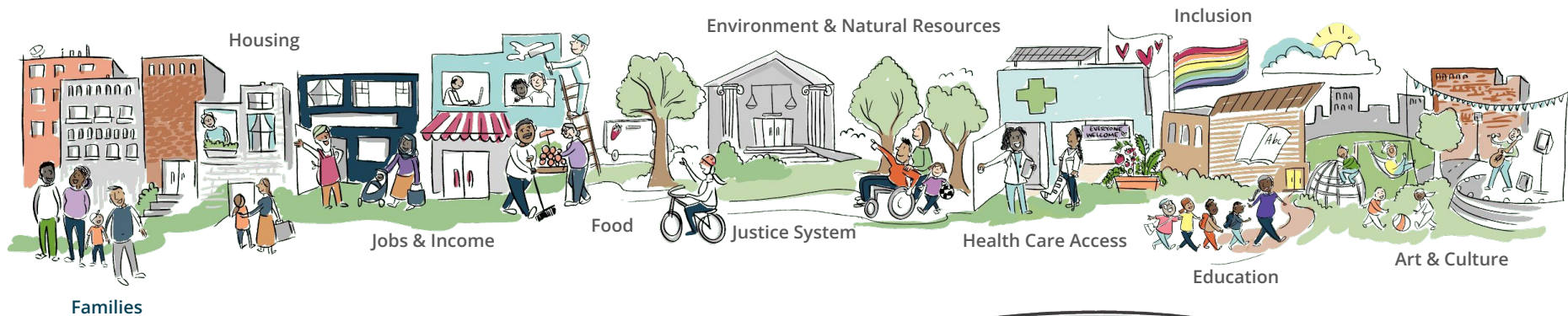
Discrimination & Bigotry Normalized



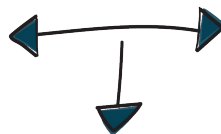
Natural Resources Threatened



Public Education Defunded



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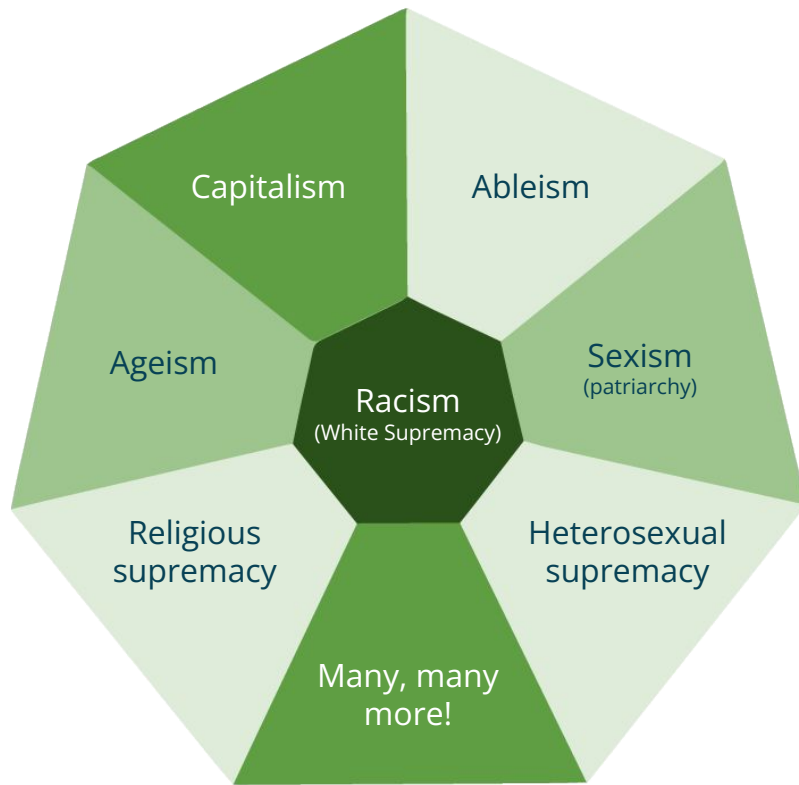


Natural Resources Threatened



Public Education Defunded

# What is structural oppression?





# Racism is...

“ ... a **system** of advantage based on race. ”

*David Wellman, Portraits of White Racism*

# Racism is...

“

...a **system** of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on phenotype (“race”), that:

- unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
- unfairly advantages other individuals and communities

...undermines realization of the full potential of the whole society through the waste of human resources.

”

*Dr. Camara Jones, Former President of the APHA*

## Racial justice as outcome

As an outcome, racial justice is achieved when one's racial or ethnic identity no longer systematically exposes them to risks OR grants them privileges with regard to socioeconomic and life outcomes. It's when the people who need resources the most are prioritized to receive those resources.

## Racial justice as a *process*

As a process, racial justice is when those most impacted by historic and current structural inequities are leading or meaningfully engaged in systems change efforts.

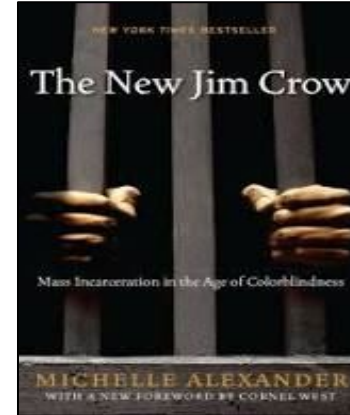
# Racism codified in US public policy



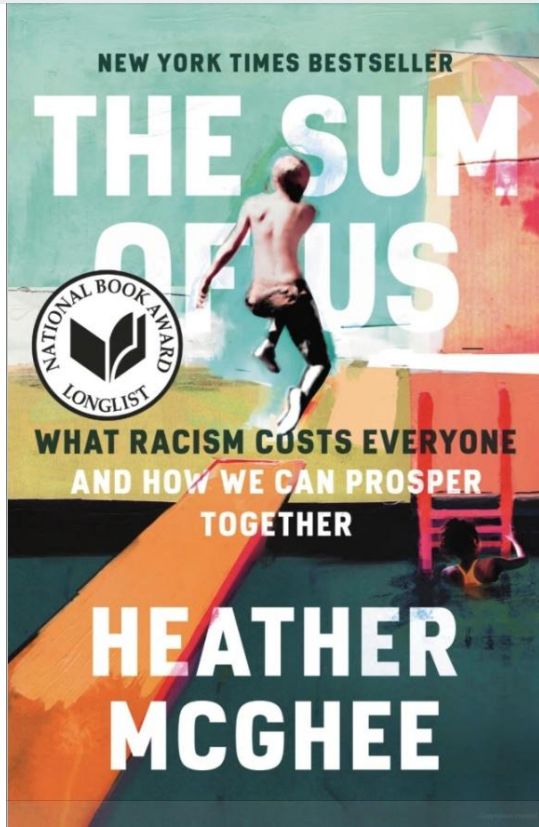
**National Labor Relations Act**  
(1935)



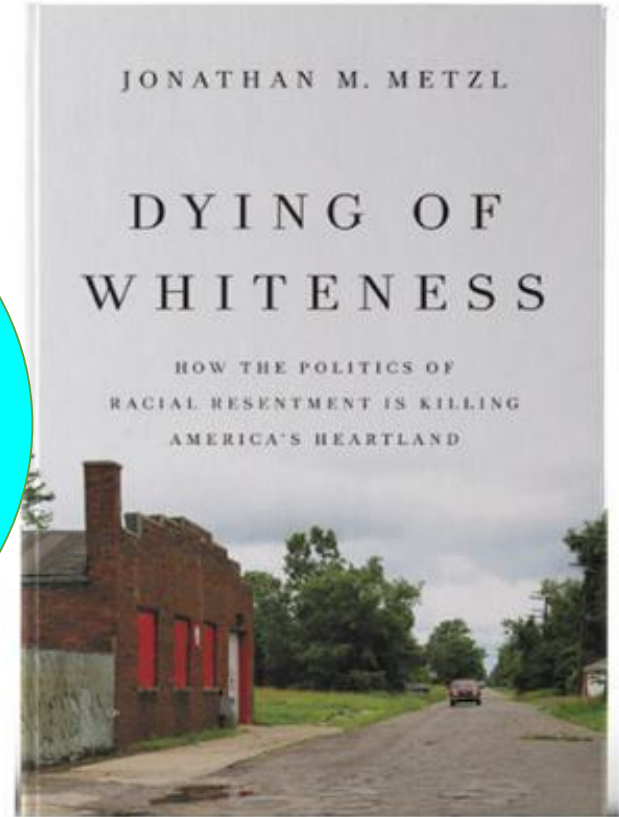
**Federal Housing Administration**  
(1934 - 1968)

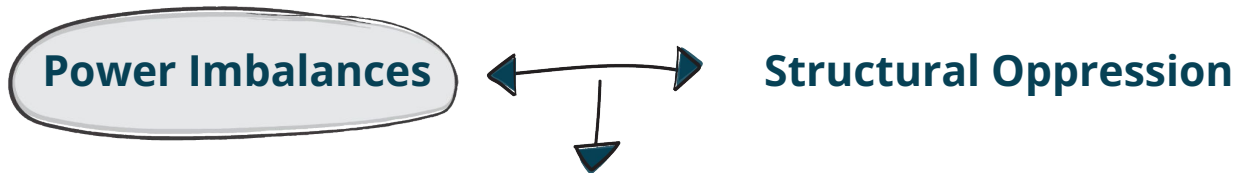
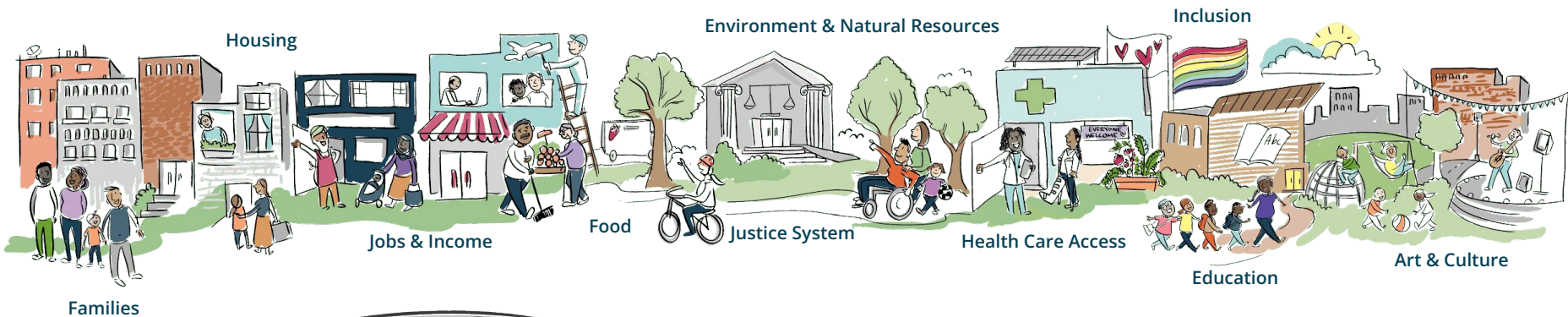


**Stop and Frisk**  
(1990s-2000s)



**Our fates  
are linked,  
we are  
inextricably  
connected**





Families Separated



Diminished Housing Access



Food Security Threatened



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**“Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.”\***

\*<https://images.app.goo.gl/71f7daK6roM9VrZp7>

# Power imbalances and access to power affects health through:

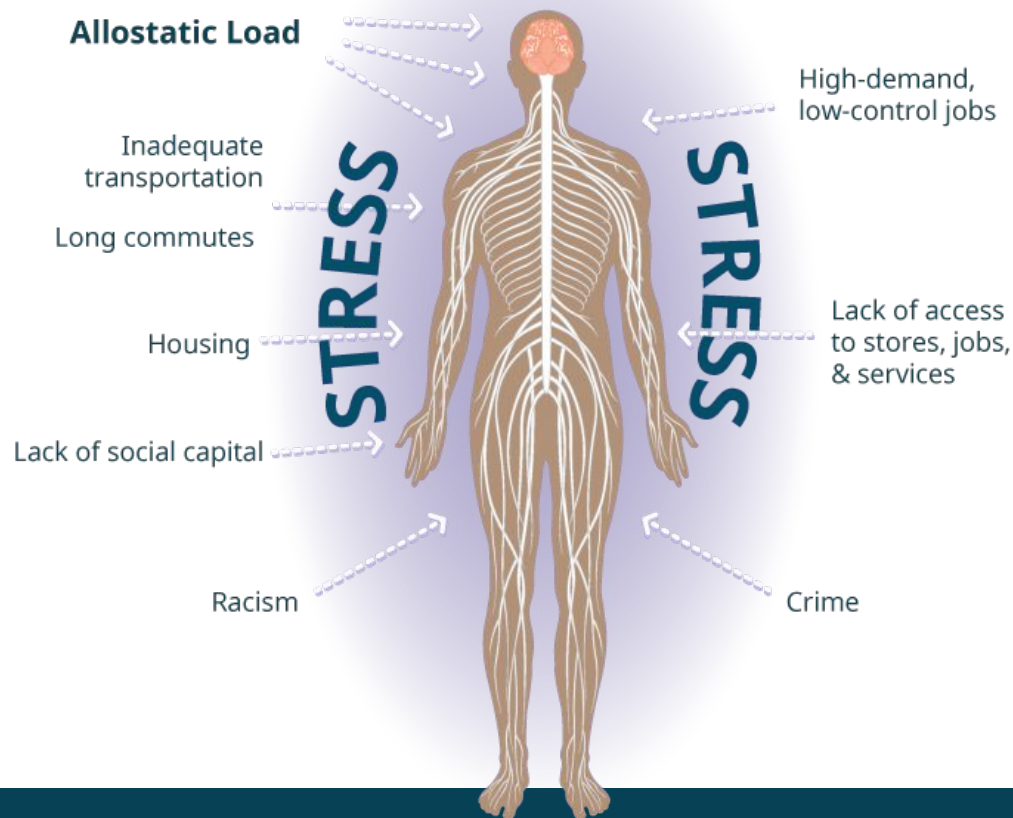
- Degree of control one has over their life (agency)
- Lack of access to resources that can be used to avoid risks or minimize the consequences of disease
- For people above a certain threshold of material well-being, two things matter most to health: how much autonomy they have over their lives, and the opportunity for social participation



The screenshot shows the top portion of a web page from Health Affairs. At the top left is the 'HealthAffairs' logo. To its right is a navigation bar with 'COVID-19' highlighted in a blue box, followed by 'Topics', 'Journal', 'Forefront', and 'Podcasts'. Below the navigation bar, the article is categorized as 'POLICY INSIGHT | COMMUNITY HEALTH'. The breadcrumb trail reads 'HEALTH AFFAIRS > VOL. 41, NO. 12: EQUITABLE SOCIAL SUPPORTS & MORE POLICY INSIGHT'. The main title of the article is 'Building Community Power To Dismantle Policy-Based Structural Inequity In Population Health'. Below the title, the authors are listed as 'Anthony Iton, Robert K. Ross, and Pritpal S. Tamber'. There is a link for 'AFFILIATIONS' with a dropdown arrow. At the bottom of the article preview, it says 'PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 2022' with an 'Open Access' icon, and a DOI link: 'https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00540'.



# Community power and agency are the antidote.



Source/credit: Dr. Tony Iton, The California Endowment

# Community Power

the ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance health equity

Source: [Lead Local Glossary](#)

# Power to win a specific election or decision

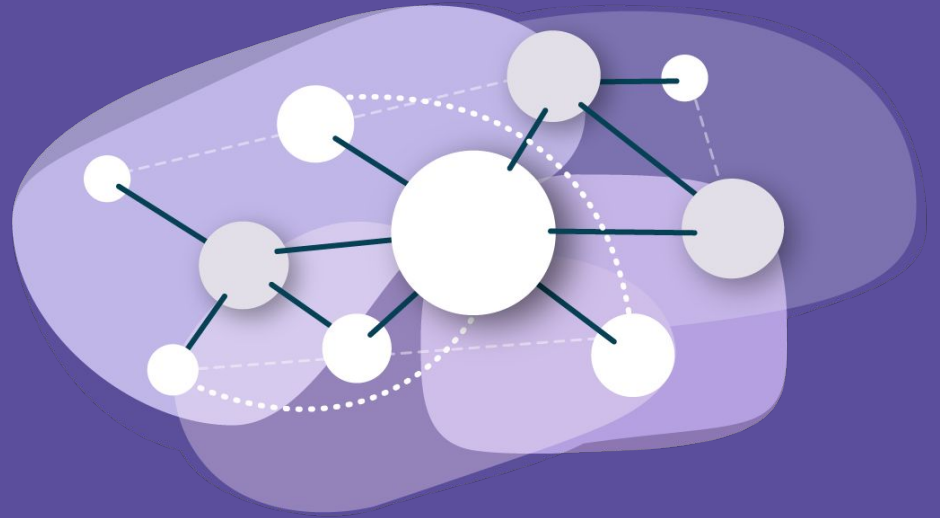
Organizing people and resources for direct political action

*Source/credit: Grassroots Power Project — 3 Dimensions of Power*



# Power to set the agenda

Building infrastructure to shape the political agenda



*Source/credit: Grassroots Power Project — 3 Dimensions of Power*

## Power to change/hold public narratives

Shaping how we make meaning of the world and what we think is possible.



*Source/credit: Grassroots Power Project — 3 Dimensions of Power*

# What is Community Power Building?

Developing, sustaining, and growing an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to:

- ❖ Set the agenda
- ❖ Shift public discourse
- ❖ Influence decisions
- ❖ Increase accountable relationships with decision-makers.

Source: [Lead Local Glossary](#)



# What are CPBOs?

CPBOs are community organizations that support base building, often around a certain location (e.g. a neighborhood, city, or state), demography or identity (e.g. youth, formerly incarcerated people, tenants, undocumented immigrants) or issue (e.g. health equity, environmental justice.) They're also sometimes called grassroots organizing groups, movement-building organizations, community organizing groups, and base-building groups.<sup>1</sup>

Not all community-based organizations are CPBOs. What differentiates CPBOs is a commitment to organizing and base building. CPBOs are deeply rooted in and accountable to communities, making them adept at navigating intricate local politics to create real change.



CARING  
ACROSS  
GENERATIONS



THE  
CENTER  
FOR  
POPULAR  
DEMOCRACY



PEOPLE'S  
ACTION



CALIFORNIA  
GREEN  
NEW DEAL



FAITH  
IN  
ACTION



Central Coast Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy

# Build a “Public Health Ecosystem” to advance racial + health equity

Governmental  
public health  
*(local, state, federal,  
tribal)*

Community  
power-building  
organizations +  
national  
organizing  
networks

Non-  
governmental  
public health  
*(non-profits,  
academic,  
philanthropy, PH  
associations)*

Governmental  
non-health  
*(housing, econ dev,  
transportation, etc.)*



# Inside-outside strategy between PH and CPBOs:

- Public health departments and community power-building groups are best positioned to transform policies and systems to achieve health equity **together via coordinated and strategic action.**
- To this end, we must build our collective capacity for an **'inside-outside' strategy and practice with partners.**

## Develop an inside-outside strategy



The strategic alignment of health departments and community power-building groups working towards policy and systems changes for racial and health equity, with each entity using its relative power, voice, and resources inside and outside of government, together.

# We are all on a journey of growth together



# Thank you!



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