



Governor's Office of  
**Planning and Research**

**To:** California Racial Equity Commissioners  
**From:** Racial Equity Commission Staff  
**Re:** Riverside, CA Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
**Date:** July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024



On July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Racial Equity Commission (Commission) Staff cohosted a Community Meet-n-Greet in Riverside in partnership with TruEvolution. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado hosted the event and Commissioner Salas attended to represent the Commission. TruEvolution, founded by Commissioner Maldonado, is an organization with deep ties to the LGBTQ+ community that "fights for health equity and racial justice to advance the quality of life and human dignity of LGBTQ people." TruEvolution sponsored dinner and the

Racial Equity Commission provided Spanish and ASL translation. The evening focused on engaging with and learning from community members, including clients from [TruEvolution](#) in Riverside, CA.

### **Dinner and Meet-n-Greet**

TruEvolution provided refreshments for the meet-n-greet. State staff got to meet and network with community members, TruEvolution clients and staff, and learn about Project Legacy. Founded in 2023, Project Legacy provides transitional supportive housing, a career center, and wrap around services focused on homeless LGBTQ+ youth on a one (1) acre campus. Project Legacy housing supports a variety of residents, off all ages, sexualities, and abilities. This allows for inter-generational housing where clients form diverse community.

### **Opening remarks**

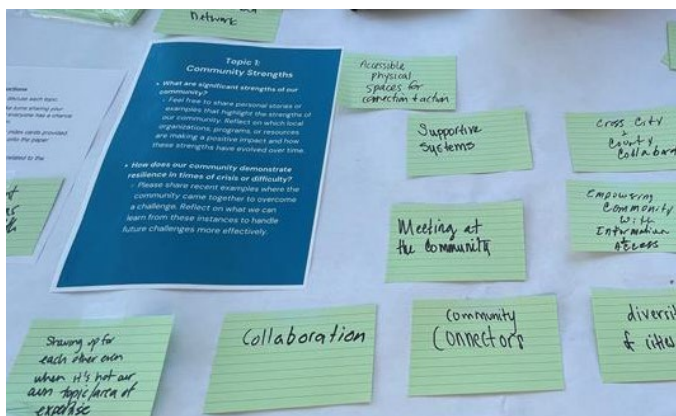
Commissioner Maldonado, CEO of TruEvolution, introduced his work at TruEvolution which he founded in 2007 as a safe space for LGBTQ+ and HIV positive community. We also heard from Jesse Melgar, the Vice Chair of the [Inland Empire Community Foundation](#) (IECF) and the former Communications Director and Press Secretary for Governor Newsom. His remarks focused on why racial equity is important in the Inland Empire. He emphasized the importance of intersectionality in his work as well the importance of finding an intersection of philanthropic, non-profit, and government dollars when funding a project. IECF





helped sponsored Project Legacy through philanthropic funding. Sabrina Gonzalez, the Executive Director of the [Civil Rights Institute](#) delivered a presentation called "Civil Rights Institute – Living Enterprise based in History." Based in Riverside, the Inland Southern California Civil Rights Institute provides programming, exhibitions, and archives of civil rights efforts in the Inland Empire. Gonzalez emphasized the importance of storytelling in the Institute's exhibits and centering community. One of their current exhibits, "Working Coachella: Images of the farmworker community of the Coachella Valley," is now exhibited in Coachella, rather than Riverside, based on community feedback. Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director of the California Racial Equity Commission, provided closing remarks and reflections. Dr. Estes spoke on the importance of meeting community where they are at, as well as the importance of accessibility, such as the Spanish and ASL translation at the meet-n-greet. Dr. Estes also introduced the REC's Data Committee and spoke about standards of data, data disaggregation, and data mapping.

### Interactive activity led by TruEvolution



Julianne Ballon, Development Assistant at TruEvolution, and Nicole Le Bail-Sanchez, Executive Assistant to CEO at TruEvolution, co-lead the night's activity, along with Commissioner Maldonado and Jesse Melgar. Community members—including TruEvolution clients—State staff, and TruEvolution staff joined together for a visioning activity, with the goal of facilitating collaborative dialogue on key community topics. Attendees were split into three (3) groups, each with a different topic to discuss for 15 minutes. At the end of the discussion, TruEvolution staff facilitated the final portion of the activity: the share out. A representative from each group shared main points from their tables.

Topic 1 – Community Strengths: What are specific strengths and of our community? How does our community demonstrate resilience in times of crisis or difficulty?

- For this topic, a community member shared out the beauty of the ecosystem in the Inland Empire, such as the many academic institutions and civil rights organizations located in the region. Sabrina Gonzalez spoke on the community's value on accountability and the importance of calling in, rather than calling out.



Topic 2 -- Community Challenges and Needs: What are the major challenges that our community faces today? What resources or support systems are currently missing that could help address these challenges? What barriers prevent community members from accessing necessary services?



- The community voiced their concerns about air quality in the Inland Empire, pollution, and high rates of asthma. The community was also concerned about rent prices, loss of income, and resulting homelessness and youth displacement. Community members also called out the problems created by warehouse expansion. An additional issue identified by TruEvolution staff is the need for Identification (ID) Cards for unhoused and undocumented people. Unhoused and undocumented people are unable to access vital social services, many of which can be accessed through TruEvolution, without ID cards. One of the solutions proposed was a mobile ID center which can be brought to unhoused residents.

Topic 3 -- Future Vision of the Inland Empire: What is your vision for the future of the Inland Empire over the next 5-10 years? How can the Racial Equity Commission (REC) and key stakeholders support the future vision of the IE? What role do you see for youth and future generations in shaping the Inland Empire's future?

- Table Three (3) discussed how to address the issues faced in the Inland Empire. They discussed education access, especially access for older adult and returning students. They also talked about the need for economic growth and investment in small businesses. TruEvolution staff also brought up affordable housing and the lack healthcare access in disinvested communities.

While attendees recognized many of the challenges in the Inland Empire, they also identified the many strengths of the region and solutions to overcome the challenges. During the share out, attendees chimed in with solutions they have identified to the problems voiced. When the need for a mobile ID network was shared, another attendee chimed in that another location in the Inland Empire was providing similar services. After the official share out, attendees organically came up to one another to further discuss the problems and solutions shared.

### **Closing Remarks**

Commissioner Salas provided closing remarks. She began her speech with the statement that regional equity is racial equity, shining light on the disparities faced in the Inland Empire. Commissioner Salas summarized the points of the interactive activity starting with the strength of the Riverside community in centering land and home, centering people and relationships, and their ability to create good trouble. She also recognized the community's truthfulness about the challenges they face, while still maintaining a vision of collaboration.



### **Considerations for the Commission**

This community meet-n-greet gave Staff and Commissioners the opportunity to meet TruEvolution clients and community members from the Inland Empire. One key takeaway from the discussion was the critical need for identification cards for those looking to access supportive services provided by community and government systems. Community members brought to light the regional inequities to the Commission to make recommendations including bringing investment, housing, and health care access to the region.

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