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## **INFORMING THE FIELD: PEOPLE OF COLOR CREATING EQUALITY (POCCE) EVALUATION REPORT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Horizons Foundation (Horizons) is a community foundation located in San Francisco, CA *rooted in and dedicated to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Horizons Foundation exists to mobilize and increase resources for the LGBT movement and organizations that secure the rights, meets the needs, and celebrate the lives of LGBT people; empower individual donors and promote giving as an integral part of a healthy, compassionate community; and, steward a permanently endowed fund through which donors can make legacy gifts to ensure the LGBT community's capacity to meet the future needs of LGBT people.*

POCCE is a program intended to build capacity within LGBT organizations for individuals of color through the following objectives:

- Increase understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for raising support for same-sex marriage among people of color.
- Encourage and support communities of color in defining the strategies most likely to be effective in their respective communities.
- Support the implementation of these strategies through re-granting to nonprofits best situated to carry them out and realize results that will inform future efforts to increase acceptance of same-sex marriage in communities of color.

To accomplish these objectives, Horizons implemented three strategies: 1) research, 2) convening, and 3) re-granting.

- **Research** - An environmental scan and summary report of the current strategies and opportunities for increasing support for marriage equality in communities of color
- **Convening** - In March 2010 in San Francisco, Horizons convened more than forty participants from around the state to share their insight and observations on variety of issues related to marriage equality and communities of color. The notes from the various discussions and activities were compiled in to an internal summary.
- **Regranting** - Horizons staff, with input from a group of advisory board members, allocated \$350,000 to nine nonprofit organizations to develop, test, and educate communities of color (African-American, Spanish-speaking Latino, and Asian/Asian Pacific Islanders) through message testing focused on LGBT rights and marriage equality. Grantees were located in predominantly urban communities across the State of California.

## Evaluation Overview

Horizons engaged jdcPartnerships to design and conduct an evaluation of the POCCE pilot program with a major focus given to the lessons learned within and across funded nonprofits. This work was shaped by three evaluation goals: 1) Document lessons learned during the implementation of the POCCE pilot program, 2) Explore ways in which individuals are building bridges within and across communities and 3) Determine best practices around message and messengers when developing communication strategies within communities of color.

### Summary of Major Findings

The POCCE pilot program served as a transformative experience for program staff and participants. The three-pronged approach supported progress towards the three objectives identified for this effort. Both the research and the convening yielded reach information and insights that led to the shaping of the re-granting strategy. In addition, through the grantees interviews, several noted the convening served as an opportunity to learn about current and historical regional and national programs and helped shape and refine their strategies.

With regard to the re-granting strategy which is primarily the third objective. Although nonprofits experienced obstacles gearing up to implement their respective projects, these occurrences forced organizations to build internal capacity and external support through enduring partnerships. Because the period of the grant (approximately 18 months) was brief given how long it typically takes to design and launch a new endeavor, grantees were successful. Overall, they made progress towards the benchmarks identified in their grant agreements and were able to do so by adopting many of the strategies and recommendations that surfaced through the research and convenings.

### Highlights

- *Nonprofits experienced staff capacity issues while gearing up to implement grant-funded efforts.* Grantees reported executive leadership transitions, staff capacity limitations, and difficulty recruiting culturally competent staff with the resources allotted.
- *In order to better leverage resources, nonprofits utilized donated services to enhance the deliverables produced by their funded programs.* Community allies provided in-kind services such as research, staff training, building space, video editing, script writing, and acting.
- *There were various degrees of organizational capacity across organizations and projects.* Some projects involved in this pilot program were secondary projects within larger organizations whereas other projects served as a stand-alones. The extent to which grantees were able to access resources and support throughout the term of the grant, affected their success.
- *Strategic partnerships were an integral part of the success of individual organizations.* Pre-arranged partnerships established between grantee partners included expertise from academic researchers, media arts consultants, and training and development advisors. Informal partners offered access to meeting space, marketing resources to extend project communications, and additional staff capacity to help manage the completion of the project.
- *POCCE grantees organizations with pre-established relationships were most successful at building bridges in the community when there was primary leadership and clarity around anticipated outcomes.* *Community members were most receptive to advocacy efforts with an educational approach in comparison to messaging with biased persuasive intentions.*
- *Participants regularly discussed with whom conversations and engagement in efforts would influence them on an individual, family, and community-wide basis.* *Messengers, who were familiar, had positive standing in the community and able to facilitate respectfully these discussions were more likely to gather honest sentiments through dialogue.*
- *The notion of sexual orientation had varying resonance with communities.* Effective messengers should explore level of knowledge and comfort with this concept and be aware that factors that influence the understanding of this concept include citizenship, age, and acculturation to American culture.

- *The extent to which community members of color were open to the idea of marriage equality and LGBT rights was influenced by the perceived origin of such advocacy efforts as well as the group benefit of its successes. For example, African-American members expressed hesitation in supporting efforts that stood to benefit Caucasian communities and believed participation in such efforts could lead to additional tensions in their communities. While Chinese-American families placed high importance on familial duty in relation to individual rights and privileges.*

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the program served as a transformative experience for program staff and participants. Program staff reported that this project was the first funded opportunity to engage in an organized effort to gather information intended to develop effective strategies to understand and engage communities of color about LGBT rights and marriage equality.

The sequential grant-making strategy outlined by Horizon staff enhanced the success of the pilot program. The interview report informed both the convening and re-granting efforts strategies. The Foundation-hosted conference brought together a network of nonprofit leaders to explore the application of such strategies in communities of color. It was also an opportunity for LGBT leaders to learn about current regional and national programs.

On the local level, both staff and community members found value in the opportunity to discuss the LGBT advocacy efforts in safe settings. Field-wide, the information garnered from this evaluation serves to inform the interests of potential funders and partners, to extend resources for organizational capacity building, promote common pathways that lead to bridge building; and lastly, to add to the collective knowledge base of the nuances involved in communicating with multicultural community members. Even with the success of the pilot program, there are areas that warrant further exploration of target populations to confirm the lessons learned.

### **Recommendations**

The following are a combination of lessons learned from the research, convening, and re-granting strategies:

1. Develop recruitment strategies that engage heterosexual men.
2. Identify ways to share the lessons of an individual grant project.
3. Allocate funds for professional development.
4. Identify opportunities to align with similar social justice efforts.
5. Synthesize, integrate and disseminate findings from research and convening strategies
6. Convene dialogue(s) on findings and implications

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## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

### Project Overview

The Horizons Foundation (Horizons) is a community foundation located in San Francisco, CA *rooted in and dedicated to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Horizons Foundation exists to mobilize and increase resources for the LGBT movement and organizations that secure the rights, meets the needs, and celebrate the lives of LGBT people; empower individual donors and promote giving as an integral part of a healthy, compassionate community; and steward a permanently endowed fund through which donors can make legacy gifts to ensure the LGBT community's capacity to meet the future needs of LGBT people.*

POCCE intended to build capacity within LGBT organizations for individuals of color through the following objectives:

- Increase understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for raising support for same-sex marriage among people of color.
- Encourage and support communities of color in defining the strategies most likely to be effective in their respective communities.
- Support the implementation of these strategies through re-granting to nonprofits best situated to carry them out and realize results that will inform future efforts to increase acceptance of same-sex marriage in communities of color.

To accomplish these objectives, three strategies were adopted: 1) convening, 2) research and 3) re-granting.

### Research

The Horizons Foundation commissioned an environmental scan and summary report of the current strategies and opportunities for increasing support for marriage equality in communities of color. Horizons consultant, Belma Gonzales of B Coaching and Consulting conducted phone interviews with leaders and activists from LGBT communities of color as well as key non-LGBT allies. The distillation of their key reflections included ideas, challenges, lessons, allies, and the status of messaging in communities of color. Information compiled from the environmental scan informed planning efforts for the 2010 conference convening.

### Convening

In March 2010 in San Francisco, Horizons convened more than forty participants from around the state to share their insight and observations on variety of issues related to marriage equality and communities of color. Perry Chan, Director of the POCCE conference, helped facilitate brainstorming sessions to document ideas related to current/future LGBT advocacy efforts and marriage equality messaging strategies. Conference proceedings compiled by Mr. Chen were used, in the evaluation of re-granting efforts to provide a contextual understanding of the experiences that influenced the work of grantees.

### Regranting

Horizons staff, with input from a group of advisory board members, allocated \$350,000 to nine nonprofit organizations to develop, test, and educate communities of color (African-American, Spanish-speaking Latino, and Asian/Asian Pacific Islanders) through message testing focused on LGBT rights and marriage equality. Grantees were positioned in predominantly urban communities across the State of California. Figure 3 presents grantees, grant amounts, target communities, and projects.

Figure 3. POCCE GRANTEE PROJECTS OVERVIEW

	PROPOSALS	GRANT AMOUNT	AREA	ETHNICITY	CONSTITUENTS	PROJECT
1	API Equality/APALC	\$40,000	Los Angeles	Asian/Pacific Islander	Chinese-American	Message testing w/ APALC in Chinese community
2	Barbara Jordan/Bayard Rustin Coalition/ECQAI/SCLC/Analyst & Women's Institutes	\$40,000	Los Angeles	African-American	African-American	Identify messages to move Black voters
3	California Rural Legal Assistance	\$50,000	Rural/Central valley	Latino/a	Rural/Immigrant/Spanish-speaking	Develop series of radio <i>novelas</i> in Spanish for rural audiences
4	Center for Lesbian/Gay Studies in Religion & Ministry	\$25,000	East Bay	African-American	Black faith/clergy	Develop & test curricula on marriage equality with Black pastors, congregations
5	Chinese for Affirmative Action/API Equality	\$40,000	San Francisco	Asian/Pacific Islander	Filipino	Ethnographic research w/Filipino-American voters to develop messaging
6	Equality California Institute/HONOR Fund/JRC	\$60,000	Los Angeles	LGBT	Latino/a	Door to door canvass in Latino/a community
7	Honor Fund/EQCAI/GLAAD	\$40,000	Los Angeles	Latino/a	Latino/a	Develop & test <i>promotoras</i> strategy, to do education & outreach
8	Somos Familia	\$25,000	East Bay	Latino/a	Latino/a families, students, teachers	Test video storytelling w/youth and families to build acceptance
9	Zuna Institute/Nia Collective	\$30,000	Sacramento	African-American	African American women	Develop messaging and promotional video; facilitate dialogues with Black heterosexual women and their orgs
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>				

## Evaluation Overview

Horizons engaged jdcPartnerships to design and conduct an evaluation of the POCCE pilot program with a major focus given to the lessons learned within and across funded nonprofits. Horizons Foundation and jdcPartnerships collaboratively established three evaluation goals:

- Goal 1: Document lessons learned during the implementation of the POCCE pilot program
- Goal 2: Explore ways in which communities are building bridges within and across communities
- Goal 3: Determine best practices around message and messengers when developing communication strategies within communities of color.

This report speaks to three strategies that comprise the POCCE program: research, convening and re-granting and their contribution to the three goals. While, the report focuses on the impact of re-granting efforts, it incorporates developmental lessons gleaned through a review of materials/deliverables produced in preparation for the pilot program, research and convening.

## Methodology

jdcPartnerships applied a mixed method evaluation approach to examine the re-granting efforts of the POCCE pilot program. Horizons provided background information such as grant budgets, grantee proposals, final reports, conference proceedings, and other program development documents. These materials informed the development of an inquiry matrix, which outlined a set of key questions explored within each goal area (See Appendix). This cross reference made clear the need for additional information. Supplemental data collection included interviews of all grantee recipients and a select group of advisory committee members. Additionally, jdcPartnerships modified the final report template to align more closely with areas of inquiry included in the inquiry matrix.

Twelve interviews were conducted in English by phone and taped with interviewee consent. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a coding schema framed by the inquiry matrix. The grantee interview protocol (Appendix A) sought to uncover information not captured in existing documentation. Findings from grantee interviews shaped the advisory board committee members interview protocol (Appendix B). Advisory board members were selected and invited to participate based on experiences as a funder, policy advocate, or LGBT nonprofit leader.

*Figure 4. POCCE Interviewees*

<b>GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS</b>	
1	API Equality - Jonipher Kwong
2	Barbara Jordan/Banyard Rustin Coalition- Milton Davis
3	California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) - Dan Torres
4	Center for Lesbian/Gay Studies in Religion & Ministry (CLGSRM) - Roland Stringfellow
5	Chinese for Affirmative Action - Tawal Panyacosit
6	Equality California Institute (EQI) - Andrea Shorter and Joseph Arroyo
7	Honor Fund - Luis Lopez
8	Somos Familia - Laurin Mayeno and Janette Alvarez
9	Zuna Institute / Nia Collective - Francine Ramsey and Stephanie Daniels
<b>ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS</b>	
10	Ada Chan - City of Oakland, Office of Rebecca Kaplan
11	Doreena Wong - National Health Law Program, LA
12	Vincent Jones - Liberty Hill Foundation

## Report Structure

This report presents evaluation consultant analysis and reflections on the research and convening strategies and summarizes the experiences of POCCE grantees during the implementation phase of the POCCE program. It is in six sections reflecting the three core strategies with a focus on re-granting and includes Conclusion and Recommendations.

## RESEARCH– CONSULTANT REFLECTIONS

The POCCE Interview Report produced by Belma González B Coaching and Consulting is a summary of ideas and opinions generated during interviews with leaders and activists of color on increasing the support of marriage equality in communities of color. The more than 30 page document presents themes organized by the ten questions which framed the interviews and includes anecdotes in the interviewees own words.

Qualitative data is always compelling and engaging particularly on a topic such as marriage equality as it engages the mind and the spirit on so many levels. However, it is the synthesis of strategies summarized and prioritized by frequency of comment by interviewers, which seems to yield the greatest promise for what next in the pursuit of marriage equality. Following are the strategies identified in priority order:

1. Collaborate with people of color and/or social justice organizations and groups. Frame marriage equality as part of a broader social justice agenda.
2. Work with progressive religious leaders and reach out to religious institutions.
3. Utilize a variety of messages to reach the diversity of people of color who may, with education, be open to supporting marriage equality.
4. Build genuine relationships and trust with community residents.
5. Support the leadership development of LGBT people of color and young people of color, including young LGBT people of color.
6. Share the diversity of our community through the diversity of our stories.
7. Create support systems and strategies for more LGBT people of color to come out – not just in San Francisco or Los Angeles but also throughout the state.
8. Utilize allies as spokespeople
9. Utilize the marriage equality issue as an educational opportunity.
10. Actively frame ideas and values supporting marriage equality and other issues of importance to the LGBT community.

The full report provides additional detail on each of these strategies including identification of particular partners, allies and models to explore to move the work forward. The Afterword written by the Horizons Director of Grants and Community Initiatives presents a higher-level summary of key themes from the interviews, which also bear mention and further exploration and attention. Because it is brief yet comprehensive, the majority of it is included below.

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## High-Level Themes<sup>1</sup>

### Family

Interviewees frequently referred to the importance of family relationships in people of color communities. The documented history of undermining family relationships – both deliberate and ‘incidental’ – is long and insidious, from forbidding slaves to marry to allowing only lone Chinese men to immigrate as railroad laborers, to current immigration policies which separate and disperse the families of undocumented workers who have been long-time residents of the U.S. The result for communities of color has been a significantly complex relationship of the individual to the family of origin, which might be viewed as a ‘life raft’ in the sea of oppression. This emotional link interacts with political reality in ways that are quite different from that of others in the LGBT political arena.

However, there is also a different weight to the idea of family (and fear of losing it) in the LGBT community that can be mined, articulated and bridged. The basic concept of family may vary but it has universal significance that can become a unify message rather than divisive one e as it has been shaped by conservative activists.

### Bridging

Another recurring thread in the interviews was the importance of linking marriage equality with people of color issues rather than simply setting out with the idea and hoping to ‘convert’ people of color communities to supporters. In the 1970s, this bridging of issues proved to be vital to the anti-war movement in the African American community during the Viet Nam war era. That community had struggled to be accepted as equals in the military and so rarely questioned U.S. military involvements. However, revelations about the disproportionate numbers of African American soldiers dying in Viet Nam created a new perspective that helped shift the sentiments in African American communities and with African American students on college campuses.

### Sex

The significance of faith in people of color communities has often been discussed and will probably not be undervalued ever again. However, a somewhat related issue which is just as deeply seated is the complex relationship those communities have with sexuality – a topic which was rarely raised. When the role of sex was mentioned in the interviews the weight of it was too obvious to be overlooked. Two comments that stand out are:

*“Sexuality – being sexual – in our society is taboo. Discussing our sexuality, feeling good about being sexual beings – all that – is very shame-based.”*

And *“LGBT folks become the symbol of our sexual shame – and dehumanized, over-sexualized, etc.”*

These responses grow out of the country’s Puritan roots and were highly evident in this country’s response to the advent of HIV/AIDS. The sentiment continues to dominate many communities of color for additional reasons. Much as the dominant culture disrupted family ties to undermine people of color communities, sexuality – especially sexual stereotyping – was also used against oppressed minorities of all kinds. Sexual stereotyping of women in U.S. culture creates a conflicted relationship for women and their sexuality. Similarly, it creates an unspoken challenge for people of color communities in their relationships to LGBT people – who are identified primarily by sexual practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from Horizons Foundation People of Color (POCCE) Interviews Report, May 2010

In communities (especially middle class segments) that remain silent on sexuality of any kind creating a place for the ‘out loud’ support of homosexuality will be a long-term project.

### **Reframing**

Finally, just as the LGBT community has developed our own cultural reference points – from ‘two snaps up’ to Sylvester to flannel shirts – the community will need to re-frame the ideas, references and metaphors, which drive the movement. We do draw from earlier social change movements; however, the LGBT movement is unique with unique challenges.

For example: we do not come from a common root but are a weave of all strands of U.S. culture; but the temptation to downplay differences in the general culture is strong. The previously cited challenge of the taboo of sex is another element currently more often explored in cultural presentations rather than political discussion. The difference between use of the terms ‘civil rights’ and ‘human rights’ presents another important area of reframing that remains unexplored on a leadership level.

From these and other cultural identifiers we might divine and design strategies for social change that reflect not simply what we want – marriage or military service or jobs – but who we are – an unusually constituted cross section of all cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and classes that really isn’t just like everybody else.

The importance of redefining families, bridging issues between communities, developing our own analysis of sexuality and sexual identities and reframing our movement’s historic and contemporary culture indicates a deeper need for the LGBT movement to examine the idea of not just a gay rights agenda but also a progressive agenda, which recognizes the interrelationship of oppressions. In our differences, we could find the strength of our movement.

### **CONVENING– CONSULTANT REFLECTIONS**

In late March 2010, Horizons Foundation with the assistance of consultant Perry Chen, designed and facilitated a convening in San Francisco attended by more than forty participants from across the state. The purpose of the gathering was to share insights and observations on a range of issues related to marriage equality and communities of color which would then be used (and were used) to shape the POCCE re-granting strategy. Participants were organized in to identity sub groups and charged with discussing the same set of topics.

*Figure 5. Convening Organizational Elements*

<b>IDENTITY GROUPS</b>	<b>DISCUSSION TOPICS</b>
African American	Reflections and Lessons
Latino	Challenges and Opportunities
Asian and Pacific Islander	Mapping
Class and Geography Socio-economic & Demographics	Brainstorm Strategies
Faiths	Reaching Out Strategies
Age	Strategic Communication Strategies
	Infrastructure Strategies

It is these notes, which are the basis of the documentation from the gathering, which Mr. Chen produced and describes as “an informal package of materials which attempts to capture the critically important viewpoints, and brainstorms.” This package includes: 1) consolidated session notes organized by session (i.e., ethnicity,

age...etc) in an Adobe PDF and 2) a digest of mapping and brainstorming from the session organized in an Excel file.

From the review of the two documents, there was a mix of viewpoints and experiences on the full range of issues discussed. And yet there were re-occurring themes across identity groups that surfaced, a few of which are briefly described below and were really questions and challenges to move the work forward.

- *Family* – this concept remains core and complex for communities of color. The Marriage Equality (ME) movement needs to understand and embrace the varying types of families that exist and redefine the conversation.
- *Messengers* – The take-a-way is that they matter. The lack of representation of the many faces of families and LGBT individuals particularly those of color was a deficit in the Proposition 8 campaign. It was noted that it is not only cultural/ethnic diversity that needs tending but also the social and/or economic standing of the messenger should be considered. For instance, faith leaders are important in most all communities of color whereas heterosexual educated allies can also be powerful voices.
- *Messages*– What is the message that most resonates? For instance, some feminist, regardless of cultural identity, marriage may not be state to which they aspire. In other communities, there are more pressing, or seemingly, so, basic needs to be addressed. So, if and how does the ME issue fit?
- *Leadership Representation* - Latinos are the largest percentage of the state population so statistically that suggests it would be mirrored in the LGBT community. Yet, leadership does not reflect that reality. How and in what ways can this be changed?
- *Cross-issue Allies* – Communities of color are impacted by a variety of issues many of which can be described as social justice or social equity issues. In what ways are proponents of ME working with and for other causes, movements, building partnerships, and coalitions?

These themes, and others which can be gleaned from the report, are similar to ones that surfaced in the interviews as well as those that emerged from interviews with those funded through the re-granting strategy discussed later in the report. There is more information to be mined from these notes.

## RE-GRANTING-SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

### Goal 1: Document Piloting Project

#### Overview

This initiative provided \$350,000 to nine nonprofit organizations located across California. Funded projects were broad in regional scope yet held targeted parameters to help guide the exploration of relevant research, outreach, and communication strategies for communities of color (African-American, Asian/Asian Pacific Islander, and Latino). Figure 5 summarizes communication strategies by target communities.

Figure 6. Community Messaging Strategies

ETHNIC GROUP	MESSAGING STRATEGIES BY ETHNIC GROUP
African-American	Identifying messages to move Black voters Develop and test curricula on marriage equality with Black pastors, congregations (and for Black Pride events) Develop messaging and promotional video to convene and aid dialogues with Black heterosexual women and their organizations
Asian / API	Message testing in Chinese community Ethnographic research w/Filipino-American voters to develop messaging
Latino	Develop series of radio <i>novelas</i> in Spanish for rural audiences Door to door canvassing in Latino/a community and Asian Americans in Los Angeles Develop and test <i>promotoras</i> strategy, develop training to provide one on one education and outreach Test video storytelling with youth and families to build acceptance

Organizations received funds in the winter of 2009, during a time of internal transitions and as the holiday season approached. During the term of the initiative, many organizations experienced unexpected challenges with other institutions that led to grant modifications and extensions. Most reports identified staff capacity issues (i.e. understaffed, key staff transitions, or ill-equipped employee prospects) enhanced by the economic climate. Despite various obstacles, more than eighty percent of the grantees reported meeting the goals of their projects.<sup>2</sup>

### Common Challenges

In addition to those noted above, two additional challenges experienced by grantees while gearing up to do the work are worth noting: staffing and organizational restructuring.

### STAFFING

Organizations working on outreach-oriented projects experienced trouble staffing their projects. For instance, staff at the Jordan Rustin Institute experienced difficulty finding a consultant to run a canvassing campaign. An employee states:

*"It is very difficult to find someone you can outsource to that you can trust to do the work in a way that is careful, considerate, and thoughtful; and actually achieves your goal. After about two rounds of near hires, and one who was actually a partial hire that we decided that we were not satisfied with the way they were delivering it, treating it more as a pure survey rather than as a persuasion, we decided that the best route to go was to run the canvassing campaign in-house. It's really hard to find a Canvass Director for LGBT issues and it's even harder to find a good crop of canvassers for LGBT issues. I had experience running canvassing campaigns as a volunteer so I decided to be Director."*

Another organization involved in similar efforts found that paid organizing positions attracted more diversity. The Equality California Institute (EQI) project procured paid staff to complete phone outreach to assess support for marriage equality. The organization found differences in the retention, diversity, and the motivations of volunteers who stayed with the organization. According to their experiences:

<sup>2</sup> Grantee progress retrieved from review of final reports and project benchmark data

*“Paying people to do this work facilitates the creation of a diverse team of people who care about LGBT issues but might never have volunteered for marriage equality. However, when paid, they show up and work hard. This includes parents of small children, people of color, working class people, and other marginalized populations. The stipend helped attract mothers, Spanish speakers, and others from the community in which they worked. ”*

EQI also offered leadership training to individuals who displayed initiative. These opportunities were mutually beneficial because they increased retention and served as a resume builder.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING**

Grantees experienced several challenges while collaborating with leading organizations. Several key collaborating organizations experienced staffing changes including an Executive Director shift and other organizations experienced financial cutbacks that affected staffing capacity. Fortunately, the Horizon Foundation maintained transparent communications with all nonprofit organizations. All grantees experiencing the adjustments found Horizons’ Program Officer to be exceptionally helpful with resources and flexible enough to allow adjustments.

### **Use of Additional Resources**

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL ALLIES**

All grantees reported using in-kind professional services to complete key tasks of their projects. Services included video editing, script/curriculum development, research, assessment tool development, and meeting space. The process of identifying professional services served as an opportunity for organizations to expand their networks and find supporters.

Following are a few examples:

- Equality California Institute used Rodrigo Lehtinen from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to train and coach staff. The Jordan/Rustin Coalition reached out to their counterparts, Vote for Equality and Basic Rights Oregon, to request their experiences with canvassing campaigns. These partnerships reflect instances where there may have been pre-established relationships. However, others experienced opportunities that led to new relationships with community members.
- The California Rural Legal Assistance Program recruited volunteers to play roles in the radio novelas. The staff found the experience to be mutually beneficial and cathartic for some people.

*“These experiences had a lot of meaning for our actors who were volunteers. A lot of them came to this space with the same questions expressed in our focus group, which led them to decide that they wanted to volunteer. Some of them actually told us that the process*

#### **POCCE GRANTEE PARTNERS & ALLIES**

Center for Latino Community Health  
Evaluation and Training from Cal State  
Long Beach

MALDEF- Fiscal Sponsor

Bill Richards Office, Advisor, Honor Fund

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against  
Defamation (GLAAD)

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of  
Los Angeles

Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Amy Simon, Partner, API Equality-NoCal

Creating Change Conference, Minneapolis

Planned Parenthood Los Angeles

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of  
Los Angeles

Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Radio Bilingüe – Bilingual Radio Station

Family Acceptance Project of San  
Francisco State University

California Ring Coalition

Queer Women of Color Film Festival

Basic Rights Oregon

Vote for Equality

Voter Access Network

Light Box Collaborative

Life Print Videos

Stuart Maddox-Filmmaker

Queer Women of Color, Media Arts Project

Bayview-Hunters Point Center for Arts and  
Technology

Head Start, Oakland

*was very cathartic for them because they hadn't really placed themselves in these situations, on this level. Some of the younger males playing the part of the boys reported that this program made them think about it more. One of the moms playing a character revealed that she was going through the process of coming to terms with a daughter who had recently come out. This was a healing process for her and was very powerful to experience it on screen. Going into this we did not know that in fact these volunteer actors were in different places and in a way turned out to be very representative of our community and their positions."*

- Another organization reportedly used donated office space from a local business owner. This inadvertent request exposed a community member to their efforts who happened to be a lesbian LGBT right advocate.

Grantees identified a host of external partners and supporters. Individuals provided monetary gifts, fiscal sponsorship, donated resources, knowledge, moral support, media connections, and information for conferences and film festivals. Grantees were also interested in obtaining information about the other organizations who expressed interests in learning about and promoting LGBT rights.

### **Lessons Learned**

The following section about capacity building summarizes the overarching lessons that emerged across POCCE grantees during the implementation phase.

#### **CAPACITY BUILDING**

Not surprisingly, there was varying capacity across organizations and projects. Some projects involved in this pilot program were secondary projects within larger organizations, such as the projects of the Equality California Institute and the Nia Collective program of the Zuna Institute. While others projects, like the Center for Lesbian/Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CFLGSM) program, served as a stand-alone project. Given the diversity among grantees, training and coaching needs differed.

Several organizations found it necessary to provide support to staff and volunteers. It is important that volunteers and staff are oriented to the values, expectations, and strategies of an organization involved in organizing. Organizations that introduced or re-educated individuals on new or pre-existing strategies to engage individuals led to better-equipped advocates. For example, Equality California Insitutie and the Center for Lesbian/Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry recognized a need for resources to build capacity within their organization; specifcially, professional development for staff and supporters of the project. For example, the Director at the Center for Lesbian/Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry decided to provide education to volunteers and community supporters when he observed apprehension related to a lack of knowelege about the use of canvassing in the African-American community. He shared:

*"What I found mostly is that a lot of local Black organizations thought that we were going to seem reckless if we went door-to-door. I think the idea of canvassing seemed somewhat ...for lack of a better term ... a white idea in the sense that they could not comprehend outreach that required us to go and knock on someone's door, have them answer it, and talk to us."*

The Director responded to reservations by first identifying instances in which these tactics were successful (Obama's campaign) and then showing videos from his experiences implementing similar efforts. His training increased reassurance that the strategy was safe and reasonable and lead to successful canvassing efforts that outreached to 25,000 homes.

Stress management was another area requiring more resources than initially anticipated. Project directors experienced excessive stress related to the nature of the job. Directors were responsible for trouble shooting,

providing support to staff members; and providing crisis management to participants. One staff member from Equality California Institute shared his experience:

*“Talking to voter after voter about why they oppose marriage for gay and lesbian couples can have a great emotional impact on employees. As one phone banker explained, ‘The worst part of working on this project was being hit with a level of verbal violence and hate speech that is rarely encountered in a door-to-door environment. People tend to be less sensitive over the phone.’”*

EQI was the only organization that reported on practices that addressed the emotional needs of their employees. Staff members had the opportunity to debrief after difficult phone conversations and at the end of the end of the day. The Manager shared:

*“We checked-in with phone bankers multiple times throughout every shift, asking how they were doing and if they needed help with anything. This practice led others to begin checking in with each other throughout each shift. We also had snacks available at every shift, facilitating fun food breaks, and had a team dinner after one of the final shifts.”*

## **Goal 2: Explore How Organizations Create Bridges in Communities**

In addition to the lessons learned while gearing up to do the work, themes emerged related to building bridges within and across communities. This section summarizes key themes, specifically taking care to highlight practices across communities, discussing considerations for building bridges within target communities (African-American, Asian/API, and Latino); and noting some of the barriers encountered during the development of strategies that lead to support for marriage equality.

### **Summary of Efforts and Best Practices**

Best practices are those themes that emerged and were reenforced by several organizations doing the work.

#### **PARTENSHIPS**

Traditionally the fight to obtain LGBT rights has been lead by predominantly white organizations. Over the last decade there has been an intentional efforts to understand and engage LGBT communities of color<sup>3</sup>. This need was further galvanized by the defeat experienced as a result of Proposition 8. The Horizons Foundation is recognized as a leader in its commitment to funding efforts related to LGBT people of color such as the POCCE pilot program. Despite their generous efforts, there continues to be a rising need for financial support for efforts to build capacity in LGBT communities of color, especially to fund efforts to test effective communication strategies for communities of color.

Limited financial supporters have forced nonprofits to find helpful partners within other organizations to meet the needs of their communities. Many individuals within these organizations have expertise around LGBT issues, communities of color, communication strategies, civil rights, and research related to these efforts. In 2010, the Horizon Foundation coordinated a conference that convened LGBT leaders, nonprofits, and supporters. This event provided information to inform subsequent grantmaking decisions but most importantly offered LGBT advocates an opportunity to exchange information with those involved in similar efforts. Grantees requested more opportunities to learn about the work of others in the field. In general, opportunities to explore formal and informal strategic collaborations are important in efforts to inform the field. Evidence of these efforts was apparent throughout the compilation of grantees. For instance, the academic/nonprofit partnerships involved in this project afforded access to research and expertise that helped organizations identify viable assessment measures. While nonprofit and religious institution collaborations

<sup>3</sup> Padilla, Y. (2004). *Gay and Lesbian Rights Organizing: Community-Based Strategies*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.

aligned to reduce dogmatic teachings and communications barriers in the community. In essence, organizations who established shared values and identified complimentary skills are most likely to engage in work that is impactful and responsive to the community.

For example, The California Rural Legal Assistance program partnered with the Family Acceptance Project to understand family dynamics.

*“The input from their research on the adverse outcomes of family rejection helped us think about those things and share that information when we are talking with the community after we presented the stories. It was very helpful to have framework-backed research in our conversations.”*

Through another partnership with Life Print Videos, The Center for Lesbian Gay Studies in Religion selected an editor who had cultural experiences that aligned with the work.

*“We interviewed several editors and selected an individual who was royally excited and eager about the project. Her viewpoint as a lesbian really encouraged her to give more of her heart and soul to the project. She is very pleased with the product to the point where she also submitted it to the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.”*

#### **CLEAR MESSENGING WITHIN AND ACROSS ORGANIZATIONS**

Clarity within and across organizations is key to building a consistent message. For instance, it is important to identify and articulate outcomes for individuals completing phone outreach. Persuasive frames are often less effective than conversations that lead to educational moments. According to the California Rural Legal Assistance program:

*“Rather than jumping right into the issue, we slowly engage folks around other areas such as gender and discrimination in particular. Then we can ask them to identify pre-existing relationships with LGBT family members to place people in that mind to think about that and then slowly bridge the connection to the idea of how they could support the relationships of their LGBT family members.”*

This point also extends to partnerships between organizations. Partnering organizations should discuss and agree upon a common set of values and goals when implementing work. Appropriately framed conversations are instrumental to decreasing conflicts that may arise when organizations have different intentions. An example of this type of partnership may happen between an organization focused on policy efforts and an organization that seeks to educate individuals on LGBT issues. Depending on the time of year, one organization may have a persuasive goal to move constituents toward voting action while the other organization’s goals and value are creating a safe space for dialogue. Contentions are sure to arise if outcomes are not clear and agreed upon. Strong and effective communication strategies can often be grouped in one of three categories which actually reflect a continuum: 1) education, 2) persuasion, and 3) action. Being clear about the primary goals of the campaign at the onset, particularly one in partnership, is critical to alignment and effective use of resources.

#### **RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNAL VALUES**

Community values was a highly prevalent theme that transcended all groups. Asian/API communities valued communal values over individual ideas and needs. All three target communities placed high value on the collective needs of their communities.

Religious teachings also heavily influenced African-American and Latino families. Latinos are influenced through a diverse set of denominations while African-Americans are traditionally influenced by Christian teachings.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, bridge building can help through partnerships with supportive religious institutions.<sup>5</sup>

### **Community Connections**

Communities of color are filled with individuals from diverse cultural experiences. Interviews with grantees reinforced this fact and showed that there were differences in beliefs toward marriage equality across gender, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, and place of birth.

### **SEXUAL IDENTITY: LGBT VS. NON-LGBT**

Most projects developed strategies to target heterosexual families and individuals. As a result, there are limited opportunities to explore differences in building bridges across individuals based on sexual orientation. However, there are a few illustrations from which to learn.

Initially, the Zuna Institute's Nia Collective program attempted to engage the leadership of heterosexual Black women's organizations and the women within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in a discussion about the perceptions and attitudes about same-sex marriage. Attempts to recruit members were less successful than expected. Reflectively, directors of the program recognized that they held limited connections to heterosexual women as they lived their lives as open lesbian women. During focus group discussions with predominantly lesbian/queer participants, the groups explored the root to such barriers between black lesbian and heterosexual women. Responses led them to conclude that participants felt an overwhelming desire to avoid homophobic experiences, which led them to limit associations to a small network of open LGBT individuals. Through her reflections, one participant concluded:

*"We kind of have our lives in a place where we feel safe and comfortable, so having a lot of heterosexual Black people in kind of our immediate circle we just don't have. We don't have friends and colleagues that are heterosexual in relationships or partnerships we're with, so in kind of looking back at this, and asking 'Well, why is this?', one of the things I've come up with myself is that it's a way of protecting myself and being in my little comfort zone; being comfortable with my life has excluded a whole other segment of the community. And that was one of the things that the project was supposed to sort of do – to bridge that gap, but not realizing that was just the way with me, that it was that way for almost everybody else."*

Outside of sexual orientation, female participants explored their commonalities as single parents. Surprisingly, several participants expressed no interest in the need to pursue formal marriage arrangements because they feared it might be an added burden if that arrangement ended.

*"We learned that many are not necessarily in support of marriage or they support marriage but they do not want to be married. Because of probably the same issues that heterosexual people go through when they have to get divorced. We had conversations at a retreat and many people talked about that they were married and then they were separating and all of the challenges around that, -- finances, the emotions, and things like that. Given this belief, many participants in the dialogue session did not vote for or against Prop 8. They mentioned it was irrelevant to them and therefore skipped it on*

<sup>4</sup>**A Religious Portrait of African-Americans (Jan 2009)** <http://pewforum.org/A-Religious-Portrait-of-African-Americans.aspx>

<sup>5</sup>**Religious Groups' Official Positions on Same-Sex Marriage (July 2010)** <http://pewforum.org/Gay-Marriage-and-Homosexuality/Religious-Groups-Official-Positions-on-Same-Sex-Marriage.aspx>

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*the ballot. We were also surprised to hear that many people in our community were not interested in marriage because of legal issues."*

Asian/API participants under 35 expressed similar perceptions of indifference toward marriage. If this evidence represents widespread community views, similar efforts should check assumptions related to the value of marriage. Reflections might lead to implications for future work.

### **ETHNIC CONNECTIONS**

Members of communities of color prioritize communalistic values. Therefore, all attempts to build bridges in the community should identify and communicate community benefits. There was an overwhelming sense of mistrust and apprehension toward following traditionally white standards. Individuals believed the marriage equality movement and efforts to establish LGBT rights were started, and thus most beneficial to, individual of Caucasian descent. Thus, individuals who attempt to expand the LGBT rights movement face instances where they have to prove their authenticity and make definitive forecasts that show communal benefit.

For example, canvassing was an idea traditionally recognized as a white method of outreach. Hesitancy from participants at the CLGSM led to education about the communication strategy but also uncovered unspoken anxiety toward using unfamiliar methods with Caucasian roots. One interviewee described mistrust in supporting traditionally Caucasian civil rights efforts because of her belief that the community may bear a heavier burden and have a higher risk for community disruption.

*"It is my belief that after they have raised all of this havoc with the Black communities and the Black churches, we are just going to be left to heal our wounds and build our relationships with no resources to do it with. All of the tension we are experiencing was not created by us. The white marriage equality movement created all of this drama between the Black church, the Black community, and the gay community. I just feel as though now we are left with trying to clean up this mess without these resources."*

Latino and Asian communities also expressed hesitation as to how these efforts aligned with the larger need to fight for immigrant rights. Both groups thought that it was important to explain how marriage equality related to higher community concerns of higher importance. Primarily, families were concerned with the relationship between marriage equality and those experiencing discrimination and fighting for immigrant rights.

Another issue of importance that surfaced within the Asian/API communities was the notion of family duty and honor, which surpassed individual ideas and needs. During community discussions, it was uncovered that criticism steamed from messaging that highlighted individual rights rather than what was best for the community and family. API organizations responded to this feedback by asking focus group participants to think analytically about how bullying and discrimination in general affected families and the community. These organizations garnered more empathic responses. This method of communication and bridge building also reflects their preference over polite subtle messaging rather than direct patronizing images. Another issue that was uncovered during discussions within Asian communities was the influence of gender roles. Specifically, organizations found that the notion of effeminate males was most shameful in Chinese families. Further research to determine if these beliefs represent a stigma that exists throughout the Diaspora of Asian/API descendants would be helpful.

## COMMUNITY BRIDGES

In the quest to uncover the nuances to building bridges across communities of color, it is important to recognize the successes and barriers.

### *Successful Bridging*

POCCE programs that held screenings to test audio/visual images and offered facilitated discussions were able to produce images that led participants to critically examine and educate each other. Discussions reaffirmed the absence and need for such community discussions. Furthermore, these discussions served as an opportunity for LGBT organizers to assess the level of education needed across ethnic groups. For instance, homophobia is a recognized barrier to establishing connections in the African-American communities.<sup>6</sup> Thus, members of this community are more likely to be comfortable discussing barriers to marriage equality and are able to identify opponents based on their personal experiences. In contrast, API-LA found that members of the Asian community were at different developmental stages of acceptance.<sup>7</sup> Particularly, foreign-born individuals of Asian descent were less likely to recognize homosexuality in their communities and thus were unable to relate to the priorities placed on obtaining marriage equality. During API's focus groups, one 37-year-old female participant reacted to the "Deported" message by questioning whether there was an actual sexual relationship between the lesbian partners, responding, "Is there really sexual love?" Another 52-year-old female Mandarin-speaker said the descriptions reminded her of two very good female friends who live together: "They are like sisters... and I know they are Christians but many people misunderstood them." They have lived together for a very long time... they go in and out together." The participants' disbelief suggests that discussions about marriage equality should consider the developmental level of acceptance toward the concept of same-sex orientation.

Lastly, asking participants to identify their experiences with LGBT individuals served as an appropriate primer for discussions. Additionally, framing discussions in the spirit of education, rather than persuasions successfully helped others think analytically about the impact of unequal laws and discrimination and lead to broader support for civil rights and then marriage equality. Asking participants to empathize with others increased their desire to be involved with the work on building support networks. Many individuals left discussions vowing to help spread the message to others.

### *Barriers to Building Community Bridges*

For some communities of color, religious institutions are a major barrier to opening the minds and hearts of individuals who may be supporters of LGBT rights and marriage equality. For instance, Christian teachings heavily influence African-Americans. These beliefs correlate to higher incidences of homophobia and marginalization in black communities. More recently, the notion of religion has become polarizing for individuals who are LGBT or have LGBT family members. When CGLSRM began building bridges with the leaders of faith-based institutions, they found that different biblical interpretations lead to strong areas of contention in discussion. Religious tenets were also highly influential within Latino and Asian communities. However, there was some variability in denominations such as Catholicism, Buddhism, and Fundamentalism.<sup>8</sup> Efforts to build bridges with faith-based institutions and highly religious people is an important area to explore as one promotes marriage equality in communities of color

<sup>6</sup> *Preventing HIV among Latino and African American Gay and Bisexual Men in a Context of HIV-Related Stigma, Discrimination, and Homophobia: Perspectives of Providers*, Brooks et al *AIDS Patient Care STDS*. 2005 November; 19(11): 737-744.

<sup>7</sup> *At The Intersection: Race, Sexuality and Gender*, Human Right Campaign Foundation 2009  
<http://www.freedomtomarry.org/resources/entry/at-the-intersection-race-sexuality-and-gender>

<sup>8</sup> *Religious Groups' Official Positions on Same-Sex Marriage (July 2010)* <http://pewforum.org/Gay-Marriage-and-Homosexuality/Religious-Groups-Official-Positions-on-Same-Sex-Marriage.aspx>

Finally, another area on which to build is the inclusion of males and fathers in this work. Across, the board, there was limited male representation. Future projects should develop outreach strategies and further explore appropriate messaging for males across each ethnic group.

### **Political Context and Media Coverage**

#### **CALIFORNIA MARRIAGE PROTECTION ACT (PROPOSITION 8)**

The political climate at state and national levels served as a catalyst for many grassroots organizations to engage people of color about marriage equality and LGBT rights. Several grantees believed local and national legislation served as a primer for the preceding conversations facilitated by their organizations.

One of the most noted local legal cases was the California Marriage Protection Act also known as, "Proposition 8 or Same Sex Marriage Ban." This California initiative proposed a ban on same sex marriage stating, "*Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.*"<sup>9</sup> In 2008, the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of maintaining the traditional definition of marriage (between man and woman) despite civil right advocates' argument that this was unconstitutional.

This legislation affected individuals, families, and organizations. Equality California Institute, a leading policy advocate for LGBT Rights, experienced great backlash after the "No on Prop 8" campaign failed. One interviewee described it as a tailspin, stating:

*"EQI is a legislative organization, that's what it does best. However, I think the venture into the leaderships position on the No on 8 campaigns brought it to a different place, especially with the loss on Prop 8. Part of the blame was laid at the feet of Equality California."*

Backlash also extended to organizations that collaborated with LGBT supporters in the fight for general Civil Rights. According to the accounts shared by one member of the Advisory committee:

*"After the Prop 8 defeat, one of our supporters, the African American Civil Rights group (NAACP) took a really hard hit in their college membership base. Families did not encourage their kids to become members anymore."*

As a whole, Marriage Equality advocates and LGBT rights organizations witnessed funding cuts, instances of community blaming, and conflict across collaborating organizations. One panelist of the public forum, "I Do. Who Can't?"<sup>10</sup> hosted by the Commonwealth Club of California, described a very hostile environment:

*"Marriage equality supporters, LGBT individuals, and their families also experienced increased incidents of hate crimes and discrimination leading up to and after the vote."*

#### **DONT ASK DONT TELL**

As the climate settled in California, the fight for LGBT civil rights expanded to a national stage. In 2010, President Barack Obama began focusing on a 2008 campaign promise to repeal the Don't Ask Don't Tell Uniform Code of Military Justice. This policy "prohibits United States military personnel from discriminating against or harassing closeted homosexual or bisexual service members or applicants, while barring openly gay,

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved May 21, 2011 from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California\\_Proposition\\_8\\_\(2008\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Proposition_8_(2008))

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved May 24, 2011 from: <http://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/2011-05-09/i-do-who-cant-silicon-valley-leaders-speak-about-gay-marriage>

lesbian, or bisexual persons from military service.”<sup>11,12</sup> The arguments for this policy received national media coverage leading up to the House and Senate on December 15, 2010. Grantees believed that the coverage induced polar reactions in the community. One grantee reported that media attention:

*“Brings the issues into the foreground so that they are more in the forefront of people’s consciousness than they would have been otherwise. However, the opponents created a climate of fear and hatred with their messages. This was apparent during our conversations with families.”*

Media coverage from both high-profile legislative battles increased attention toward LGBT rights and marriage equality. California advocates experienced enhanced political unrest as California state and mid-term national elections occurred throughout 2010. During these experiences, organizers have continued to gain supporters in California and hope to broaden support nationally. As organizers gear up for the 2012 campaign season, they will have to face different regional and cultural dynamics. Overall, the POCCE program has shown grantees how to counter the negative media campaigns, identify areas of misinformation, and engage individuals in conversations that inform, educate, and persuade potential supporters.

### **Goal 3: Identify Effective Messengers and Messages for Communities of Color**

As organizations begin to build effective messaging strategy for communities of color, it is imperative that there is awareness that cultural diversity effects the individual and collective perceptions of a community. POCCE grantees were charged with the task of reaching into three target communities of color (African-American, Asian/ API, and Latino). Within these communities, perspectives on marriage equality were influenced by ethnic background, citizenship, age, gender, and sexual orientation. This section describes some of the lessons learned that help identify appropriate communication strategies that increase support for marriage equality.

#### **Messengers and Messengers**

##### **AFRICAN-AMERICAN**

It is widely acknowledged that the historical and current sexual exploitation of people of color by the dominant culture created and perpetuates sensitivity to sexual practices and orientation among several of the communities in which the grantees worked. Given the tensions around same sex orientation experienced by some members of the African-American community, POCCE grantees working in these communities took the opportunity to engage black constituents in three ways:

1. The NIA Collective within the Zuna Institute explored marriage equality through facilitated conversations between heterosexual females and black Lesbian/Queer women.
2. The Jordan/Rustin collaboration targeted families through a door-to-door canvassing campaign created to increase education and persuasion around marriage equality.
3. The Center for Lesbian/Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry engaged individuals in religious institutions and LGBT people with a curriculum focused on the theological and social reasons for supporting marriage equality in African-American communities.

The most provocative discussion across all three projects centered on the intersection between religion and homosexuality. One out of three projects focused on engaging individuals within religious institutions but all of the organizations reported that:

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved May 24, 2011 from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don't\\_ask,\\_don't\\_tell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don't_ask,_don't_tell)

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved May 24, 2011 from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/dont-ask-dont-tell-timeline/>

*“Religion was the single largest barrier to making Black voters more supportive of marriage equality.”*

Another grantee reflected on her experiences:

*“A lot of Black people grew up in the church, and they have their own issues around being gay because of the Bible.”*

The Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies in Ministry and Religion concluded after building messages for leaders within religious institutions that:

*“There is also a lot of fear and trepidation on the part of clergy. We think it’s something that people dance around -- this topic -- because for some people this topic is taboo.”*

Successfully framed messages helped participants identify personal relationships with LGBT people. Framing conversations in this way served as a springboard to conversations that led people to illuminate myths and contradictory messages of certain religious teachings:

*“What is really helpful is asking them about any gay people they may know whether it’s friends or family.”*

This type of framing also led to discussions that uncovered confusion about key terms such as: the difference between *“marriage equality, domestic partnership, and civil unions.”*

Overall, people responded to messages that encouraged them to reflect on personal relationships. People were most receptive to messages that helped people view individuals with same-sex orientation as *“authentic and living with integrity.”* The extent to which organizations framed discussions as a mutual dialogue and included scenarios or images to respond to, was impactful in African-American communities.

### **ASIAN/ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDERS**

Organizations working within the Asian/API community uncovered multiple considerations through the research gathered during outreach efforts in their communities. LGBT issues are an emerging topic in Asian communities and homosexuality and marriage equality was an arcane idea for some people involved in outreach efforts. Accordingly, movement toward acceptance for LGBT rights is in its neophyte stages. The research completed by POCCE grantees successfully uncovered several cultural considerations to incorporate as organizations work to increase support for marriage equality and LGBT rights. POCCE grantees engaged Asian/API communities in two ways:

1. API Equality – Los Angeles completed qualitative message testing in Chinese communities.
2. API Equality – San Francisco completed ethnographic research in the Filipino–American communities.

Research showed that the messages and messengers working within Asian communities should pay special attention to cultural traditions. For instance, respect is an important principle within Asian culture manifesting in the communication with another individual. According to API- LA:

*“The LGBT community is often seen as petulant or loud and obnoxious and really trying to kind of angrily claim rights. And that approach is really problematic with API [Asian Pacific Islander] families and communities because it’s very counter-cultural in terms of the communication. The communication tactic is a little harsh; it’s a little too direct. We don’t just march up to someone and say we want to have marriage equality rights but rather we use subtler messages.”*

One staff from the Equality California Institute offered an analogy of an individual expressing hunger:

*"If you're hungry, it's rude to ask for food. You might say something instead of saying 'I'm hungry', you might be like, 'I haven't had a chance to eat, but it's okay. Don't worry about it.' and they will be like 'Oh, let me get you something,' and you say, 'Oh no, no, please. I don't want to impose,' and they'll be like 'Oh, please let me.'"*

Lessons about subtlety should also be incorporated in the development of community messaging and images.

#### *Family Duty*

Another consideration when building messages included the value placed on family respect. API research showed that, the *"extent to which a child is perceived as filial might be an important determinant of whether that child is considered a good child as his or her sexual orientation"*. Fulfilling gender roles is one example of how one would display family respect. For example, *"Chinese American parents want to ensure that there's a clear distinction between what men are supposed to look, act, and feel like in society and to a lesser extent, female roles."* Consequently, images of effeminate males tend to be viewed disgracefully amongst community. In opposition, EQI also found that despite community perceptions, when it came to support, individual family relationships took precedence over communal beliefs for Chinese-Americans. Chinese parents presented with stories of children who experience discrimination and ostracism because of their sexual orientation tended to reprioritize the importance of communal values. Loyalty and concern for well-being led to acceptance of their children for the sake of family unity.

#### *Non-Native vs. Native-Born*

Different beliefs about homosexuality and acceptance between native-born Asians and immigrants have implications for community messaging strategies.

According to feedback from API Equality – Los Angeles' focus groups, *"foreign-born participants viewed heterosexuality as in accordance with nature, and same-sex sexual orientation as something that contradicts nature."* On the contrary, results showed, *"native-born participants are much more receptive to legalized same-sex marriage, corresponding to a more accepting attitude towards LGBT people in general. Additionally, "native-born Chinese-Americans viewed marriage as a personal decision, not as something that is done to meet societal or familial obligations."* Additional feedback uncovered contention between immigrants with limited English proficiency. Research found that immigrants who were less acculturated *"were more susceptible to misconceptions carried with them from their countries of origin. Non-natives were also less likely to identify personal experiences in which they were exposed to LGBT people."*

Based on API Equality – LA conclusions, it was important that the messages add considerations for acculturation and language proficiency. Additionally, the existence of varied perspectives across the API community should influence messengers to broach communication efforts in a subtle educative manner. On the contrary, acculturated US-born people may be supportive and yet open to extending general civil liberties to individuals with opposing sexual orientation. Their messaging should focus on encouraging political action.

#### *Gender and Age*

Recruitment efforts geared toward African-American and Latino men fell short when compared to their Asian male counterparts. API Equality -LA recruited Chinese-Americans and then divided participants based on gender and age (35 and above vs. 35 and under). Culturally competent staff found that women were *"not as candid and frank about sensitive issues in groups like sexuality"*. Through their discussions, more support was elicited when women were confronted with messaging that framed support of equal marriage as an extension of family acceptance of individuals. They found that maternal instincts lead to a belief that individuals, particularly children, should be protected against discriminatory practices.

When divided by gender, *“Women were more receptive to pro-same-sex marriage arguments than men.”* Evidence showed that, *“The English-speaking groups expressed greater support for same-sex marriage than men in the same age and language categories. Furthermore, females were much more likely to change their minds in favor of supporting same-sex marriage while males moved towards increased opposition towards same-sex marriage.”*

### LATINO

Cultural diversity is also a major influence within Latino communities. POCCE grantees working in these communities took the opportunity to target outreach efforts toward Spanish-speaking communities and engage constituents in three ways:

1. The California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) program developed a set of radio novelas to engage rural communities in the Central Valley.
2. The Honor Fund developed and tested promotoras to facilitate one-on-one discussion in the community.
3. The Equality California Institute engaged Spanish speakers through a telephone campaign.

Preliminary information collected through the programs suggests that values toward family acceptance, interests in immigration rights, religious influences, and linguistic translations influence the support for LGBT rights and marriage equality.

### Language

Many Latino community members are multilingual, thus messaging should consider the language translation errors during the development of communication materials. The California Rural Legal Assistance program encountered difficulty translating the concept of same-sex marriage for Spanish speakers. For example, during the development phase of their radio novelas, staff was particularly interested in using appropriate non-offensive language. One staff shares:

*“I personally pushed the questions of, ‘Can we use the language of “esposo<sup>13</sup>”?’ to refer to a gay male couple whose relationship was married? I wanted to test it out. We did with a focus group and they reacted adversely to this, saying it made them close their ears. They are not ready to hear that term.”*

### Immigration

Immigrant rights are a topic of high importance to the Spanish-speaking community. The extent to which individuals felt that marriage equality was a viable issue in the communities was influenced by their personal experiences and exposure to the issue. Several community members believed that immigrant rights held a higher precedence in the community. Beliefs are reflective of the division experienced by some LGBT individuals and program staff who were equally as passionate about the need to enhance efforts to promote marriage equality as well as the need to fight for immigrant rights.

### Community Priority

Participants of the CRLA radio novela series were very adamant about the flow of discussions. Particularly around how conversations were started, *“People were very vocal about starting the conversation about marriage equality to not be about same-sex marriage, or even using terms like marriage equality which does not resonate from the beginning. Instead, participants responded to discussions that elicited thoughts of how it felt to experience discrimination. Latina women were most affected and protective as the dialogue expanded from general discrimination to discrimination*

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<sup>13</sup> Translates to Husband.

*induced by a child's sexual orientation."* The connection to family and acceptance resonated across all three communities. Unfortunately, perceptions from Latino males were not heavily represented during these efforts. Of those who participated, one father requested materials to share with his community to help increase acceptance. Male participation highlights an area that needs additional attention, *"Latino males are generally seen as less accepting of their lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and less willing to speak out about their experiences publically than mothers. The lack of participation from fathers serves as a barrier for the enhancement of our educational materials."*

### COMMUNITY MESSENGERS

There were several themes related to selecting appropriate messengers that were consistent across all three communities involved in POCCE.

#### *Cultural Competence*

Individuals or organizations interested in working in communities of color need to be culturally competent enough to establish credibility with their members. Cultural considerations include knowledge about the nuances involved with communicating with different individuals within the community. Gender matching may be the most appropriate way to start conversations within the Asian community. Unsurprisingly, individuals who are proficient in multi-languages and dialects will serve to increase opportunities to expand conversations.

#### *Professionalizing Messengers*

API Equality - LA found that paid organizing positions broadened recruitment efforts that led to interest from diverse staff that were able to use their experiences to relate to their constituents.

#### *Education Before Persuasion*

Messengers who were passionate and committed to educating people were most effective in changing the hearts and minds of individuals. More often than not, individuals engaged in conversations are ignorant or misinformed about the discrimination experienced by LGBT individuals. Both POCCE grantees and participants of the efforts reported that this was the first time they were engaged in conversations in their communities. These conversations helped expand their worldviews and led to increased awareness of a group of marginalized individuals. Ultimately, the most effective messengers were those who approached conversations as an opportunity for mutual education.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The POCCE pilot program was a transformative experience for program staff and participants. It included three strategies (researching, convening and re-granting) and was guided by three objectives:

- Increase understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for raising support for same-sex marriage among people of color.
- Encourage and support communities of color in defining the strategies most likely to be effective in their respective communities.
- Support the implementation of these strategies through re-granting to nonprofits best situated to carry them out and realize results that will inform future efforts to increase acceptance of same-sex marriage in communities of color.

The Horizons Foundation met the first two objectives through hosting several events leading up to the pilot. The People of Color Conference gathered nonprofit LGBT leaders to discuss various topics related to LGBT

rights and marriage equality. Several of those who attended would subsequently receive dollars allocated through the re-granting strategy. The grantees interviews revealed that the convening served as an opportunity to learn about current and historical regional and national programs and helped shape and refine their strategies. The Foundation also commissioned a set of stakeholder interviews and used an advisory board committee to guide the development of the initiative. Most recently, the Foundation commissioned this evaluation to document the lessons learned across organizations working with communities of color.

With regard to the re-granting strategy which is primarily addressed the third objective, overall, grantees made progress towards the benchmarks identified in their grant agreements and did so by adopting many of the strategies and recommendations that surfaced through the research and convenings. Not surprisingly nonprofits experienced obstacles gearing up to implement their respective projects, however, these occurrences forced organizations to build internal capacity and external support through enduring partnerships. Many also remain interested in exploring ways to continue and expand their work around ME to extend to other issues that address the quality of life of their communities.

The synthesized information within this report does not capture all the nuances involved with working within communities to support issues of marriage equality. Rather, it is to enhance the interests of potential funders and partners to extend resources for organizational capacity building and promote common pathways leading to bridge building. Lastly, it adds to the collective knowledge base around effective strategies for communicating with multicultural community members.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered to support continued progress in the marriage equality discussion and debate as it pertains to the inclusion of multiple voices and multi-cultural populations. They also have broader applicability to other issues and attempts to advance equity and social justice agenda.

### ***Recommendation 1. Develop recruitment strategies that engage heterosexual men***

As mentioned within this report, attempts to gather the feedback from heterosexual men were restricted, particularly individuals from African-American and Spanish-speaking communities. Future efforts should identify ways to engage their voices. It was evident that the conversations were transformative for many community members. Female attitudes toward marriage equality and LGBT rights moderately improved after participating in the projects, while opposing male attitudes changed slightly. Community members affirmed the research that suggests there is an underlying tension and opposition toward LGBT rights among heterosexual men of color. Given the documented consequences of extreme homophobic attitudes, it is imperative that persuasion and support from men of color become a priority area for future efforts.

### ***Recommendation 2. Identify ways to share grant projects***

Several grantees reflected on the impact of the conference organized by the Foundation. Future convenings of this nature should incorporate ways to expose the work of POCCE grantees. Grantee organizations that produced video and radio materials were interested in ways to share materials with the public. Media consultants involved with the project were integral in identifying opportunities to help organizations share their work with the field. In like fashion, the next iteration of grant-making should include opportunities for organizations to share materials and experiences with LGBT advocates and others in the field. Such an effort will build capacity across organizations as smaller organizations have the opportunity to share ancillary conclusions from their work and build credibility in the field. Media screening opportunities also give leaders opportunities to discuss information about the best practices to sustain leadership, recruit employees, and build bridges within communities.

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### **Recommendation 3. Allocate funds for professional development**

POCCE grantees, like many other nonprofits during this time, encountered many obstacles while completing projects. Given the nature of the work, it is important that leaders within the organizations are able to educate others about the potentially harmful (psychological, somatic, social) effects experienced as a result of the work. To the extent possible, grant dollars should include monetary support for coaching and leadership training as well as resources to help outsource social services needs. All managers should have training that equips them with the tools to recognize and support others through this work.

### **Recommendation 4. Identify opportunities to align with similar social movements**

Grantees and advisors were well aware of the historical impact of the civil rights battles which they believed laid the foundation for their work. According to API Equality – Los Angeles, *“Advocates frequently described the fight for marriage equality in terms of being the new civil rights battle.”* Their account shows that communities garner inspiration from historical efforts to obtain equality. Latino and Asian LGBT rights organizers see opportunities to align their efforts with the current movement for immigrant rights. Somos Familia has identified an opportunity for a strategic partnership to help support efforts in Latino communities, *“We noticed the stuff that’s going on with immigrants. We have not had too much of a connection with the immigrant rights movement but there is interest in building those relationships. I think that there’s been so much going on around that issue that there is more potential, at least now, for doing that kind of work than there has been in the past.”*

API Equality also acknowledged their need to connect to larger community efforts, *“We realize that the LGBT community is a tiny fraction of the overall community and if you add Asian/API to that it would be an even smaller fraction. So, if we did this work all by ourselves, we wouldn’t get very far in terms of the total population here in California. We also face other related issues like immigration where we can build bridges and allies that have a more empathetic response.”*

Similarly, the workforce human resource movement to establish domestic partnership rights in businesses may also serve as an untapped opportunity to expand the message. During a recent Commonwealth Club public forum<sup>14</sup>, Randy Pond, Executive Vice President of Operations, Processes, and Systems for Cisco, describes research that shows there is substantial financial benefit to establishing equal human resources practices for employees within an corporation. Future efforts should consider opportunities to contribute to the workplace rights movement.<sup>15</sup> LGBT advocates can begin building partnerships with employees or executives interested in establishing domestic partnership policies. Outreach should engage staff during culturally appropriate events such as brown bags, volunteer opportunities, and through corporate training videos.

### **Recommendation 5. Synthesize, integrate and disseminate findings from research and convening strategies**

Although this report provides a high level overview of the structure and findings from the interview research and convening, there is more from those strategies that can inform those engaged in the marriage equality movement as well as others interested in the nuances of framing and messaging within communities of color. Existing documentation from both efforts should be synthesized in to a briefing to inform others engaged in this work.

### **Recommendation 6. Convene dialogue(s) on findings and implications**

As the 2012 presidential elections approach, LGBT rights are sure to be a topic. For that reason, the Horizons Foundation has a unique opportunity and a small window to identify proactively ways to leverage support

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<sup>14</sup> Retrieved May 24, 2011 from: <http://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/2011-05-09/i-do-who-cant-silicon-valley-leaders-speak-about-gay-marriage>

<sup>15</sup> Raeburn, N.C. (2004). *Changing Corporate America, Inside and Out*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.

and educate others about their efforts, successes and lessons learned from POCCE to support the work of allies. These allies include grant makers, those with political influence and other activists engaged in social justice and equity work.