



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP: EARLY VISIONARIES INSPIRE TOMORROW'S SUCCESS

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### INTRODUCTION

The community development movement began in the US in the 1960s and 70s and was marked by courageous individuals who witnessed a challenge or problem and took it upon themselves to work to solve it. These early leaders did not have courses that they could take at the university to learn how to do their job. There were no peer trainings or websites to give them insights and tools. In the early days, the leaders had to learn by doing. And, what they learned was that to be an impactful leader, they not only needed a vision and a plan, but also the ability to engage and excite others to carry out the vision. They needed to learn to deliver change at a pace that others could absorb.

As we look back over the past six decades, the community development sector can claim many strong leaders. They started with a vision and a skeleton staff and transformed that vision into capable, multi-million-dollar enterprises, all the while staying true to their mission of improving disinvested places and providing opportunities for people who live in there. They accomplished this by establishing a clear picture of what needed to be done, and a thoughtful and collaborative approach to implementing the work.

These seminal leaders have not only had a local impact, they have also forged alliances and partnerships to impact policy at the state and national level. As their organizations grew and the focus of their work shifted to address issues more broadly, their leadership styles changed to accommodate these shifts.

This paper will capture the stories of some of the community development sector's long-time leaders, working in both urban and rural places, across the country. Each of the people we interviewed leveraged their leadership style to build an organization, and to influence policy and programs at the local, regional, and national level.

Through structured interviews with leaders who have led their organizations for 20 or more years, we will discuss what has inspired our leaders, identify how their leadership styles have evolved over time, and review common themes and lessons learned. In addition, we will examine the leadership skills that will be needed in the future, given the ever-changing environment in which community development professionals work.

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*The views expressed are those of the authors and do not represent those of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco or the Federal Reserve System.*



This paper is organized around four sections: leadership profiles; leadership themes; the evolution of community development leadership; and the future of community development leadership.

## Defining community development

Community development can be defined as a purposeful effort to improve a place while involving the people who live and/or work in that place. Community development provides a forum for all voices to create a shared vision, with a goal of strengthening the economic, social, and environmental fabric of a community. The approach to community development is to build upon community assets, rather than focusing on deficits. Community development engages residents and connects businesses, health-care institutions, educational institutions, faith-based organizations, elected officials and administrators, and other community partners. The core values, passion, mission, and vision of community development have been consistent over the past 50 years; however, the practice has evolved significantly. As organizations grew, and leaders tackled more complex initiatives in affordable housing, enterprise development, community facilities, workforce development, and human services, their leadership styles also evolved.

## SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP PROFILES

While there are hundreds of individuals who merit mention, this paper is based on the information gleaned from twelve long-time leaders. Abstracts of each of these interviews are included in the appendix. The 12 profiles featured here represent diverse community development leaders who led organizations for over two decades. Following is a brief description of each interviewee.

**David Adame** is the current CEO of Chicanos por la Causa (CPLC). David came to the organization right after college when long-time CEO Pete Garcia hired him to work on business development. Later David worked for their credit union and took banking training. David left CPLC to gain additional experience in real estate development and project management and returned to CPLC under CEO Edmundo Hidalgo, later stepping up to the CEO role. David's profile in the appendix shares some insights and lessons from the late Pete Garcia, long-time CEO of CPLC.

**Nancy Andrews** was the long-time CEO of the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF). Nancy got her start in community development as a VISTA volunteer in Utah. She later gained a master's degree from Columbia University and worked at the JP Morgan Municipal Bonds Department, the Ford Foundation where she launched their housing initiative, and the CDFI Fund and HUD. She began her leadership role at LIIF in 1998, where she grew the organization three-fold, and departed in 2018.

**Roberto Barragan**, former CEO of Valley Economic Development Center (VEDC), studied politics and business administration and interned with the National Economic Development and Law Center early in his career. During his career he held positions at the Mission Economic Development Agency and Community Development Resource Center prior to going to VEDC in 1998, where he expanded their small business lending and significantly grew the organization's assets.

**Bill Bynum** began his community development career while in college where he led the Black Student Government of UNC. After college, he joined the Center for Community Self-Help, where he organized employee-owned businesses. Bill moved to the North Carolina Rural Center prior to leading the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta in the mid-1990's, which became HOPE Enterprise Corporation, which has evolved into a \$400 million CDFI.

**Peter Carey** joined Peace Corps and worked in Sierra Leone building water systems after dropping out of college. Upon returning to the US, he worked at the American Friends Service Committee doing disaster response work. After finishing his BA he applied to VISTA to work on self-help housing. He began work at Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) in 1974, was promoted into the Director of Programs position, and ultimately became the CEO in 1990. In addition to leading SHE, Peter served as Mayor of Visalia and chair of the California Housing Finance Agency.

**Gordon Chin** grew up in Oakland and from an early age was aware of the cultural and economic importance of San Francisco's Chinatown. Gordon's first brush with community activism and civil rights occurred in college, and after graduating, Gordon continued his activism by



fighting to protect Chinatown which was under immense development pressure. Gordon founded the Chinatown Resource Center which helped form the Chinatown Community Housing Corporation, later the two organizations merged, becoming the Chinatown Community Development Center, which Gordon led until his retirement.

**Kerry Doi** became active in Asian American student issues during college. He started a drop-in center to combat drug abuse, and became interested in workforce issues. After stints at the California State Employment Development Department and Rockwell International, he created the Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment (PACE) in 1976, which was modeled after the Urban League's jobs program for African Americans. PACE serves over 50,000 low-income individuals annually through workforce development, housing, asset building, and services.

**Robin Hughes** grew up in South Los Angeles and at an early age became keenly aware of the devastating impact that disinvested communities had on the residents. After earning a graduate degree in public administration, Robin worked in the public sector, believing that she could have a positive impact and bring resources to these under-invested areas. Robin's early work included jobs with the LA Community Development Commission and with Mayor Tom Bradley's office, but it wasn't until she began work at the LA Community Design Center that she found the job that fit her exact interests. Robin became CEO of the Design Center and has led it successfully for 23 years.

**Marty Johnson's** grandparents were sharecroppers, and the family moved to Ohio to find work in the tire industry during the depression. Due to Marty's football prowess, he was recruited to Princeton University, studied anthropology, and founded Isles Inc. in 1981, an organization focused on connecting community-based groups with appropriate technology opportunities, including urban agriculture, housing development and brownfield clean-ups. Marty continues to lead Isles, working to merge community development with healthy sustainable communities.

**Lynette Jung Lee** began her community development career working with immigrants in Oakland's Chinatown. She taught ESL at an adult education school and helped students engage in social action. Through this work she joined the board of the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) and later became its second employee. In 1982, Lynette became the Executive Director, and led the organization until her retirement. During this time, EBALDC took on many housing and community development projects to improve living conditions and opportunities for low-income residents of Oakland.

**Ron Phillips** is a first generation American of Albanian descent, and grew up on Cape Cod where his family was in fishing and farming. After college and seminary, Ron worked with the National Council of Churches in NYC, and was co-founder of the newly-organized Corporate Information Center, the predecessor of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. In late 1974, Ron moved his family to Maine, where he, along with a core group of community leaders, formed Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI). Ron led CEI until his retirement, building the organization into a multi-faceted community development corporation and CDFI working in finance, housing and job creation aimed at the fish, farms and forest sectors.

**Sue Taoka** got her start in community development by participating in anti-war and civil rights movements of the 1970s. While in college, she met Asian American leaders and became acutely aware of the imbalance of power and resources facing Asians in the US. She moved to Seattle for law school and began working for the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority, later becoming its CEO for sixteen years. She completed her career working for a large northwest regional CDFI, Craft3.

## SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP THEMES

As we were conducting the interviews, we started observing common leadership themes among the leaders which draw from the core values and practices of community development. This section summarizes these leadership themes and highlights their relevance for current and future leaders. We offer examples from a number of interviews to underscore the themes.



### **1. Commitment to social justice and human rights**

Community development is grounded in social justice and human rights. All the leaders we interviewed found community development as a way to express their core values and commitment to equity and justice. Kerry Doi (President & CEO of PACE) became involved with community development work to fight discrimination. He formed an organization to improve workforce development opportunities for young Asians. As a young seminarian, Ron Phillips (Founder and former CEO of Coastal Enterprise, Inc.) saw community development as a way to bring together people, capital, and social justice. Nancy Andrew's (Former President & CEO of LIIF) experience as a Vista Volunteer in Salt Lake City with low-income single parent families struggling for housing, led her to become a housing finance expert and ultimately a leader of a CDFI that has a strong ethos for financing initiatives that benefitted families. Her passion was to help low-income families acquire safe, decent and affordable housing. Growing up in South Los Angeles and living for a short time in public housing as a child, inspired Robin Hughes (President & CEO of Abode Communities) to devote her life's work to address the deplorable living conditions that some people with limited means endure. Whether it was through personal experience or compassion for the plights of others, the leaders all leapt into their work to address a social justice and human rights issue.

### **2. Value of community engagement**

All the leaders we interviewed talked about community engagement and/or community organizing, as a cornerstone of their work and a key to their success. Community development work is based on the premise that to be successful, a bottom-up, community informed process will be used. This results in community buy-in, ownership, leadership and influence. Community engagement invests in the development and leadership of people.

Gordon Chin (Founder and former President & CEO of Chinatown Community Development Center) advanced community organizing efforts to preserve the core of Chinatown and worked with others to pass legislation that downzoned allowable building sizes to protect existing buildings and residents of Chinatown. He also

created leadership opportunities for residents in Chinatown and helped form tenant associations that included youth and seniors. Peter Carey's (Former President & CEO of Self-Help Enterprises) commitment to self-help housing sprang from a desire to stabilize the living situation for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, allowing them to become stakeholders in rural communities in the Central Valley. By engaging with and involving the people who would be housed in the construction of the housing, Peter helped future residents build skills and ownership. And, with stable housing, the farmworkers' families could have a future in their respective communities. Sue Taoka's (Former President and CEO of SCIDPDA) experience as a community organizer in her youth, informed her approach to community development, working collaboratively with community members and other stakeholders to undertake transformational projects. All of the leaders interviewed demonstrated through action their commitment to working closely with the communities they served.

### **3. Strategic and courageous leadership**

Lynette Jung Lee (Former Executive Director of EBALDC) said in her interview that community development leaders need to be both strategic and courageous. Strategic and courageous leadership combines both strategy and persistence in designing and implementing bold decisions that will improve the quality of life for diverse residents. Lynette persisted for many years in leading, planning, and raising funds for the Asian Resource Center, which took seven years to develop. Lynette was able to convince her board, composed of a number of professionals who were risk averse, to allow EBALDC to acquire the Hotel California in Oakland and develop it for vulnerable seniors some of whom were on the verge of homelessness. She and the leadership team at EBALDC stayed the course and were able to get the financing and supports for the Hotel California to succeed and be renovated as a major community resource.

Ron Phillips provided strategic leadership in expanding CEI's work from natural resources to community facilities, affordable housing, and workforce development. CEI had a huge influence on major sectors in the Maine economy that led to jobs for many low-



income residents. CEI never lost sight of the importance of fostering jobs that would benefit residents. Another element of courageous leadership is being a strong advocate for the community and being tenacious and persistent in stating the case for those you aim to assist. Sue Taoka spoke of the challenge of being an Asian minority in a Black and White world, and the importance of elevating the issues that face the many distinct Asian subpopulations that reside in the US to ensure that their needs aren't overlooked.

#### **4. A champion of place**

Several leaders talked about the importance of having a strong sense of place, resulting in a commitment to the people and places where they devoted their time building and leading strong community-based institutions. However, most of the community development leaders that we interviewed did not grow up in the communities where they spent the majority of their career. Robin Hughes is an exception, and while her work extends beyond South LA, she is still strongly focused on the community she lived in as a child. Many leaders interviewed became champions of the community where they worked, even if they lived elsewhere, working to ensure that their community could provide social and economic opportunities for all residents.

Roberto Barragan (Former President and CEO of VEDC) worked for a regional economic development organization, before becoming the leader. There he championed the Pacoima neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley, which has a large Latino population that was underserved. Bill Bynum (CEO of HOPE Enterprises) began his profession career in North Carolina, but moved to the south in 1995 and became a tireless advocate and generated considerable resources for the Delta region of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Gordon Chin grew up in Oakland, and views Chinatown San Francisco as the "spiritual center" for Chinese Americans since it is the oldest and was the largest Chinatown in the U.S. He views it akin to the notion of Harlem as the spiritual center of the African-American community.

#### **5. Instinct for policy**

Effectiveness in influencing and advancing public policy has been essential to the growth of community development, which is dependent upon significant policy resources. All of the leaders interviewed saw public policy as a core competency and devoted considerable time and resources to advance policy objectives. Their policy work was at the local, state, regional and national level. Both Sue Taoka and Robin Hughes had stints in the Mayors' offices of the cities in which they work, giving them first-hand knowledge of how to move policy changes through the system.

Peter Carey of Self-Help Enterprises was elected to the Visalia City Council and served a two-year term as Mayor of Visalia in 1991 to 1993. Self-Help Enterprises operates in a conservative political environment and Peter talked about the importance of maintaining positive relationships with legislators, while advocating strongly for affordable housing.

Before leading LIIF, Nancy Andrews was a leader in promoting affordable housing policy at the Ford Foundation and while at LIIF had public policy staff working in Washington D.C. Ron Phillips built strong political relationship with the Maine delegation and was the CDC leader in the creation of the CDFI Coalition, leading to the creation of the CDFI Fund in 1994.

#### **6. Balancing priorities and instituting good business practices**

As organizations grow, community development leaders must balance a number of diverse goals, interests, and projects needed to revitalize communities. They must be both visionary and pragmatic and develop strong business practices to succeed. When Peter Carey became the CEO of Self-Help Enterprises in 1990, he maintained the vision of the organization in serving farmworkers while improving business systems and efficiency. Peter moved all employees into one building and implemented a new technology system. He used to walk the floors on a regular basis to interact with the staff.

Marty Johnson's (Founder and CEO of Isles, Inc.) approach to leadership was to balance chaos and order to innovate new initiatives. There was a healthy tension in the Isles work environment. Isles became a leader in



urban agriculture, affordable housing, brownfield remediation, healthy homes, and youth initiatives.

Roberto Barragan of VEDC was able to increase the impact of his organization by lending into the community where he worked. He did this by raising capital from banks and the public sector lending throughout Los Angeles. His organization was one of the few organizations that provided financing to small businesses during the Great Recession. VEDC had a default rate of less than 5% in that challenging economic environment.

As Abode grew, Robin Hughes had to step back from managing real estate projects to focusing on the larger issues that ensured the successful operation of the organization. Getting the right staff in place and delegating not only tasks, but authority and decision-making power, was critical to getting her team working at full steam.

## 7. Governance

Community development is a team sport. CEO's need to work in tandem with the board of directors, senior staff, and other collaborative partners. Board members and other volunteers can provide critical advice, strategic thinking, resources, relationship cultivation, and stewardship to a complex organization. Nancy Andrews said governance was critical to the growth of LIIF. The governance strategy was designed to generate more thought partners and relationships requiring a more powerful board. LIIF developed term limits and some of the long-time board members were disappointed when their terms were up but this led to a stronger creative board that could help identify new resources, programs, and ideas.

Marty Johnson has a balanced and active board of community residents, professionals, and regional representatives who help Isles access wealthy influential individuals who can support the organization's efforts.

## 8. Collaboration

All the long-time leaders talked about the growing importance of collaboration in their work especially in their later years. As community development work becomes more comprehensive, community development organizations need to reach out to new partners. Peter

Carey mentioned a new multi-family housing initiative in Goshen, California that has a recreation center partnering with the local park system and a Federally Qualified Health Care Center (FQHC).

Lynette Lee has a long history of forming partnerships with other organizations in housing, commercial revitalization, asset building, and more recently healthy communities ranging from the Oakland Housing Authority to several large health care institutions.

Coastal Enterprises has collaborated with the Maine Fishing Industry, University of Maine's Child Care Center, and the Maine Workforce board to strengthen CEI's policy, technical assistance and program outreach.

Bill Bynum operates in an area with limited capacity and has had to recruit partners from outside the immediate area to provide support for small businesses.

In all cases, the challenges that the leaders were trying to address, were complex and multi-faceted, necessitating partnerships with multiple organizations and a collaborative approach. No one organization was big enough to do it alone.

## 9. Youth and next generation

A number of the community development leaders started their careers working with youth and stressed the importance of engaging youth in the future work of community development. Several of those interviewed started running their organizations when they were quite young but given the size of the organizations and the complexity of the business, today, most people have significant experience before taking on a CEO role. These long-time leaders are serious about cultivating the next generation of leaders especially from communities of color.

Lynette Jung Lee earned a teaching certificate and planned to be a teacher. While working at an Alternative High School in Oakland Chinatown teaching immigrant youth and some gang members, she helped get the youth engaged in social action. Kerry Doi's early passion was preventing drug abuse, as he witnessed a number of young Asian American's dying of drug abuse in the late



1960's. He helped youth find employment opportunities and PACE has helped develop young Asian leaders.

Pete Garcia (long-time former CEO of CPLC) was adept at recruiting students and young Latinx community leaders. He saw potential and looked for people who were smart, committed, and had heart. Current CEO David Adame, as well as earlier leaders, have implemented important training opportunities for young staff. David has seen a number of staff leave to work in private enterprise and have often come back to work at CPLC with their new expertise.

As we look to the future of community development, Sue Taoka recommends that long-time leaders evolve to new positions so that the next generation can move up into leadership positions. Without an opportunity to advance, young people can get discouraged and leave the sector. Sue believes it is the job of the older leaders to mentor younger staff and help pave the way for their advancement and success.

### SECTION 3: EVOLVING CDC LEADERSHIP THEORY AND PRACTICE

Effective leadership has been the gas fueling the growth of community development over the past 50 years. Community development leadership evolved significantly as the sector matured and the leadership needs of community development organizations changed. The evolving leadership theory and practice is relevant for current and future leaders. This section explores how leadership has evolved from strong visionary creators and leaders, some of whom we interviewed to the current leadership environment of fostering institutional leaders.

While leadership styles are not linear, there is a progression that generally follows the growth and maturation of the organization. This progression can be characterized as follows:

- **Phase I** is marked by strong visionary, entrepreneurial leaders who see a problem to fix, or a challenge to tackle, and take that leap of faith to address it.
- **Phase II** leadership style reflects a shift to a strategic focus, where the leader still sets the direction of the organization, but expands impact by

involving more staff through delegation, and develops their own leadership skills.

- **Phase III** leadership styles reflect those leaders who have endured and built their organizations into significant community institutions, and have learned to share leadership and authority within their organization
- **Phase IV** leadership styles are seen in leaders who use their skills to influence and impact a larger, ecosystem level that often reaches across sectors and geographic boundaries.

In most cases, leaders must master the visionary, entrepreneurial stage of leadership, before they can move on the other phases. However, it isn't usual for the leadership style to fluctuate among the four phases of leadership depending on the task at hand.

#### **Phase I: Entrepreneurial Leader**

Community development organizations often start as the result of an idea and vision for a community-based response to a problem or need in a disinvested place. In cases where the effort is successful, a founder has a powerful vision and can cultivate supporters to catalyze change. Most of the leaders that we feature in this paper either started or were the first employee of their organization. As entrepreneurs who moved their respective organization forward, they were initially at the center of all decisions, and owned and managed most of the relationships.

At the beginning of an organization's life, when resources are scarce and capacity is limited, it is incumbent upon the leader to lead to succeed, which means being involved at a very operational level, providing strong direction, and being the "decider" for what the organization does. As the organization gains traction, this approach will need to be replaced by a leadership style that still provides direction but builds a team that has the authority to help implement the mission.

As the organizations grow and staff were hired, the entrepreneurial leader needs to become more of a coach and manager, and less of an autocrat.

The community development leader develops more personal and professional mastery as they move towards leadership Phases II to IV.



## Phase II: Strategic Direction and Building Capacity

Phase II leadership combines strategic direction with personal leadership mastery gained from experience and insights. The leader engages additional stakeholders from the board, senior staff and partners to identify new directions and initiatives for the organization. Strategic planning and thinking become institutionalized within the organization with careful consideration of opportunities as well as challenges. The SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is a simple way to understand the trade-offs between opportunities and challenges. Lynette Jung Lee engaged her board early on in developing the strategic direction for EBALDC. Once an organization gets some wins, it is easy to become the new go to organization for solving community problems. The challenge for leaders at this stage is to be able to be strategic and answer this key question, “Do these opportunities fit within the strategic direction of the organization, build on our core competencies and leverage our comparative advantage?”

As the staff grows and the complexity of the organization grows, successful leaders need to focus on their own personal mastery and growth, in order to keep advancing the capacity of their organization, as well as themselves.<sup>1</sup> During this phase of organizational growth is often when there is a need for the development of more sophisticated financial/accounting, management, human resources, and information systems to keep track of information and outcomes that are essential for effective strategy and decision making. It is necessary that the leader devotes resources to building and maintaining the systems so that information can be shared with the decision makers and program staff.

## Phase III: Enduring and Institutional leaders

What distinguishes phase III is the notion of building an institution that will endure beyond the initial leader’s vision. One of the key elements to making this transition is that leaders learn to empower others within the organization. The concept is to create more horizontal leadership where decision making is dispersed and closer to the program implementation and the community. In this phase, the leader becomes more of a facilitator and

coach, growing the management and leadership skills of others.

Leo Vazquez in his book and training curriculum, *Leading from The Middle*, demonstrates how you can lead throughout the organization and manage up, down, and laterally. This is when you begin to build an institution with strong staff, connected board, and information and management systems to function in high manner.<sup>2</sup> Good governance becomes critical in phase III, as the leader will need a strong board. Successful Phase III leaders have engaged boards that are effective at setting policy and overseeing the mission and direction of the organization. The boards are the stewards of resources and strategic thinking partners for the executive leadership. According to Nonprofit Corporate Governance, good boards “monitor, guide and enable good management; they do not do it themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

A strong staff is also important during this Phase. Leaders need to develop existing staff to learn the skills they need to work effectively in a larger, more complex organization. They also need to hire talented new staff and invest in their development, providing them leadership opportunities to grow. Community development that emphasizes human capital potential provides pathways for advancement for talented employees which is critical to the success of comprehensive organizations. As staff members build knowledge and capacity, shared leadership gets strengthened with clear roles and responsibilities. Ron Phillips, the former CEO of Coastal Enterprises utilized consensus leadership approach with a lot of voices assessing and weighing in on major organizational decisions.

One of the key concepts behind enduring leaders is that encourage their employees to flourish by discovering their talents and creative passions and then act upon them to meet the mission and vision of the organization. Chip Conley, the CEO and founder of Joie de Vivre Hospitality group, discusses in his book *Peak* the importance of leaders creating an environment for employees to become self-actualized and strive for excellence and service. This is a good example of the organizational culture being aligned with the mission and vision of the organization.



Burt Nanus and Steven Dobbs, in their book *Leaders Who Make a Difference*, have an excellent diagram of moving from entrepreneurial leadership to enduring leadership. Some of the examples are:<sup>4</sup>

Entrepreneurial leadership	Enduring leadership
Having leaders at the top	Having leaders at every level
Leading by vision	Leading by vision and goal setting
Leading by allocating scarce resources	Leading by creating strategic alliances
The leader as a boss	The leader as a coach
The leader develops good administrators	The leader develops future leaders

#### Phase IV: Influential and Impactful Leadership

This phase of leadership integrates advocacy, organizing, systems change, and impact to building internal and external collaborations and alliances. After establishing the organization as a strong institution in the community, the Phase IV leader needs to address the question of how their reach and impact moves beyond the community. Jim Collins and Jerry Porras in their book *Built to Last* talk about the importance of creating a sense of purpose and clear goals that people can rally around.<sup>5</sup> They coined the term “Big Hairy Audacious Goals” to align the vision, resources, and effort around making significant change. Several of the leaders that we profiled dramatically increased their lending and investment activity in the Great Recession since mainstream financial institutions were not providing financing and small businesses and affordable real estate developers needed access to capital. They took a risk and the risk paid off.

Leaders start shifting from a transactional approach to a transformational approach bringing together different sectors and stakeholders through engaging in more alliances and collaborations. Community development is inter-disciplinary and requires many competencies both technical and multi-cultural given the diverse nature of communities. Community development leadership engages race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, and diversity. While it is challenging to operate in a

complex environment, phase IV leaders become adept at managing change and complexity. Change has become the new normal and many community leaders are trying to balance change with a clear strategic direction developed by the organizational stakeholders.

Collective impact has emerged in the past decade as a leadership strategy to engage diverse stakeholders in addressing pressing economic and social challenges. Community development leaders can bring an important perspective to collective impact using the lens of race, inclusion, power dynamics, and equity to make decisions that reflect the priorities of the community. The trends are clear that the intersectional work will become increasingly important and community development leaders will be more adept at guiding cross-sectoral work as well as using data, research, and policy to drive social change at the local level. Marty Johnson from Isles has used data on lead poisoning of children to make the case that lead safe houses dramatically improve education, health, and social outcomes for children and when they become adults.

The history of community development offers relevance to today’s critical needs to achieve political will, catalyze and sustain exceptionally diverse partnerships to address the fundamental challenges and rapid changes in education, work, health, infrastructure, etc. We need to better understand what leadership skills and abilities are necessary to move us forward. How do we continue to develop leaders in a more complex environment? The next section will advance our knowledge and collective understanding of leadership.

#### SECTION 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LEADERS AND AREAS OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The community development leaders interviewed for this article, are seasoned community development practitioners with significant experience in leading diverse community development organizations over many years. They all share a strong interest in helping to advance the community development sector and support the next generation of leaders. In that spirit, we would like to offer the following recommendations for mastering the next generation of community development leadership.



While it is impossible to precisely predict the ways community development will evolve over the next decade, leadership approaches that allow organizations to address multiple, inter-related issues, will likely impact what the sector will become. Going forward, it will be more important than ever, to inspire diverse communities to collaboratively act in their enlightened self-interests, while focusing on overcoming racial and gender disparities across income, wealth, education, health, and other key factors.

We anticipate that organizations will continue their work on equitable economic development; the construction, management and preservation of affordable housing; access to capital; educational attainment and funding, health and community livability. However, depending on the outcome of local and federal policy other issues may move to the forefront. For example, significant changes related to public investments in infrastructure and transportation; tax policy; retirement and social security, healthcare, criminal justice and environment stewardship, could redirect the focus of leaders into new areas of work.

In order to lead the way, community development leaders will need to be highly skilled in a number of the same areas, as they are today. However, there is likely to be a greater focus on maximizing the practices and benefits of incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion. Additionally, collaborative innovation -- attracting participants from many different vantage points who will contribute diverse perspectives, will be key in developing sound strategies. Data and technology will also likely play a growing role in both informing our work and in how we deliver our services and programs. It will also be critical that leaders continue to envision and establish multi-sector partnerships with diverse, high quality leaders and institutions.

In recent years, there has been much effort aimed at accessing flexible capital and “impact investments.” Going forward, this will continue to be an important focus as the reliability of public resources remains uncertain. This means that savvy leaders will need to understand the fundamentals of what drives investors, and they will need to have the data and track record that supports the viability of their organizations to investors.

As always, leaders of the future will need to excel at forming key relationships and teams that can respond effectively and quickly to unpredictable changes that will produce tremendous opportunities and significant threats. Being courageous, strategic and resilient, will continue to be key qualities of leaders that thrive in the future.

Over the past several decades we have witnessed that the organizations and leaders that have persevered are those that have become sustainable and scalable. While there is much more work to be done to adequately scale community development work, new approaches to ‘moving the needle’ that measures tangible progress in solving seemingly intractable problems will be critical.

Leaders will also need to leverage their core competences to get things done by managing, developing and empowering others, including organizing multigenerational, multicultural, multi-sector groups that can work together and gain the most from the assets they bring to every endeavor

The authors would like to offer additional research, analysis, and training that could help facilitate the transition from one group of leaders to the next. Following are some suggested areas of work.

## Community Development areas of research and future practice

We are proposing the following areas of research, analysis and work to advance community development leadership practice and mastery.

### 1. Additional interviews

Twelve distinguished long-time community development leaders were interviewed for this article, but there are many more leaders with exceptional experience who could be tapped for additional insights. Information from these additional interviews could be compiled and shared with community development audiences.

### 2. Webinars and presentations

A broader audience could be reached through webinars and presentations that focus on the lessons learned from exemplary leaders, the evolution of leadership, and future leadership strengths and challenges. In addition to training people in the field, material could be



developed for Boards of Directors, as they will be key in choosing many of the next leaders.

### **3. Training and technical assistance**

Training curriculum for new leaders on the evolution of community development leadership and the future ecosystem of leadership and skills that are needed to succeed, could be developed and delivered.

### **4. Community development leadership community of practice**

A community of practice including seasoned and emerging leaders could be facilitated to provide an ongoing learning laboratory.

### **5. Mentorship programs**

Mentorship programs for local, state, and national networks could be developed.

### **6. Leadership competencies**

Additional research could be done on leadership competencies and the changing leadership styles of the next generation. This information could be put into a future publication and draw from the book *Navigating Community Development*, leadership interviews and additional analysis.

### **7. Racial and Gender equity**

The leadership interviews in this article touches on these issues, but more research could be done to better understand the barriers to and opportunities of promoting a diverse group of community development leaders.

## **CONCLUSION**

A major reason that community development has achieved the stature that it has is due to talented entrepreneurial leaders who built their organizations and revitalized their communities. These leaders were successful in part because they knew how to deliver change at a pace that others, including boards, staff, public officials and communities, could absorb. This paper was designed to share the experience, insights, and accomplishments of long-time community development leaders for current and future leaders. Let's continue to shine the light on exemplary community development leaders. Community development will likely look different in the next 50

years, but the values, vision, mission, and effective leaders will be critical to the future growth of this important social industry and movement contributing to a just American society.



## APPENDIX: INTERVIEW ABSTRACTS

Following are abstracts of the interviews with each of the twelve people highlighted in this paper. Many of the leaders are from the Western part of the United States which reflects that Bob Zdenek, who did most of the interviews, lives in California and was able to have face to face interviews with a number of the prominent community development leaders featured in this paper.

### David Adame

Chicanos por la Causa (CPLC) will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2019. We have included CPLC because of their strong mentoring and leadership development programs. The organization has had seven leaders during its long and successful duration. Our plans were to interview long-time CEO, Pete Garcia from 1984 to 2007, and sadly Pete passed away in 2017. We interviewed David Adame, the current CEO, and drew from materials and videos of CPLC capturing their rich leadership history.

### Professional development/early years

CPLC traces its roots to the Civil Rights Movement, especially Caesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, and Chicano students from Arizona State University. CPLC focused on organizing and advocacy in the early years and began to provide social services. Ronnie Lopez who was the President of CPLC from 1969 to 1974 developed strong political relationships for the organization and became involved in civic leadership. Tommy Espinoza who led CPLC from 1974 to 1984 helped develop the corporate and business side of CPLC. He launched Tiempo, the for-profit real estate firm that now generates \$2 million annually, and expanded CPLC to Tucson. Tommy was followed by Art Othon who served CPLC for a year and focused on economic development. Pete Garcia became the longest standing CEO of CPLC from 1984 to 2007. The organization grew dramatically under Pete's leadership and added several new social services and affordable housing. Pete retired in 2007 and was succeeded by Edmundo Hidalgo who wanted to move CPLC to a more self-sufficient model. CPLC also began to expand to other states including Nevada and New Mexico. CPLC received \$126 million of Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds to stabilize affordable housing opportunities in several states. David Adame became the current CPLC President in 2015.

### Mentoring

CPLC is a laboratory for bringing people together and developing talent. Pete Garcia, a long-time former CEO of CPLC (1984-2007) had a talent for recruiting students and young community leaders. He saw potential and looked for people who were smart, committed, and had heart. Pete strengthened the CPLC mission of combining economic development and political empowerment. Building capacity was critical for CPLC, and Pete was resourceful and had other programs train staff. Pete hired his eventual successor, Edmundo Hidalgo with an initial LISC grant, and many others. David Adame was hired by Pete Garcia to work on business development out of college. He was familiar with CPLC and was excited to work for CPLC. David was assigned to the CPLC credit union to stabilize it after a director left and position it for the next director. Pete was able to arrange for banking training for David where he learned credit, lending, and CRA. Peter encouraged CPLC staff to take advantage of professional opportunities outside the organization. David worked for Phoenix LISC, Fannie Mae, and McCormick, Baron, Salazar where he learned large project development skills. He was brought back to CPLC by Edmundo Hidalgo who took over for Pete in 2008.

### Leadership

David's focus has been on a seven-year plan for CPLC to increase its trajectory and impact. The first two years of the seven-year plan focused on strengthening infrastructure to demonstrate evidence-based outcomes. CPLC developed data system and metrics to manage their vast array of initiatives and provide timely data and analysis. David mentioned that CPLC has made a \$1.7 billion impact in Arizona, which he



shared with Governor of Arizona. The third to fifth year of the strategic plan is focused on the growth of CPLC. CPLC is expanding into several new locations, and they have a budget of over \$63 million. The last two years of the strategic plan or third phase is devoted to leading impacts for the residents, community, and state.

David is committed to increasing the visibility and importance of community development in Arizona and beyond. He talks about overcoming industry and race stereotypes showing how community development makes a difference, and is a “hand-up”, not a “hand-out” which has been a theme of CPLC for many years.

### **Key accomplishments**

1. CPLC is celebrating 50 years of leadership and impact. It started as a small advocacy organization and is now the largest community development organization in Arizona and one of the largest nationally.
2. CPLC has continued to be an innovative organization developing social ventures 40 years ago, well ahead of many other organizations.
3. CPLC has helped create new organizations including the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB) and several local coalitions
4. CPLC has been engaged in cross-sector work for many years and has developed national models including Maryvale Community Health Center.

### **Advice/legacy**

David emphasized the importance of being a strict steward of resources and leverage what you have. David talked about the significance of CPLC as a self-sustaining organization and his goal over the seven-year plan is to increase self-sustaining income from 51% to 77%. CDCs need to have evidence-based outcomes, a major reason they have invested in outcomes, and don't forget the human dimension and the importance of stories showing how CPLC has changed and improved thousands of people's lives.

## **Nancy Andrews**

### **Professional Development/Early jobs**

After college, Nancy was a Vista Volunteer in Salt Lake City, Utah, working as tenant rights organizer. She saw first-hand the importance of affordable housing and understood that housing is a women's issue too — so many households with housing problems are single moms. She enrolled in graduate school at Columbia University to learn about real estate finance and did a year internship at JP Morgan working on Municipal Bonds Department.

Nancy worked for 9 years with the Office of Program Related Investments at the Ford Foundation with Tom Miller. She conceived of, won approval for and ran the Ford Foundation's housing program. Her next position was as the Chief Financial Officer with the International Water Management Institute, which is part of a global system of international research organizations, created by the World Bank in the 1960s to address food security. In this position, she lived in Sri Lanka for 3 years. Nancy then worked at the CDFI Fund and HUD.

### **Mentors**

Nancy mentioned that her mentors were Tom Miller, who oversaw the Program-Related investment Office at the Ford Foundation and Cushing Dolbeare, the founder of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition.



## **Leadership**

Nancy was hired as the CEO of Low-Income Investment Fund in 1998. LIIF's assets totaled \$35 million when she arrived and was large at that time for Community Development Organizations. Upon her departure in 2018, LIIF's managed assets had topped \$1 billion. She counts herself lucky to have led an organization that was stable, with strong financial condition, and a high impact mission. Nancy saw the opportunity to leverage and scale LIIF to achieve broader impact for poverty alleviation. The key to growing LIIF, she believes, was excellent governance and programs that went beyond housing to tackle poverty. She attracted new thought partners and grew the Board to represent a national organization. LIIF expanded its programs to include affordable housing, education and schools, workforce development, early child care and facilities, transportation, health and healthy foods. LIIF also added a focus on policy advocacy, to strengthen the public commitment to each of these sectors.

It took 10 years to build the capacity and systems that allowed LIIF to grow dramatically. Nancy worked hard on the internal strategy before growing the external resources. Bankers and policymakers saw the importance of LIIF and wanted to support the organization, mission, and growth. Nancy focused on the importance of transparency and measuring success, and program. Her leadership style was to hire strong people, establish clear goals for success and create accountability around results. She is especially proud of: spearheading the creation of the Capital Magnet Fund, creating the Social Impact Calculator, publicity "Coming out as a Human Capitalist: Community Development at the Nexus of People and Place," receiving the Disruptive Leadership award from Living Cities, the Housing Visionary award (2018) from the National Housing Conference and the Ned Gramlich Lifetime Achievement Award (2018) from the Opportunity Finance Network.

## **Key Accomplishments-**

1. Started the Housing Program at the Ford Foundation.
2. Increased LIIF's balance sheet from \$35 million to over \$1 billion.
3. Started new initiatives in education and schools, early childhood, health and healthy foods, and transportation.
4. Major role in Capital Magnet Fund enactment and developed a Social Impact Calculator.
5. Received major awards including Housing Visionary Award 2018 and Ned Gramlich Lifetime Achievement Award.

## **Advice/Legacy**

Nancy stepped down as CEO of LIIF in the Spring of 2018. She stressed the importance of money and mission, staying focused on strengths and comparative advantages, importance of policy and the big picture, governance and strategy, and metrics. She commented that the community development paradigm is limited, and we can't lose sight of human rights and justice.

## **Roberto Barragan**

### **Professional Development/Early jobs**

Roberto went to Princeton as an undergraduate and studied politics in part because of its influence in economics. Roberto pursued graduate studies in business administration at U.C. Berkeley and worked did an internship with the National Economic Development and Law Center (NEDLC). He learned about community development from the late Mike Freedland who taught him about business strategies including franchises. He learned that CDCs have an important role to play in the local economy. His interest was in business development and job creation. Roberto attended an NCCED conference in Orlando in 1987 and meet a number of CDC leaders and decided he wanted to do community development.



Roberto was hired as executive director of Adelante Inc. in Berkeley which ran an adult vocational and ESL training for mostly immigrants. They also owned a building. Roberto helped them acquire another building and was able to apply his community development training.

Roberto was recruited in 1989 to lead Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA) in the Mission District, a largely Latino neighborhood in San Francisco. MEDA was involved in loan packaging and business and economic revitalization. MEDA was located above a laundry building and Roberto wanted a better location and went in with several other non-profits to lease a building with a better location. One of his major initiatives was to clean up a parking garage that homeless people occupied. They were able to partner with a business to manage the parking garage and clean it up. The garage became quickly utilized by residents and customers and it helped local businesses with good parking options.

He was recruited by several financial institutions to work at the Community Financial Resource Center in the aftermath of the Los Angeles disturbances in 1992. Community Development Resource Center was designed to serve South Central Los Angeles. Roberto started there through 1994 in 1993 and managed several major economic development initiatives.

Roberto was hired in 1995 by Valley Economic Development Center to manage the Business Assistance Center in Pacoima, CA, a low-income minority community in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. VEDC gained significant resources in the aftermath of the 1994 Northridge Earthquake. Roberto became the Director of the Revolving Loan Fund later in 1995 and was able to loan \$6 million to small businesses many of them impacted by the earthquake.

### **Mentors**

In addition to Mike Freedland, Roberto said his other community development mentors included Pete Garcia, Lee Beaulac, Jose Villalobos, Marva Smith Battle Bey, Ron Phillips, Bob Zdenek, and Bob Rapoza.

### **Leadership**

Roberto became Interim Executive Director at VEDC in the later part of 1999, and he became the permanent President of VEDC in 2000. He launched new initiatives at VEDC expanding the becoming a Small Business Development Center from the San Fernando Valley and Ventura County to all of Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties. VEDC managed a fund for the Community Development Bank of Los Angeles and made micro loans in South Central Los Angeles. VEDC became a certified CDFI in 2006 and had \$8 million in capital and major investors including Wells Fargo and Bank of America. Before the Great Recession, VEDC had assets of over \$11 million and had lent over \$10 million. VEDC increased their lending during the Great Recession. Roberto's philosophy is to make a difference and no one else was providing capital. At the request of the banks, VEDC expanded to New York, Chicago, and Miami to do small business lending. By 2016, VEDC had \$70 million in assets and were lending \$20 million a year.

VEDC grew to 80 staff. Roberto's vision was to focus on impact and achieving outcomes not just getting funding. His management approach was to hire the right people to fit the job and "get out of their way." He provided a lot of responsibility to the managers and staff. He said it is critical to respond to problems and try to create a "win-win". He instructed staff to bring complaints to him to try and resolve. He said it was important to take care of the staff and they will take care of you.



### **Key accomplishments**

1. By 2016 VEDC had \$70 million in assets and were lending \$20 million annually.
2. VEDC was providing minority business financing in 8 states: New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Chicago (Illinois), and was exploring Miami (Florida), Nevada, Utah as well as California in addition to Los Angeles.
3. VEDC significantly increased its lending capacity during the Great Recession from 2009 to 2016
4. Roberto founded a low income CDFI certified community development credit union in 2005.

### **Advice/Legacy**

Roberto encourages community development leaders to serve on other boards providing them valuable learning experiences and networks. He said it was important to be on both non-profit and for-profit boards. He also raised the important issue of how to attract and maintain young leaders of color. He said there is latent racism in community development, and it is important to understand that the financial needs of people of color are often different than the majority. They can't afford the normal salaries if they have high student loans, no assets, and other family responsibilities. He said compensation needs to be adjusted to recruit and maintain leaders of color in community development.

## **Bill Bynum**

### **Professional development/Early jobs**

Bill was the leader of the Black Student Government at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. He led a successful action to reverse the denial of tenure to a prominent African-American studies professor, and testified before the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare as a student leader. Bill started in 1983 as the second employee at the Center for Community Self-Help where he helped organize employee-owned businesses and was a charter organizer of Self-Help Credit Union. Bill transitioned in 1989 to North Carolina Rural Center, where he launched the N.C. Microenterprise Program, which became one of the largest in the U.S. At the Rural Center, he also developed the N.C. Capital Access Program, and oversaw funding and capacity building programs for community development corporations and minority credit unions.

### **Mentors**

Bill grew up during the era of segregation. His mentors include a Vice Principal of his elementary school who operated a credit union for African-Americans; Gary Grant, who ran a casket manufacturing business and was an elected official in Tillery, North Carolina; Martin Eakes of Self-Help; Billy Ray Hall of the Rural Center; and Delta civic leader L.C. Dorsey.

### **Leadership**

Bill was recruited by several prominent political, civic and industry leaders from Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi to head Enterprise Corporation of the Delta in 1994, a \$1.5 million business loan fund. Later, Enterprise Corporation of the Delta became the primary sponsor of Hope Credit Union and changed its name to HOPE Enterprise Corporation. Hope went through several major phases of growth to its current level of over 200 employees and a \$400 million-dollar loan fund/credit union. They were able to use the NMTC as regulatory capital to grow the credit union from \$4 million in 2004 to \$50 million in 2006. The next growth phase was in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Hope designed and managed homeowner and business recovery programs on the Mississippi coast and in New Orleans, and the staff grew from 50 to 150, and built substantial project management capacity. Bill and the leadership team saw an opportunity following the 2007 to 2009 Great Recession to respond to the record number of bank closings in low-income communities. Since 2008, Hope Credit Union has grown from seven branches to 31 branches. They acquired nine former bank branches and merged with six credit unions.



Bill talked about the importance of a leadership throughout the organization, and a diverse staff that is reflective of the communities that Hope serves. Bill has transitioned from day to day management to focus more on policy, capitalization, and partnerships. He serves on several national boards and encourages Hope staff to become more involved in other organizations. He said it is invaluable both as a learning experience and in positioning Hope as an industry leader.

#### **Key Accomplishments-**

1. Grew Enterprise Corporation of the Delta from a \$1.5 million loan fund into a family of CDFIs with assets of over \$400 million.
2. Growth of Hope Credit Union from a local church project into a regional institution with offices in five Deep South states
3. Secured guidance for New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) leveraged debt transactions; and IRS ruling allowing nonprofits to establish LLC's without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status.

#### **Advice/legacy**

His advice to young leaders is find your passion and enjoyment. When you find your passion, it is not work in the traditional sense. He also said, "keep the fire burning" by continuing to innovate and finding ways to add value. Bill has transitioned substantial responsibility to his executive team and senior leadership but has not set a timeline for retirement. He views that his organization has a lot of leadership depth, and when time comes to step down, a deep leadership bench will propel the organization forward.

### **Peter Carey**

#### **Professional Development/Early jobs**

Peter went to Lehigh University and dropped out during his Junior Year. Because of his construction skills he was able to join the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone where he helped build water systems and schools for 27 months. Back in the states, he went to work for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in disaster response at Buffalo Creek, West Virginia. There he first saw self-help housing project. Peter finished B.A. in English from Lehigh University, and was thinking of becoming a high school English teacher but remained interested in self-help housing. He applied to VISTA and requested an assignment in self-help housing He was sent to Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) in 1974. Peter started working in construction at SHE after a year as a VISTA. He developed his construction management and supervision skills and completed the Building Inspection program at the community college. He became Director of Programs in 1986 and continued his education, earning an MPA from the University of San Francisco. He was hired as the next CEO of Self-Help Enterprises in 1990, when long-time director Bob Marshall retired.

#### **Mentors**

Bob Marshall- long-time director of Self-Help Enterprises, Moises Loiza - Housing Assistance Council director, and over the decades, a close-knit group of peer non-profit CEOs.

#### **Leadership**

Peter focused on building the management and production side of the organization. Self-Help Enterprises expanded into multi-family housing, rehab, and infrastructure. One of his early challenges was to integrate two different organization cultures within SHE. Peter's work focused on business efficiency since his view was that business principles and efficiency enabled the mission to succeed. Peter's leadership emphasized developing people, financial management, effective information technology, business systems, and the organization's reputation. He balanced mission and service with strong management systems. Peter mentioned that leaders need to sell the enthusiasm of the mission and making a difference.



Peter was active in public service including serving a term as Mayor of Visalia and five years as chair of the state housing finance agency. SHE operated in a politically conservative environment and it was important for Peter and his colleagues to operate in a non-confrontational manner. He was active on the policy and legislative front at the state and national level. He played significant leadership roles at the local, state, and national level.

#### **Key accomplishments-**

1. Self-Help Housing has helped construct over 7,500 units of affordable housing
2. Forged key partnerships with many small cities, counties and local districts.
3. Built a strong financial base which allowed SHE a high degree of independence and stability.

#### **Advice/legacy**

Peter saw his legacy as deepening the philosophy of Self-Help Enterprises to “do what they say” and focus on action. He also talked about how housing and community development have shifted towards a collaborative approach and sees that as part of his legacy. A good example is the Goshen housing complex that includes rental housing, self-help housing, an FQHC, and a recreation center and community park, underscoring the importance of collaboration to achieve large scale community revitalization. It is a beautiful complex and one would never know that, most of the houses were built by the families with support from Self-Help Enterprises staff

### **Gordon Chin**

**Professional development/early jobs-** Gordon grew up in Oakland, California. His grandfather was from Guangzhou. He mentioned the importance of San Francisco Chinatown as the entry point for so many Chinese Americans. Gordon offered the analogy of comparing the spiritual value San Francisco Chinatown to Chinese Americans with Harlem for the African American community. Gordon went to San Francisco State during the height of student activism and he participated in the student strike in 1968 where he met a lot of other activists. This spurred Gordon’s activism which transitioned into the Chinese community. He started as an organizer in 1972 to preserve and support the Chinese community in the face of development pressures. He worked on an SRO project and with youth gangs to solve community challenges. Gordon founded Chinatown Resource Center (CRC) in 1977 with five other organizations to represent the broad interests of the community. CRC helped form the Chinatown Community Housing Corporation which was spun off by CRC. Interestingly, it became part of CRC in 2000 which allowed both organizations to combine advocacy, planning, and housing development under one roof. The new name for the unified organization is Chinatown Community Development Center. One of the major achievements of CRC during the first decade was the rezoning of Chinatown to lower height limitations critical to preserving existing affordable housing, since there were 950 apartment buildings housing Chinese Americans, and preservation is critical for preserving low-income units.

#### **Mentors**

Gordon’s mentors included Reverend Harry Chuck who preserved Chinatown playgrounds, Larry Jack Wong, and George Woo a professional photographer for Sunset Magazine.

#### **Leadership**

Gordon’s initial focus was on building a strong organizing team, hiring planners to develop plans and help with the rezoning campaign. His affiliate organization CCHC had a housing development staff with property managers since CRC and CCHC developed several affordable housing units. Gordon’s leadership was designed to keep a critical balance between organizing, development, and management, and without



organizing and planning, development is stymied. Gordon provided the leadership in growing the organization and its advocacy and programs. One area of pride to Gordon was the development of tenant associations and youth and senior groups. CRC has over 1600 members in the tenant associations providing important opportunities for residents to express their priorities. CRC also developed strong youth and senior organizations. At the same time, Gordon focused on the internal capacity of CRC. They developed the position of Deputy Director in 2006 to strengthen infrastructure and systems, and the organization also expanded the management team from six to twelve to make sure that major program directors were involved. The organization aggressively pursued shared training and took senior staff to NeighborWorks and other training venues.

### **Key Accomplishments-**

1. Creating several strong organizations that combined advocacy, organizing, planning, and development.
2. Winning the rezoning battle to keep Chinatown lower height limitations, preserving 950 buildings in Chinatown.
3. Starting tenant, youth, and senior associations with 1600 members.

### **Advice/legacy**

Gordon started telling people in 2008 that he was planning to leave in 2011. The board and staff leadership team used Compass Point as a tool to identify personal qualities that they were looking for in the next leader of the organization. The board hired Norman Fong a senior staff member of CRC to be the new Executive Director. Gordon saw his legacy that he had an important role in building leadership in Chinatown, made a lot of friends and very few enemies and had a great time doing meaningful work. He talked about the importance of strategic thinking and deepening leadership in the organization and community. Gordon also wrote a book, *Building Community: Chinatown Style*, a thoughtful analysis of how Chinatown evolved and Gordon's role in leading and partnering with others. This is the best book we have seen written by a former community development leader.

### **Kerry Doi**

**Professional Development/Early jobs-** Kerry attended Cal State Long Beach and became active in Asian American student issues. He started a drop-in center for Asian American students to combat drug abuse in the community. He became interested in workforce and employment issues. Kerry was hired by the California State Employment Development Department (EDD) as a Minority Employment Representative based in Torrance. He learned about the Urban League and how it helped African-Americans get jobs and wanted to launch a similar initiative for Asian Americans, which became PACE. The timing was important since thousands of new Asian refugees arrived from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in Los Angeles and surrounding communities after the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

Kerry worked next for Rockwell International. His title was community interface representative and his major function was to bring resources from a multi-national corporation to the community. He supported Affirmative Action functions, as the only Asian-American on to ensure that employees had their rights. Kerry had a powerful mentor, but his biggest interest was in starting an Asian American organization to focus on employment opportunities. Kerry launched Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment (PACE) with other activists to bring together Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Koreans. PACE was incorporated in 1976 so they could receive funds. Mayor Tom Bradley wanted to fund an Asian American organization, and PACE was able to secure the funds to get started. They received CETA funds to provide job training for workers. PACE provides small business training especially to Korean businesses who wanted English



speakers and some American businesses who wanted Korean speakers. In the late 1970's, they started a handyman program for repairing homes for older adults to make them safer. PACE soon expanded into weatherization training programs and built their first affordable housing units in the early 1980's.

### **Mentors**

Kerry's early mentors included staff from TELACU formerly known as The East Los Angeles Community Union, and Uncle Bob Santos of the International District Improvement Association in Seattle.

### **Leadership**

Under Kerry's leadership, PACE has grown significantly in the past four decades and serves over 60,000 people annually, 90% of whom meet federal poverty standards. They provide workforce development, business technical assistance, non-traditional loans to people who are unbanked, asset building, financial counseling and coaching, pre-school enrollment, and other social services. PACE is probably the most ethnically diverse organization in the U.S. in the U.S. PACE serves the diverse Asian American Community, Latino Community, and African-American community in Los Angeles. 40 languages and dialects are spoken by PACE staff.

Kerry places a high priority on being strong advocate for PACE, the larger community, and their programs. PACE has become a large organization and Kerry feels a strong sense of urgency to redouble their efforts and work to improve the self-sufficiency of their clients and the sustainability of their programs. A good example is their energy development work to increase energy efficiency for low-income families and make them self-sufficient. Their energy efficiency work on an annual basis has led to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 20,000 cars on L.A. freeways.

### **Key accomplishments-**

1. PACE serves 60,000 people on an annual basis from all diverse communities, and the staff speaks 40 languages and dialects.
2. PACE provides a comprehensive array of workforce development, business support, asset building, pre-school education, and financial counseling and coaching.
3. PACE has trained 1,000 entrepreneurs

### **Advice/Legacy**

Kerry is still providing active leadership to PACE after 43 years and plans to continue at PACE for the foreseeable future. His major new priority is to build community engagement through PACE, a form of community organizing. Kerry wants PACE to help people find, develop, and use their voice to speak out on issues that are important to them. Kerry's vision is to build an organization strong enough to defend the community in times of need.

## **Robin Hughes**

### **Professional development/Early jobs**

Very early on in life, Robin knew that she wanted to work in community development, based on her experience of growing up in South LA and seeing the devastating impact the lack of resources had on disinvested communities. She observed that communities with limited resources not only had more difficulty accessing food, services and transportation, but living in these places also took a toll on the mental and social well-being of the residents.



During her college years at the University of Southern California, Robin majored in Public Administration thinking that she could have an impact if she worked in local government. While in Grad School, she worked with the Community Development Commission at Los Angeles County doing economic development work and really loved bringing new resources to communities.

Robin's early work included four years with Mayor Tom Bradley's office, making small business loans, but she missed working on tangible, physical projects that improved neighborhoods. Robin was introduced to affordable housing by veteran housing leader Carla Dartis. Carla let Robin know about a project manager position at the Los Angeles Community Design Center and Robin determined that this job was the exact fit for her interests. Working at the Community Design Center (now called Abode Communities) was Robin's dream job, and while there she rose to the position of CEO, a position she has been in for 23 years.

### **Mentors**

Carla Dartis was an early mentor in Robin's life. There were a couple of touch points where Carla steered Robin in the right direction and helped her understand the business. Along the way, Ann Sewill, Vice President of Health and Housing at the California Community Foundation, Robin's long-time boss at the Community Design Center, demonstrated how a passion for your job and drive to do good, were critical ingredients to success. From Ann, Robin learned that no problem was too big to take on, and that even if you couldn't solve the entire problem, you could, and should, make a dent in it. Jane Graf, CEO of Mercy Housing was also someone Robin admired and considered a mentor. Robin respected Jane's leadership in industry and her sharp thinking. Jane demonstrated that it isn't about being the greatest or best, it is about solving the problem

### **Leadership Style**

Robin's leadership style evolved over the years, as her organization grew, and as she gained experience. Robin noted that in the CD sector, many people get promoted because of their technical skills, not because of their management skills. We get technical training early on, but often have to learn management skills on the job. Robin strives to give those on her team authority, power and influence and to imprint on the team the values and culture of the organization. When asked what leadership style she admires, Robin jokily admits that she was always impressed with the leadership shown on the television and movie series Star trek. The leadership team in the series was highly diverse in gender and race, technically competent, and it delegated well, taking full advantage of each team members' competencies. Furthermore, the team also shared power well. All of these things are essential for a good team.

### **Key Accomplishments**

Robin's key accomplishments include building a strong organization with a highly capable executive leadership team. Under Robin's leadership, Abode Communities is among the nation's top developers of affordable housing. The organization has deepened its mission, impact and services expanding from architecture and real estate development to include property management and resident services. Robin is proud of the organization's deep impact and ability to persevere through good times and bad. The organization has become resilient because they've had to manage through down cycles in the industry. Beyond bricks and mortar, Robin is an effective and persuasive advocate for the production and preservation of affordable housing and investment in low income community of color.

### **Advice**

There were moments in time for Robin when there were different realizations about her work. When she shifted from being a real estate developer to the primary leader of the organization, it required a big mind shift and change of focus to bigger, higher level issues than project deal points. She also strove to create a



culture of balance, so that in addition to being a good boss, she could be a great mother and wife. Over the last decade she has worked hard to make sure the organization has the right people in the right jobs. As a sector, Robin believes that we need to overcome the stigma of affordable housing so that we don't have to spend so much time battling public perceptions that make our work so much harder. For future leaders, we need to start a younger level, and make sure that economic barriers aren't preventing people from joining our work.

## **Marty Johnson**

### **Professional development/early jobs**

Marty grew up in Akron, Ohio. Both of his grandparent sets came from sharecropper families—one from Alabama/Georgia and the other from Southern Ohio. They moved to Akron to find work in the tire industry during the Depression. Marty's parents divorced when he was 16, leaving him with an invalid mother and younger siblings, who didn't want to be viewed as a welfare family. Marty was recruited to play football at Princeton University. With questions about his own culture, Marty studied Cultural Anthropology, and after football season junior year, he studied in NE Brazil. He learned Portuguese and researched the impact of a planned industrial seaport complex on a fishing village south of Recife. He returned to Princeton for his senior year, when he and two other students founded Isles Inc. in 1981. Growing out of a student-initiated seminar on the challenges of over-reliance on growth to solve the challenges of poverty, Isles sought to connect community-based groups to Appropriate Technology development opportunities. Marty was influenced by economist Herman Daly who wrote *Limits to Growth*, and E.F. Schumacher *Small is Beautiful*, Amory Lovins, John Mohawk, John Todd from New Alchemy Institute, Martin Luther King and David Morris from the Institute for Self-Reliance.

### **Early years**

While Marty was a senior at Princeton, he and his colleagues teamed up with Civil Engineer professor Steve Slaby and planned small scale appropriate technology projects, including a housing development project using local materials and renewable energy on the island of Grenada. When the U.S. invaded Grenada, the project died. They planned a second greenhouse/aquaculture project with young leaders from the Mohawk Nation in upstate New York/Canada, which also failed to be built. Isles started looking at housing development in Trenton, but when complications of funding arose, they tried urban agriculture on vacant land. They started working with community gardens, going from one garden in 1981 to 12 in 1982 and 20 in 1983.

Marty connected with the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) in 1982 and began laying the groundwork for creating community land trusts. Along with the gardens, Isles was able to complete several housing projects. Ten years later, Isles began to clean up brownfields, leading to innovative healthy homes work that Isles has pursued statewide in New Jersey. Isles mission was distilled to 9 words: to foster family self-reliance and healthy sustainable communities. Isles bridges community development and environmental health sectors.

### **Mentors**

Andy Reding, Mark Schultz, John Mohawk and Jose Barrero of Akwesasne Notes, Chuck Matthei and John Davis from the Institute for Community Economics, Alan Mallach, Liz Johnson, Paul Clements, Fred Vereen, Mauricio Lim Miller and hundreds – thousands – of others.



## Leadership

Isles' theory of change has been to provide affordable or free products and services that families and groups choose to use. To do that, the power relationship between the three main players of our game – Beneficiaries, Managers of orgs and Funders, must be more equal. Marty leads towards that shared agenda outcome – challenging funders, elevating the voices and decisions of those we serve, and assuring that Isles' staff does no damage to our end game – family self-reliance and community health. He is white, and aware of the challenge of so many white-led organizations working in mostly communities of color. Isles board leadership are people of color, upper management is diverse, and he has raised a family in the same communities where Isles works for 38 years. Marty works to build psychological safety within his team and among the funders and beneficiaries of Isles work. That requires a mix of hubris and humility, and appreciation for both chaos and order.

Marty placed a premium on hiring diverse, smart people who “get” Isles' mission, and don't feel the need to be the smart intermediaries between resources and those we serve. Those that excel at Isles are comfortable with learning, reasonable risk, making mistakes, avoiding making decisions for others and adapting. He also worked hard to build a functional board with three key types: community representatives; technical people with financial, legal, marketing, etc. skills; and regional ambassadors to connect us across the region and help raise resources. This “multi-tribal” structure is a challenge to manage, but the best option for Isles.

## Key Accomplishments-

1. Starting an organization from scratch and growing it over time, keeping the freedom to step out of the head of other orgs while maintaining Isles vision and mission.
2. Turning Isles work to protect kids from environmental hazards – especially lead – resulting in important new breakthroughs in healthy homes and energy efficiency.
3. Winning large-scale N.J. statewide Lead Remediation programs and policy shifts.
4. Creating a “think and do tank” culture at Isles.
5. Learning to teach what Marty learned to next generation leaders at Princeton and beyond.

**Advice/legacy-** Find ways to align your heart and head. The heart is the mission and relationship and intrinsic motivation to keep going. The head is learning skills that matter and systems to manage effectively over time. Marty has led Isles for 38 years and teaches social entrepreneurship part-time at Princeton for the past four years. He believes more practitioners should be in the classroom, and more PhD's out in the field. It's time to develop a pipeline of talented social entrepreneurs unbridled from the traditions of the social work profession. Isles is going to begin a national search in the Spring of 2019 for Marty's successor, and will look at both internal and external candidates. His successor needs to be similarly multi-tribal, comfortable in the community, fiercely protective of the potential for self-reliance, able to engage thought leaders and raise money from funders and wealthy donors throughout the region.

## Lynette Jung Lee

### Professional development/Early jobs

Lynette is from Hawaii and her background was English Literature and Education. She taught in an alternative high school in Oakland Chinatown focused on with immigrants and some gang members. She taught ESL and Civics. She also taught at an Adult school and helped get students engaged in social action. She met several Asian activists who introduced her to EBALDC. She joined the board of the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) IN 1975.



Lynette was hired as the second staff person by EBALDC as a Volunteer Coordinator. She was Acting Director for a brief time till a new Executive Director was hired. She then became Assistant Director. She worked on research and data analysis for major projects including the Asian Resource Center. Paul Chant, the EBALDC Executive Director resigned in 1982 to work at SBA and Lynette was promoted to Executive Director in 1982.

**Mentors-** Don Tamaki- Asian Law Caucus; Greg Marks- Professor, Asian Studies Center; and Serena Chen- Asians Now

### **Leadership**

Lynette was able to get the Asian Resource Center completed early in her tenure. She then led the organization into producing affordable housing starting with a 119-unit complex in partnership with BRIDGE Housing. Lynette worked closely with her board which was composed of a mixture of professionals and community residents. Some of her board members were risk adverse and did not want to do challenging community projects. She was able to succeed by partnering with other organizations and convince the board about the importance of initiatives that helped vulnerable populations. Lynette saw herself as a Servant Leader and provided leadership opportunities for staff. She placed a major premium on training and staff development. She encouraged the staff to develop several new economic development and housing initiatives. She was a persistent leader quietly getting results for EBALDC and the community.

### **Key Accomplishments**

1. Strong diversified organization
2. Developed over 1,000 units of housing. And 300,000 sf of commercial and community space
3. Several major commercial initiatives including Asian Resource Center, Swan's Marketplace, and Preservation Square.

### **Advice/legacy**

Lynette began planning her transition in 2007 and left EBALDC in 2009. EBALDC did a national search and hired a new director to start in 2009. She encourages organizations to partner and serve the low-income populations that are most at risk. Lynette saw her legacy is also an organization that does important work and has strong morals and values.

## **Ron Phillips**

### **Professional Development/ Early job**

Ron is first-generation of Albanian descent. He was educated at Boston University, the University of Strasbourg in France, and Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in NYC, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. While growing up on Cape Cod, Massachusetts he was close to his grandfather, who was a fisherman and farmer, and ran a general store. Ron worked with the National Council of Churches in NYC and was co-founder of the newly-organized Corporate Information Center (CIC), predecessor to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). CIC undertook research and, through church shareholder actions, challenged multinational corporations' impact on Third World people and communities both in the U.S. and internationally: apartheid South Africa, martial law in the Philippines, strip-mining on western Indian lands, and copper mining in Puerto Rico.

Formation of Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI) – In late 1974 Ron and his family moved to Maine. With support from the State, banks, businesses, and community action agencies, in 1977 he was among the core



founders and became CEO of CEI, a Community Development Corporation modeled on the Office of Economic Opportunity's Title VII program. CEI's initial focus was to raise capital and invest in the State's value-added natural resource sectors - farms, fish and forests. Its first major investment in 1979 in the Boothbay Fish and Cold Storage, Boothbay Harbor put CEI "on the map." CEI packaged local, government, private individual, fishermen, church endowment funds, and bank financing to rebuild an historic processing facility that had burned down – the blend now a routine practice of financing in the community development field.

### **Leadership**

In a team culture, over 38 years Ron built CEI through a series of market opportunities. In addition to natural resource industries, CEI provided venture capital and debt financing to job-creating small and micro businesses, community facilities such as child care, and affordable housing, while building a strong balance sheet. He deployed consensual decision-making, with major decisions also guided by an active board of directors, and strategic partnerships both in Maine and nationally. He emphasized horizontal leadership as part of the organizational culture.

### **Mentors**

Ron credits CEI's success from the many relationships built with entrepreneurs, practitioners, and funders such as the Ford Foundation who sponsored the long-term growth of the organization. The National Congress for Community Economic Development was Ron's spiritual and inspirational watering hole that sustained his efforts. Other important groups were the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC). He was a founding member of Rural LISC, and along with the Opportunity Finance Network - the voice of the CDFI network - he served on these institutions' boards for many years.

### **Key accomplishments**

1. Elevating the voice of, and developing a model rural, community development and financial institution.
2. Engaging in policy with Rapoza Associates and other advocates to expand resources for the field;
3. Advocating in Maine for consumer finance protections, women and small businesses financing;
4. Linking job creation with employment training resources; and
5. Including social services such as child care as essential to holistic community development.

CEI also was among the first organizations to focus on environmental investing and climate change. Today CEI is ranked among the top CDCs and CDFIs in the nation.

### **Advice/legacy**

Ron retired in 2016. His successors, CEO Betsy Biemann and President Keith Bisson, have effectively carried on with the mission and culture of CEI. Ron's advice to the community development field is to balance three key attributes of the CDC/CDFI field: investment, social capital, and policy – using both equity and bank-like capital; empowering people and communities at the margins through technical support of populations it serves; and engaging in policy for wider impact. While tensions between the three are certain, a healthy balance can ensure the CDC/CDFI is also holistically an agent of change for the good.

## **Sue Taoka**

### **Professional development/Early Jobs**

Sue grew up in a farming region of Colorado. Her interest in equity and social justice began during the anti-war and civil rights movements in the 1970s when she was an undergrad at the University of Colorado in Boulder. While she was in school, she met Bob Santos, a leader in the Asian American community in



Seattle. Bob introduced Sue to others who were active in issues pertaining to Asian Americans. She became aware of the discrepancies in communities and the imbalance of power and resources and decided that she wanted a career where she could work to correct these inequities. Sue moved to Seattle to go to law school and looked up Bob Santos who was, at the time, running Interim, a nonprofit community organization aimed at improving conditions of Seattle's Chinatown-International District. Bob offered Sue a job and she ended up working there over 10 years.

Sue began her career as a community organizer, working with the Asian American community in Denver after she finished her bachelor's degree. She helped elderly Asian Americans by linking them with youth and farmers. She followed this with her work at Interim, two years in Seattle Mayor Norm Rice's office, and 16 years as the CEO of the Seattle Chinatown-International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDPDA). She ended her career with ten years at Craft3, a large Community Development Financial Institution serving the Northwest.

**Mentors** Sue had many professional mentors during her career, including Asian American leaders Bob Santos, Gordon Chin of the San Francisco Chinatown CDC and Bill Watanabe of LA's Little Tokyo Service Center. She also counts Mayor Rice, John Berdes and Mike Dickerson of Craft3, and Elaine Takahashi of LA as mentors.

### **Leadership Style**

Given Sue's roots as a community organizer, her approach to community development was based on a collaborative model. She understood that she had to work with others and create buy-in. Sue had to buck the traditional roles for Asian American women of staying home and caring for children fulltime, as she advanced her career and leadership impact. She also had to combat the perception by some in the civil rights movement that race was a Black and White issue, and that the issues in the Asian community weren't valued. The perception was that Asians were a model minority community and that the struggles of others were more important. Sue had to educate others about the range of Asian populations in the US and the unique challenges that each of these groups faced. To be successful, Sue learned that tenacity was essential and that you have to keep showing up and saying what needs to be said so that you can get issues addressed and communities improved.

### **Key Accomplishments**

Sue's most impactful single project was Village Square in the International District, a large, complex, mixed-use development that SCIDPDA developed with public and private partners, over a twelve-year period.

### **Advice**

Going forward, Sue noted that community development has become very sophisticated, and we must make sure that we don't lose touch with the people and the communities we are trying to help. She also believes that older professionals need to be willing to step aside and make room for the next generation of leaders.



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Dethmer, Diane Chapman, and Kaley Klemp, *The 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership* (Conscious Leadership Group, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Leonardo Vazquez, *Leading From The Middle: Strategic Thinking for Planning and Community Development Professionals* (Rutgers University).

<sup>3</sup> John Abele, "Bringing Minds Together," *Harvard Business Review* July 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Burt Nanus and Steven Dobbs, *Leaders Who Make A Difference* (Jossey-Bass, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> James Collins and Jerry Porras, *Built To Last* (Harper Business, 1994).