

June 26, 2025

**Subject:** Racial Equity Commission March 20, 2025, Meeting Minutes  
**Prepared By:** Toya Davis, Operations Manager, Racial Equity Commission  
**Reviewed By:** Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

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## **Recommended Action**

Approval of the March 20, 2025, Racial Equity Commission Meeting Minutes.

## **Racial Equity Commission March 2025 - Meeting Minutes**

### ***Agenda Item #1: Welcome***

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** Commissioner Matthews called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM. Shared a reminder that the Commission condemns acts of hate and discrimination. Commissioner Matthews shared the CA vs Hate resource line. Commissioner Matthews noted that Chair Wood and Commissioner Sala may participate virtually.

### **B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

### **C. REVIEW OF THE AGENDA**

### **D. REMARKS FROM DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**

Commissioner Matthews welcomed any distinguished guests in the room to address the Commission. Imperial Valley College President, Lennor Johnson. Larissa De la Torre represented the office of The Honorable Steve Padilla, Office of State Senator; California Energy Commissioner, Noemi Gallardo.

**E. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM:** Quorum not met; 5/11 Commissioners Present (in-person)

### **Commissioners Present:**

1. Commissioner Candis Bowles
2. Commissioner Virginia Hedrick (Virtually)
3. Commissioner John Kim
4. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado
5. Commissioner Traco Matthews
6. Commissioner Jolie Onodera (Virtually)
7. Commissioner Dr. Manuel Pastor

### **F. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS**

#### **Public Comment**

***Agenda Item #2: Public Comment on matters not on the agenda***

Luis Olmedo of Comite Civico; John Urbanas, former Imperial Valley College student; Archie Roundtree, Jr., Justice in Aging, Monica Madrid, Coalition for Human Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), William Cooper, Becoming Project; Kei Yamamoto, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Lizbell Garcia, community member.

***Agenda Item #3: ACTION: Consent Agenda***

No action was taken due to the quorum not being met.

**Commission Discussion**

No Commission discussion.

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

***Agenda Item #4: Fireside Chat- Seeking Common Ground: Effective Communication for Racial Equity and Improved Systems***

**Commissioner Dr. Manuel Pastor**

**Guest Speaker: Angela Blackwell Glover, Founder in Residence, PolicyLink**

**Pastor:** Asked about the term “Racial Equity is being disparaged” ...and what did Ms. Blackwell Glover think about this current moment and what should we be taking away from this moment.

**Blackwell Glover:** The “quest” [we are on is] to come to grips with the racial angst that defined the development of the nation. The thought not to say “diversity, equity and inclusion” as the idea is to make a fundamental change. The thought that defining “equity” will place it in a position to be “shut down”. The realization that this thought was wrong because with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was about being transformative. Because of these efforts, thousands of people have learned history they never were interested in, they have had conversations they never thought to have and have seen humanity of people that were previously put to the side. They have had to think about what they would do differently. Millions of people have been touched. We have started the process of getting DEI into the DNA of society. People cannot unlearn what they have learned and cannot unsee what they have seen. Now, how do we transform society so that it is fully inclusive?

**Pastor:** Everything you said was very plainly spoken. What do we need to do to make this framework sensible?

**Blackwell Glover:** Always strive to get personal, mental clarity and then to find words for everyone without offending others. PolicyLink did not develop the definition of equity for ten years after [the organization] was established. The definition is: “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential”. The term is intentional so structures and systems can be fundamentally changed.

**Pastor:** Spoke of his father and the importance of plain-language. How can we move State Agencies into the vision of equity and to develop their own systems of accountability? What has been successful on moving States, metros, or cities on moving forward with equity in mind.

**Blackwell Glover:** The best policy is informed by the wisdom, voice and experience of people who are working effectively for change in their communities... local leaders are national leaders as they are working in their communities to solve the nation's problems. Examples include helping communities get inclusionary zoning within their communities so there is good transportation, housing, schools, and community-centered policing which addressed the idea that communities are safe. Not just social equity, but economic equity as well with cities such as New Orleans and Minneapolis to make sure contracts were available and young people had access to jobs which allowed democracy to work in service to human flourishing. This is not transformative, this is a chance to flex the muscle of democracy so everyone can flourish.

**Pastor:** How important were the toolkits, the data, all of the practical matters in your work?

**Blackwell Glover:** PolicyLink's tagline is "using what works". People need to see the data so they can see the data to know where to focus. Focus on consistent strategies and on stories that are added for personal connections.

**Pastor:** This region [Imperial Valley] has been marginalized. What is your experience with regions in which the region is experiencing environmental pollution and economic disparity. How do we bring in geographic equity?

**Blackwell Glover:** Inner-core cities, such as places or "urban areas" had not just racial equity issues, but regional inequity issues. Globally, State, metropolitan areas are connected and affected by issues. The region cannot flourish if the core disintegrates. Regional conversations started inequity conversations and had us look at the racial dimensions. We have to understand and accept analysis to see interdependence and to have a sustainability conversation. Data and analysis will be useful but there must be public will and advocacy to do something about it. Public will comes out of protests, advocacy and causing people to do what they are not used to doing. For California to thrive, all regions of California need to thrive. We are more sophisticated with our advocacy than we are with our follow-up which is where data, resources, and application of the sophisticated advocacy ties.

**Pastor:** In this moment of turmoil, what is giving you hope and helping you stay centered?

**Blackwell Glover:** Hope is a discipline. Hope is not sitting around wishing that things will be different, it is the discipline of knowing where you are, the history and that has happened before, understanding why we have gotten to where we are as well as who is being impacted and where they are being impacted. Finding out what works and doing the work of getting it into policy and assigning yourself to engaging in transformative solidarity. By doing the work, you improve the possibility of a different result. This is the test of democracy because we have lost any sense of what it is for as it has been reduced to the process of democracy. Democracy has a "north star"... human flourishing. "Radically inclusively, mutually accountable, multi-racial democracy in service of human flourishing"-universal human flourishing so that society can thrive in a way that each of us defines it. We need to define the outcomes of democracy. Multi-racial includes everyone. This nation was born with high ideals (liberty, justice and freedom) yet

a devastating reality (genocide, stolen land and slavery); in-between those two is where our nation was born. The notion that people decide “of the people, by the people and for the people”, the democracy has gotten stronger through struggle with all of the civil rights movements.

**Pastor:** Reiterated three things for the Commission to take away: 1. To be plain-speak plain language, speak everyday language, to be accountable. 2. To be particle with toolkits, policies and campaign plans and things that make this real, 3. Possible-to show people what is possible and thriving is attainable.

#### ***Q/A and Commissioner Discussion***

**Hedrick:** Reiterated “people cannot unsee what they have seen” and the power in that in this moment. That was inspirational and powerful.

**Onodera:** Reiterated hope is a discipline”, and looking at matters through a regional lens”

**Kim:** We have six months to complete the framework; would you recommend we, as a commission, push hard and go hard, or do we do something in the middle to build on in the future?

**Blackwell Glover:** Focus on equity that benefits all such as the “curbs” that are cut in the sidewalk that were meant to help people with disabilities in wheelchairs, and yet, others benefit from that such as those using strollers, crossing the street safely. If you solve problems with nuances in society, inevitably, the benefits will cascade out. Start out talking about the problems in California and the key to addressing issues in California is to make sure the population that makes up California can completely participate, prosper and reach its full potential. Utilize data to show that relationship and drill down on what needs to happen because that is the only way to thrive. When California can figure out a way for every Californian to thrive, we will have figured out a way for this multi-racial nation of the future to thrive. We will have the blueprint and lead the country in this change. We cannot get there if we do not build this capacity and muscle. Come with the truth.

**Pastor:** Pushing soft to avoid controversy, pushing hard to be performative, or pushing smart to be effective.

**Maldonado:** Proposition 209 [in California] has set limits on recommendations we can make based on race, so in agreement with addressing the issue based on geographic equity conversation. How do we go about that considering Proposition 209?

**Blackwell Glover:** Instead of saying “we want a specific group to prosper”, we say “we want all to prosper”. How do we know that specific people are not prospering? We look at the data and the data will tell you. That brings to mind where to focus. That also shows what data to analyze, it could be elderly, people with disabilities, etc. That is sincere work, because we do not want one group to thrive, we want everyone to thrive.

**Bowles:** Thank you for sharing your wisdom and framing as well as the discipline of hope.

**Matthews:** Thank you for sharing today, your presentation was fire and I hope to meet you in person one day.

**Public Comment**

Kei Yamamoto, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; Maria Baracat, Transformative Racial Equity at Greenlining, Ashley Contreras and Angela Flores, Imperial Valley Equity and Justice.

**Agenda Item #5: 10-Minute Recess**

Commissioner Matthews called for break at 3:43 p.m.; the meeting reconvened at 3:53 p.m.

**Agenda Item #6: Executive Director's Report**

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Dr. Larissa Estes; presented the Proposed Model for Transformation based on feedback from the December Commission meeting. Three questions were posed for future consideration of the Commission.

1. How do we define the values?
2. How does the Commission intend to shift power to communities within its scope?
3. What mechanism (should) be put into place for the Commission to measure and evaluate progress (of framework implementation) as well as hold themselves accountable to these values?

**No action was taken as there was no quorum.**

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

**Agenda Item #7: Committee Reports****A. BUDGET EQUITY COMMITTEE REPORT, 02/20/2025**

Commissioner Maldonado highlighted four key elements for recommendations for the State Budget Equity Framework: 1. Prioritization-the community needs to have a meaningful and substantive role in the prioritization of the State budget, 2. Transparency- using technology to walk the public through the budget process, 3. Input-direct correlation from the input of citizens on the priorities of the budget, 4. Accountability- hard metric accountabilities for non-adherence or non-investment in the equity framework in the state budget process.

**B. DATA EQUITY COMMITTEE REPORT, 02/20/2025**

Pastor highlighted partnerships with academic institutions and “train the trainer” so that it becomes easier for those in the State to take on the work.

**C. Framework Development Committee- no report presented.****Public Comment**

William Cooper, Becoming Project

***Agenda Item #8: 5-Minute Recess***

Item skipped

***Agenda Item #9: Commission Discussion on Key Elements and Topics to Consider for the Framework***

Joyce Chiao, Facilitator, Abundance

Joyce Chiao presented on the initial committee recommendations and the summary of tools and methodologies.

**Matthews:** Include more data about the entire state (statewide barriers).

**Maldonado:** Focus on geographic equity as an approach for methodology, and use data to overly geography to identify disparities within that region and then look at special groups within that view

**Onodera:** Geographic data focus

**Kim:** Are we going to describe a plan to build tools within the framework or are we going to build tools inside the framework? Is there a way to develop a database framework? Are we going to describe a methodology or are we going to build it? This is going to be judged, so the more real will be helpful. Add the findings from Vital Research, Possibilities Labs and State of Equity into the applicable sections or in the implementation section. What is a concrete example and what are practitioners saying about this? Priority around direct partnerships (CBOs), highlight direct engagement.

**Maldonado:** Revisit the “Four Buckets” from the December meeting and identify and define recommendations and allow the public to provide feedback; provide an analysis of the recommendations; categorize each section and allow the public to drop recommendations in “Word Cloud” with the “four buckets”.

**Chiao:** intersection of data and geography, planning/building the tool itself, building on past learnings and more community engagement

**Matthews:** We have not landed on the: four buckets”. We should institutionalize how community engagement is done as a State, require state departments to meet the community where they are through round tables, listening sessions in partnerships with trusted messengers which must include CBOs, must have language accessibility, and must include cultural sensitivities, outside of “normal: business hours. This would allow people to attend and include childcare, food, etc.

**Bowles:** How do we get framework accountability? How is the framework going to be evaluated as meaningful and transformative?

**Executive Director Estes:** Staff is considering measurement and evaluation which is costly. On-going relationships with community is going to continue because we are going back to communities.

**Pastor:** Graduate public policy class to see if they would like to take the public policy part as their graduate project; allow community to talk for more than two minutes so we can hear their stories

**Chiao:** How do we continue to bring in more partnership, more community voices?

**No action was taken as there was no quorum.**

### **Commission Discussion**

Aiden Lin-Tostado, of Youth Empowerment Commission; Alejandra Ponce de Leon, of Catalyst California; Nico Shabizian, Catalyst California; Eric Payne, Central Valley Urban Institute

### ***Agenda Item #10: Next Steps for Staff Action***

Dr. Estes shared the purpose of today's meeting was to hear from different subject matter experts to be able to move forward with drafting the framework in plain language, make it practical, and possible. June's agenda will be centered around a working meeting that allows for discussion in community around each other.

### ***Meeting Adjournment***

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.