

Impact Report: 2021 Leadership Academy on Homelessness in Alameda County

From July to November 2021, St. Mary's Center partnered with EveryOne Home and East Bay Housing Organizations to hold a Leadership Academy for residents with lived experience of homelessness and poverty. As a team, we focused on the essential elements that students needed to become informed, effective, affordable housing advocates. This cohort of 15 advocates continues to positively impact the families and individuals affected by homelessness within Alameda County. Success stories include recent graduates, **Arlene Hipp**, **Ramiro Montoya**, and **Cathy Eberhardt** serving as members under the EveryOne Home - Home Together 2026 Strategic Planning Committee to shape an allocation of \$43 million in homeless funding.

Leadership Academy Learning Outcomes

Students:

1. Connected on shared experiences and learned from the diverse circumstances of those impacted by homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
2. Navigated the power shift from an Advocate to an Advocate as a Decisionmaker.
3. Critically analyzed the root causes of homelessness by understanding the intersection of housing, race, and class and how to represent historically excluded communities through shaping regional urban planning and housing policies.
4. Utilized the county budget process to influence budget priorities, deepened knowledge of power-mapping tools, and improved their public speaking skills.
5. Understood the differences between city and county governmental resources and measured the effectiveness of various social service models.

Highlights from the program included: (not limited to)

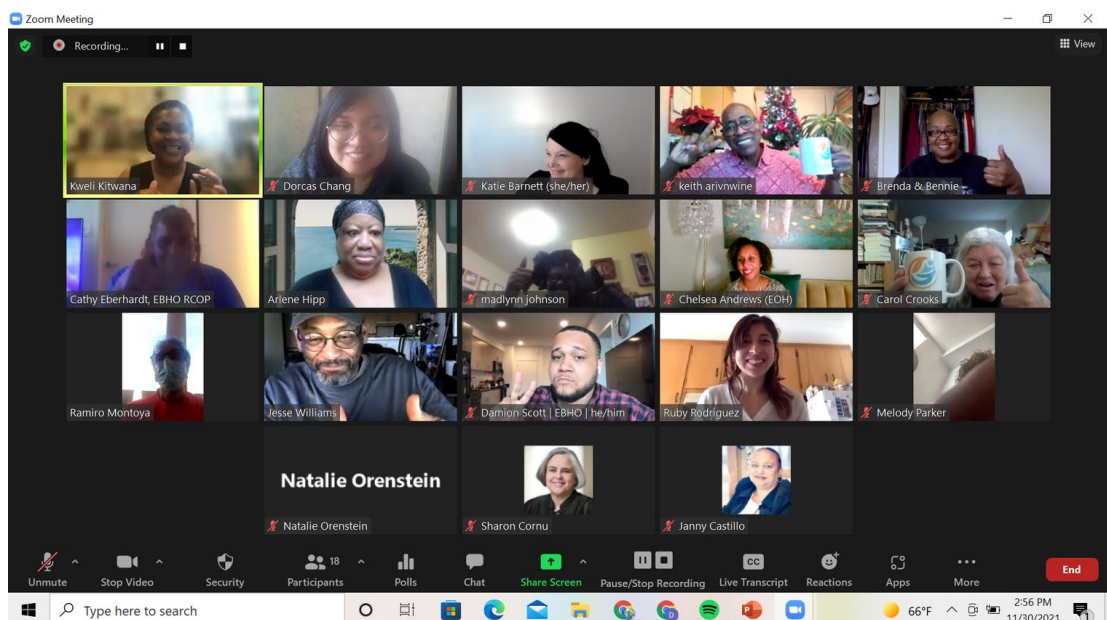
- Delivery of six core training tracks (including *Working Together for Solutions to Homelessness*, *Leadership Skills & Successful Meeting Participation*, *Best Practices: Racial Equity and Housing Intersection*, *How Local Government Works "101"*, *Services for Unhoused and Housing Insecure Neighbors in Alameda County: What the Plans Call For*, and *Hear Our Voice: Alameda County Solutions to Homelessness*)
- The strategic shift from in-person to virtual training due to COVID-19.
- Recruitment and vetting of over 30 applicants.
- Over 98% participation from leaders.
- 50+ resources and tools (including web links, online tools, handouts, and videos).
- Presentations and speakers from the county and city, and key homeless focused organizations.
- Earned media from *the Oaklandside*, promoting and highlighting the program.
- Three participants are already advancing to commission appointments.

Participant Vision and Goals



Lessons learned from the program included: (not limited)

- It is best to secure youth engagement through recruitment methods unique to youth.
- The recruitment process should be clear and transparent to all.
- Booking speakers early as possible ensures diversity of representation of topics.
- Planning for photo documentation is imperative.
- It was a great resource having a team that was tech savvy and great with Constant Contact.
- Keeping the Google Sheet up to date is a team effort to avoid losing info and data needed for reporting.
- Locking down the system for incentives is essential.



Next Up: Leadership Academy II to develop a policy agenda in Summer/Fall 2022.

2021 Leadership Academy Graduates



Keith Arivnwine

Keith lived in abandoned houses as he struggled to find stability when revolving in and out of San Quentin jail. After four months at a winter shelter, he was offered rehabilitation classes, qualified for a housing subsidy, and became a senior advocate at St. Mary's Center. He now serves as a President of the Council of Elders, an active member of the CA4SSI coalition, Homeless Advocacy Working Group, and Residents United Network. Keith currently advocates for AB 328, a housing bill to provide rehousing services to formerly incarcerated Californians. He intends to strengthen his advocacy skills to fight for a safety net for others struggling like him without stable housing.



Paul Berry

Paul is twenty-four years old but has undergone the consequences of experiencing homelessness. He shares his story to inspire policy change in addressing the needs of youth in Alameda County. Paul is an advisory member of the Youth Action Board in partnership with EveryOne Home to yield policy change through advocacy, planning, and oversight necessary to end homelessness. He believes in increasing funding, supporting youth cooperation, and promoting incentives to combat homelessness among young adults.



Carol Crooks

Carol became homeless in the mid-1990s and began living outside in a yard, and eventually transitioned to a homeless shelter. She seeks to learn the tools to be a better homeless advocate to communicate the issue of homelessness to policymakers. Carol is active in homeless advocacy in Moms4Housing, Berkeley East Bay Grey Panthers, Friends of Adeline, East Bay Housing Organizations, and St. Mary's Center. She is passionate about creating housing for unhoused people by investing in amenities for camps and tiny homes to make it more accessible for the transition from homelessness to housing.



Dana Drew

Dana has lived experience with homelessness and understands the hardships of living on limited means. He became inspired to get involved in homeless advocacy to ensure those who do not have adequate shelter have a pathway toward financial self-sufficiency and mental health wellness. Dana is a life skill coach and mentor, and successful business owner. In March 2017, he completed the Contra Costa County AB 109 Peer Mentoring Program. In this program, Dana has learned to share knowledge and offer advice from his experience with adversity and strategies to achieve financial stability. He hopes to continue to serve the community and effectively advocate to end homelessness.



Cathy Eberhardt

At the age of 40, Cathy became disabled and was homeless for eighteen months, living in transitional housing and homeless shelters. Her personal experiences helped her understand the biases against persons with disabilities and inspired her to become a leader in her community. As an advocate for affordable housing through the East Bay Housing Organizations for over three years, she has lobbied legislators in Sacramento and spoken before the Oakland City Council. Cathy was recommended to Urban Habitat's Boards and Commission Leadership Institute and attended the six-month program in 2020. She will continue to develop her leadership skills to fight for affordable housing for all.



Arlene Hipp

Arlene Hipp is a resident of Oakland who has lived experience with being unhoused, and the trauma and impact of this life event have left a profound effect on her life. She hopes that the Leadership Academy program can educate her to empower individuals and families like herself struggling with housing and the intersecting areas affecting marginalized communities. Arlene sits on two boards, one steering committee, a member of several organizations, a resource for her church and community, and completed her certification in Non-Profit Management from Cal State. She endeavors to continue to grow in education and knowledge to work on social justice issues and change policies that continue to harm populations due to poverty.



Judy Jackson

Judy became homeless after having cancer because she struggled to secure a stable job working as a probationary teacher and could not afford rent. She strove to navigate social care services with a physical and mental disability and eventually qualified for housing in March 2002. Judy began her journey to disability and homeless advocacy after testifying on the Women and Children Committee in Sacramento and now she sits as a board member representing St. Mary's Center on the California Alliance for Retired Americans. She hopes, through her activism, to increase accessibility to people with physical and mental disabilities to ensure their safety, security, and belonging.



Madlynn Johnson

Madlynn experienced living in a shelter, vehicle, and couch-surfing throughout her lifetime. As a result of her hardships, while unhoused, she became involved as a senior advocate at St. Mary's Center to speak from her experience with poverty and learn about systems of care directed for the homeless. She is an active member of the Bring CA Home coalition and sits as a board member for the United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County. Madlynn aspires to prioritize a systems-of-care approach that supports people experiencing homelessness within their current needs and personalizes their experiences.



Brandy Nicole Mays

Brandy has experienced recurrent homelessness as a young adult and twice as a mother with children. She became rehoused two years ago. She stayed at six shelters, slept in a car for four months, and two transitional housing sites. Brandy became involved with the hopes of making an impact on changing policies on homelessness. She serves on the Youth Action Board in partnership with EveryOne Home to work on advocacy, planning, and oversight necessary to end homelessness. Brandy seeks to gain skills in professional career development to effectively advocate as a leader.



Ramiro Montoya

Ramiro was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2001, after five months of living and sleeping in his car. He lost his three jobs while being treated for cancer at the hospital. In 2014, after surviving cancer, his life dramatically changed when he joined EBHO to advocate for affordable housing. Ramiro regularly attended the Oakland Housing Authority Resident Advisory board meetings, commission meetings, EBALDC events, and Residents United Network conferences at the state capitol to share his story. His experiences shape his current passion for building skills to be a better advocate and enhancing and revising affordable housing laws to ensure everyone is guaranteed a place to call home.



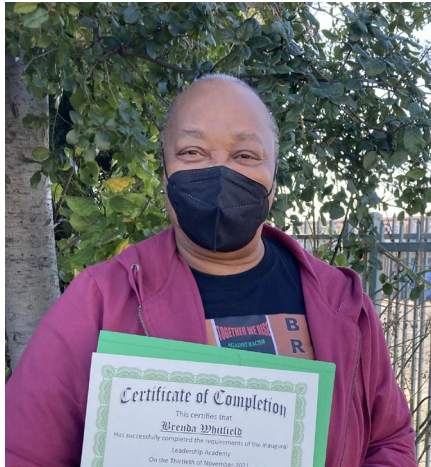
Melody Parker

Melody has lived experiences as an addict, a three-time cancer survivor, homelessness, and challenges with her mental health. She gives back to the community as an advocate through the Alameda County Pool of Consumer Champions, an active member of Black Cultural Zone, and a Resident Leader at the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation. She is certified as a Facilitator at Wellness Recovery Action Plan, Peer Specialist from Best Now, and a NAMI facilitator at In Our Own Voice. Melody hopes to learn to be an efficient leader and advocate for promoting fair, sufficient, and safe housing.



Zaynah Wafeeq

Zaynah lived in a park, slept on a sleeping bag, and rested on the sidewalks for three years. She now advocates for housing policies that account for those living on a fixed income by including a cost of living adjustment, a voucher to pay for housing each month, and sharing rent costs to make rent affordable. Zaynah's experience with homelessness inspired her to get involved with Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency as an employee and volunteer. She intends on fighting to make available resources as an advocate on a local commission to help improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness.



Brenda Whitfield

Born in 1951, Brenda never imagined she would experience homelessness in her lifetime. For years, she lived in abandoned houses, couch-surfing, and lived in a self-made tent along the railroad tracks. She became motivated to get involved to inspire hope for those who have struggled like her, surviving on limited means. Brenda currently serves on the Healthcare for the Homeless Consumer Advisory Committee and is an active member of Hope and Justice and the Council of Elders at St. Mary's Center. Her long-term goal is to strengthen her knowledge of homelessness, build resilience, and be a more decisive leader in her community.



Jesse Williams

Jesse experienced being without housing, almost twenty years ago. Still, the trauma of living outdoors without a home persists in haunting him: a repercussion from the criminalization of homelessness. During his bike rides in the neighborhood, he is constantly reminded of the previous locations he used to sleep overnight. Jesse believes that America's mindset has to change on homelessness, as poverty and racism are interconnected. Currently, he serves as a Hope and Justice Senior Advocate at St. Mary's Center and a Homeless Advocacy Working Group member involved in giving recommendations to the Oakland City Council on homelessness. Jesse feels strongly about challenging the racial status quo as an African American male directly impacted by these issues.

Leadership Academy Testimonials

First Session- Tuesday, July 27, 2021

"The first leadership academy woke up places in my mind that were dormant." – Brenda W.

"There was so much information that I feel like I need to research more, to feel more attuned with the topics." – Jesse W.

"I felt special, we were picked out of a large group of people" – Keith A.

"We are going to learn a lot, keep us motivated and learn information that will add to our social justice advocacy work." – Madlynn J.

Last Session- Tuesday, November 30, 2021

"These sessions had provided me direction and made me aware of issues that I am passionate about, and had made me believe now that I am an advocate when I did not before." - Jesse W.

"I am proud to be graduating from this academy." - Ramiro M.

"It was handled well as a remote learning class, and I have learned from everyone here." - Carol C.

"I have learned from all of you the knowledge of exploring the avenues to eradicate homelessness by devoting ourselves to making this happen by involving myself and listening to others. That gives me the knowledge and experience to be part of the Alameda County Healthcare for the Homeless." - Brenda W.

Staff Team and Organizations



St. Mary's Center

Consulting Coordinator, Kweli Kitwana
Executive Director, Sharon Cornu
Community Organizer, Ruby Rodriguez



EveryOne Home

Executive Director, Chelsea Andrews
Operations Manager, Dorcas Chang



East Bay Housing Organizations

Executive Director, Gloria Bruce
Lead Organizer, Dolores Tejeda

2021 Virtual Training Session Dates

Session 1: Tues. July 27, 2- 4p.m. - *Orientation: Working Together for Solutions to Homelessness*

Session 2: Tues. August 24, 2- 3:30 p.m. - *Leadership Skills & Successful Meeting Participation*

Session 3: Tues. September 28, 2- 3:30 p.m. - *Best Practices: Racial Equity & Housing Intersection*

Session 4: Tues. October 26, 2- 3:30 p.m. - *How Local Government Works "101"*

Session 5: Tues. November 23, 2- 3:30 p.m. - *Services for Unhoused & Housing Insecure Neighbors*

Session 6: Tues. Nov. 30, 2- 3:30 p.m. - *Hear Our Voice: Alameda County Solutions to Homelessness*

Curriculum Outline

Session	Description	Learning Content & Result
<p>Session 1</p> <p>* Each session will have (I) Inspiration, (P) Presentation/ Speaker, (A) Activity, (S) Skill Builder</p>	<p><i>Orientation: Working Together for Solutions to Homelessness</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Lesson Format</u></p> <p>Vision Activity: When We Work Together, What is Possible?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skill-builder: Using Policy and Advocacy to Advance Homeless Justice 2. Q&A Session 3. Peer Group Discussion: We all have a story - Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Experiences and Social Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Personal Stories (I) · Meet Chelsea Andrews, the Executive Director of EveryOne Home (P) · Activity: Breakout groups to discuss vision (A) · Skill Builder: Tomiquia Moss, Founder and CEO of All Home, talks about the importance of policy advocacy (S) <p>➔ Result: 17 attendees- Full attendance excluding the two additional participants. There is positive feedback from participants about their learning experiences in the testimonial section.</p>
Session 2	<p><i>Leadership Skills & Successful Meeting Participation</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Lesson Format</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skill-builder: How to read the agenda and read between the lines? What is advocacy and why does it matter? Robert's Rules Basics 2. Q&A Session 3. Peer Group Breakout: Role Play- Now Let's Practice, Who do you Represent? 4. Large Group Discussion: What are you learning about what it means to represent? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Inspiring Video about Homeless advocacy (I) · Meet Janny Castillo, Commissioner on Homelessness – Moving to the other side of the Table Building relationships and working with allies (P) · Activity: Role play (A) · Skill Builder Exercise <p>➔ Result: 17 attendees- Full attendance excluding the two additional participants. There is high engagement with the experiential learning process of applying Robert's Rules of Order.</p>
Session 3	<p><i>Best Practices: Racial Equity and Housing Intersection</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Lesson Format</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Root Causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning Herstory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Learn root causes of homelessness (I) · Housing History and Herstory Presentation (P) · Activities: How did we get here? Housing History and Herstory Discussion (A) · Skill Builder: Understand the intersection of housing, race, and class. (S)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing our Herstory: Creating our own timeline 2. Peer Group Discussion: How did we get here? 3. Some Housing History 4. Peer-learning session 5. Housing History and Herstory Discussion 	<p>→ Result: 14 attendees- Twelve out of the fifteen members were present, excluding the two additional participants; three excused absences. There is high interest in sharing personal stories in connection with the housing history of the Bay Area.</p>
Session 4	<p><i>How Local Government Works “101”</i></p> <p><u>Lesson Format</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions 2. Why Your Participation Is Important! 3. County Budget Process Overview 4. Influencing the Budget Process 5. Role play: Scenario 1 6. Public Speaking 7. Roleplay: Scenario 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Meet Bobbi Lopez, Former Chief of Staff for Council Member Rebecca Kaplan (I) · Overview of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors & Budget Presentation (P) · Activities: Creating a Program to Address Homelessness & Public Speaking Pitch to the Board (A) · Skillbuilder: Understanding the Budget Process, Oversight Process, Power-Mapping Tools and Public Speaking (S) <p>→ Result: 13 attendees- Eleven out of the fifteen members were present, excluding the two additional participants; four excused absences. There is high interest, engagement and questions relating to the county budget process.</p>
Session 5	<p><i>Services for Unhoused and Housing Insecure Neighbors in Alameda County: What the Plans Call For</i></p> <p><u>Lesson Format</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How taxes are collected 2. How expenditure plans are developed 3. City and County differences 4. Program options 5. Measuring impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understand how taxes are collected · Learn how expenditure plans are developed · Know the differences between the City and County government. <p>→ Result: Non-mandatory meeting after rescheduling. 14 attendees- Twelve out of the fifteen members were present excluding the two additional participants. There is a high level of commitment to understanding the differences between the county and city. In addition, there is a high interest in program options.</p>

Session 6	<p><i>Hear Our Voice: Alameda County Solutions to Homelessness</i></p> <p>Leadership Academy Graduation Ceremony</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activity: “Code Name” Game 2. Graduate Presentations and Remarks 3. Learning and Reflections: Our vision and goals to end homelessness in Alameda County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Graduate Presentations (P) · Activity: “Code Name” Game to create a code name for mission to end homelessness (A) · Skillbuilder: Develop our vision and goals to end homelessness in Alameda County (S) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Result: 14 attendees- Twelve out of the fifteen members were present excluding the two additional participants. There is positive feedback from participants about their learning experiences in the testimonial section.
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Acknowledgements



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Report text by Kweli Kitwana and Ruby Rodriguez.
Photos and design by Ruby Rodriguez.

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