

A Message from the CVCF Board of Directors & Staff

June 5, 2020



Our Valley is one beloved community that contains multitudes. The region's diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives makes us stronger and brings us together in our shared humanity.

When violence across our nation not only menaces individual victims, but exposes injustice for an entire race, everyone at CVCF shares the sense of violation. Rooted in the many backgrounds we bring, our values as individuals and as an organization demand 100% affirmation that Black lives matter.

Yet racism has never only been a matter of isolated, egregious acts. Recently, CVCF and its community partners have been embarking on a franker discussion of our history. Our nation and our Valley have, for far too long, experienced the racist outcomes of systems designed to impede more people than they empower.

Last year, CVCF and several hundred colleagues gathered to launch a new initiative, [Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy \(DRIVE\)](#). The vision of DRIVE is to create opportunities for all residents to achieve economic mobility by fostering an economy that is inclusive, vibrant and sustainable. Our objective is an investment plan for the inclusive transformation of our region. And we recognize that any plan to become inclusive will require all of us to understand, confront, and overturn the legacy of racist outcomes in our economy, schools, and neighborhoods.

The facts DRIVE has documented already are impossible to ignore:

- Fresno's economy ranks 59th out of 59 of California's largest cities for racial inclusion, [according to the Urban Institute](#).
- 5.8% of the population is Black but are only 2.4% of Fresno Unified educators.
- Only 2% of businesses with paid employees are Black-owned.
- Black households possess just one-tenth the average wealth of White households.
- The Black unemployment rate hovers around 20%, even in good times.
- Black mothers experience preterm birth at a two-thirds higher rate than White mothers.
- Black babies die at triple the rate of White babies.

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The DRIVE plan is still being developed, and we are preparing for significant community involvement and leadership, but what we know already is generating a powerful response. The DRIVE coalition has identified \$123 million needed over the next decade to help small businesses owned by people of color and women to grow; a total of \$221 million needed to boost the diverse teacher pipeline by 2030; and \$116 million needed for home visitation programs during pregnancy. The needs are significant, and CVCF is prepared to do its part to help assemble and deploy the capital required.

Since our work with the DRIVE coalition commenced, COVID-19 has arrived to exacerbate and remind us of chronic racial disparities in health outcomes. We have realized that charity ignorant of the underlying causes is insufficient. Therefore, as part of CVCF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are granting \$130,000 — to be matched by United Way Fresno and Madera Counties for a total of \$260,000 — to specifically reach the Black community with testing, contact tracing, and support for households grappling with the economic impacts of testing positive.

We name these actions humbly, knowing there is much more CVCF can and must continue to do. But each of us is empowered to help reshape the systems we touch, and what matters beyond words are the actions we take to do so. We are committed to working in partnership with all of you to advance the cause of justice and well-being in our communities.