

## BUILDING JUSTICE PODCAST



### CRISJ 'Building Justice' Podcast

**Season 2, Episode 7 :** The struggle to meet basic needs in Sacramento's underserved Black communities.

**Moderator:** Brenda-Joyce Newman, M.A., CRISJ Affiliate

**Guest:** Zuri K. Colbert, Founder of Community Lead Advocacy Program

*Please note: This transcript may be imperfect. Please contact the moderator of guest directly should you have questions.*

#### Music lyrics:

Company under construction, the function, justice for the human family we demand it. Justice, true freedom, equality is a must. Thus, decolonization of the planet. So bust this. People be the power now we're Building Justice. Pulling out divinations, now we're Building Justice. Welcome the planet to the Podcast, "Building Justice," "Building Justice," "Building Justice." Building is to add on, or to do away with.

0:22

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Welcome to Building Justice, a podcast produced by Sacramento State's Center on Race, Immigration and Social Justice (CRISJ). We explore critical issues affecting our communities with the hopes of creating a healthier and more just world. I am Brenda-Joyce Newman an alumna of Sacramento State University with a Master's degree in political science. Today, we will be talking about basic needs for the Sacramento community. I come enthusiastically and without reservation to introduce to some and known to others a woman with a true love for the people. Ms. Zuri Colbert, founder of the Community Lead Advocacy Program, acronym CLAP. Hello and welcome, Ms. Zuri. Can you please share with the listeners a little about yourself?

1:24

**Ms. Zuri:** Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. It is a pleasure and honor to be in your presence Ms Brenda, to be part of this wonderful podcast for our community. And you know, my name is Zuri K. Colbert. I am a founder of a wonderful organization called CLAP (Community

Lead Advocacy Program). And blessed to be here to talk about basic needs and specifically basic needs for the Black community here in Sacramento.

2:00

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Oh, that's great, Ms. Zuri. Thank you for sharing that with this. Ms. Zuri, How did CLAP form?

2:17

**Ms. Zuri:** Okay, yeah, well, I'm from Sacramento. I was raised here. I come from a military family that was stationed here. And we were blessed to be a part of a wonderful community of various Black, Latino, Asian and folks from all over the world. But our community, our friends became our family and we took care of each other (no matter what was going on). And, that was part of my--how my---life was shaped and created: to always be united with others, but also created a life of service. Because when you're a military family, you are always serving, always volunteering. And that's how I became involved in human services, working in the community and how I raised my daughter. So I was raised here in Sac. So during the pandemic time, a lot of our our families were going without and individuals were going without. And, as you know, like, in Sacramento, the marginalized communities, there are staples such as, like, housing and affordable housing and community centers. But throughout these years before the pandemic, and especially now, there's been such a deficit for the very basic needs (and access to those needs). And, so, a lot of those areas where resources were really scarce were in the neighborhoods that were predominantly Black and people of color---here in Sacramento. And that, you know, comes from (like [other] cities around California, where the distribution of resources, housing, economic sources are due to, you know, historical redlining ordinances and laws that were set in place generations ago. Um, but just with mapping and locating where resources are and organizations that provide the basic needs (like free hot meals, showers, free laundry, training) they're all based here in Sacramento, like, in the centralized areas, which is downtown. And there's other areas that are being left out, that are low income community members (like in South Sacramento, North Highlands, the Arenda Arcade area) and go without some of these major resources. And during the the pandemic basic need for the community increased, but sources for those resources decreased (with the shutdowns and the lack of involvement from our local government and organizations that, you know, just couldn't be open). So, um, with the public health crisis, it became more than just public health; it was a community crises where Black people took the brunt, especially those who were unhoused due to a lack of resources.

5:39

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** I see, well, thank you, Ms. Zuri, that tells us how complicated this program was and why there are needs for such organizations as CLAP. And we certainly do thank you for being there to help those that needed that help. Thank you so much. Well, my next question for you is there is a housing crisis due to high rents and lack of affordable housing around California. Are there any current statistics or demographics for the Sacramento unhoused community?

6:18

**Ms. Zuri:** There are. Our local COC Sacramento Steps Forward and recently did in 2020 a “point in time” count. And sometimes that's known as the “pit count” or they call it “the homeless count.” And the last one they did was prior to the pandemic in 2019. And due to that, you know, the public health crises, they weren't able to fully complete another one until this year. The findings were there's about 67% increase in those who are experiencing being unhoused right now, 67%. And that includes white people being 46% of that population of the unhoused and black people being 31% of that population of being unhoused. With the Latino Latino community, they are 20%. In our indigenous Native American community, that's 7%. So these are very staggering statistics. Right. We've discussed this. They're very staggering statistics, but they also provide a wake up call and why, you know, CLAP here we are unapologetically, focused on the Black community because, in contrast, we only make up about 11% of the Sacramento County population, yet we are 31% of that unhoused population. And if you go to the neighboring counties like YOLO County, Placer County, where there aren't even large populations at us, we still make up a large, disproportionate amount of those experiencing being unhoused.

8:14

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Wow. That is staggering. Thank you for that information. Wow. Well, my next question for you is there's been a surprising number of Sacramento State students and college students overall in California that are living in their cars or have no housing available for a lot of them, just couch surfing. So with the already growing population of younger adults going through this, do you have any information on that?

8:49

**Ms. Zuri:** Yeah. That's really hard and tough to hear. To know our young adults, and our youth; these are young people. I know you do a great job with doing a lot of supports and connecting our young people to supports and services. So this is important. And when it comes to our unhoused youth, that also--that that---statistic also went up. The data shows there has been a 53% increase in the transitional age of “early adult” (and that's that 18 to 24 year old bracket). Yeah, and ,once again. 49% are white and 33% of those young adults (18 to 24) are Black. And there's other multiple races that are you've identified with: about 15% and 22% identify as Latino or Latina. So that's heartbreaking to hear. That's our, that's our young people, you know? And we should be we---we should be---doing all the great things that some of your work is doing.

10:17

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** That's, that's another astounding statistic, you know, because I believe that human beings are our most precious resource. And if our children cannot get the education without the fear of being housed and insecure, then, I mean---you have enough on your plate trying to, you know, matriculate through college academia---but then, to have to worry about, you know, being on house housing, insecure, couch surfing and so forth, you know. I know I was really astounded to find out from another lady, Cathleen Williams, who's working with the unhoused and the CARES group at Sac State, you know, that this [Student homelessness] was even happening. I had no clue and no idea. So thank you for giving us the reality of how bad that is. My next question for you, “Is there any collected data for the Black community when it comes to unhoused Sacramento families?”

11:19

**Ms. Zuri:** Yes, they also collected data on our families and they continue to collect that, which is very key. And when it comes to families, it is very, like you said, our our precious humans. There's been a decrease excuse me, with our families that are, there were counted during this period. But we know, as we know Ms. Brenda, that--due to the pandemic---not everyone could be counted. Right? So, the data that we have is just estimates, which is also very heartbreaking. More than likely, there's more with these with the numbers that we're providing. But the composition of the unsheltered family (families being unhoused) is the the Black family, which is: the model homeless family consists of a single female head of household where the parent is Black, usually in her mid-thirties, with 1 to 2 young children.

12:27

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Wow. That's that's really just astounding. And I just I'm amazed to see this and and just wonder where hope lies. With organizations like CLAP, I know that that gives them some hope.

### MUSIC BREAK

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Now we're coming back from the break. So if you want to give us a little information about your services, at CLAP, the key services that you have there.

13:07

**Ms. Zuri:** Okay. Yeah. Thank you. Yeah, we are here at CLAP, we are a community reach up and resource support. So when it comes to our services, we provide that viable access to culturally competent resources as well as links to services that meet the needs of our community. Meeting them where they're at. We also do reach ups, which is kind of like a community reach out or a community outreach, where we also meet our community members, where they're where they're at and provide living supplies, community updates (if it's for our in-house community), but also [for] those who are in those marginalized and traditionally exploited areas that don't have a lot of access to resources and may need to sustain living. So, links to services like maintaining utilities or rental assistance or even fun things like: quality of life, like, access to art and access to enrichment activities for our youth and families. So, you'll see us have those kind of events as well in those traditionally exploited areas like the South area and El Paso Heights and North Highlands, where there's not a lot of access and activities. It's changing a little. There's more. There's more access. There's more activities. But just really meeting people where they're at, and letting them know of some of the supports.

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** And, you know, this is mostly for the Black community, correct?

**Ms. Zuri:** We are unapologetically focused on the Black community and we are unapologetically focused on the Black community because of those statistics we talked about of unhoused community, whether it's families, or individuals who are our youth (at a transitional age), young adults as well as or just a population of 31%. There, there is a generational wealth need for Black people, and we don't have that due to like the redlining and the hundreds of years that we worked and weren't able to obtain that generational wealth passed down to family. And then also within Sacramento we share a lot of resources. So a lot of times with our our

neighborhoods having supports or possibly some resources, we're sharing them with other community members. And everyone should have access, but everyone should have access to quality of life and resources and services. There's just very little feeling between, specifically, for us where we have the largest needs and we lead many of these statistics (of lack in need and in in other areas as well). When it comes to incarceration, when it comes to our local jail system, 40% of the jail population is Black. When it comes to fees and fines, revenue (that that means the revenue for our government), Black women lead that nationwide. Nationwide. So on all these areas where we're at the top of these deficits, we have to have an unapologetic focus because we don't have the wealth and the capacity to be able to pull down or ask for other supports.

17:10

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Okay, that makes sense. Thank you, Ms. Zuri. Okay. Ms Zuri, did the pandemic impact the resource rich up support provided to Sacramento?

17:28

**Ms. Zuri:** Yeah, it did for us here at CLAP. We actually stepped up, as many of our local great mutual aid groups and organizations that were doing the work prior to the pandemic. And, like, we tried to step up because there was still life going on and our folks within the communities of color, our Black folks, were being left behind. And we worked on fines and fees, reform for low income communities, and specifically created a survey that was geared towards our unhoused our community that could not get online and be a part of those hybrid meetings where they were discussing reforms. We were able to have a forum for the fines and fees changes that were needed to ensure our unhoused community were being provided a voice. And once again, like we discussed earlier with some of the numbers, with high rates of, ah, our Black folks being in the unhoused population, that also goes for fines and fees. Black women carry a fines and fees burden within the nation. We also were part of the redistricting outreach to assure our unhoused community and those who weren't familiar with redistricting here in Sacramento. At the local level, we were able to provide a voice and attend, the map, attend some of the meetings and give them updates and just continue to step it up and have our community lead these initiatives, those who were impacted, those who were unhoused, our black people and with some of our really great groups, we were very, very blessed. There are groups like NorCal Resist, Sacramento's Poor People's Campaign, the Neighbor Program, Black Child Legacy, Mutual Assistance Network, Escape Velocity. A lot of these groups were doing that work, and so we were able to connect with these amazing organizations to have more impact. And it made such made such a difference. And we continue to do that, continue to, in this year, continue that, provide that connection with other community partners, but to assure that we are meeting the needs of the people who are what's most important.

20:19

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Well, thank you, Ms. Zuri, for that. It really helps us to understand more that where there is collaboration, there is power, and that's what the people need. Thank you so much for that. Do you have any more information when it comes to the black hygiene supplies?

**Ms. Zuri:** When it comes to Black hygiene supplies we are going to start having them at more of our reach ups. I wanted to just say that it sounds weird to say “Black hygiene supplies,” right? Because all hygiene supplies are important, but for some of our community members who are Black, and even some indigenous and Latino community members, our hair texture and our skin, our skin tone is different. So we require lotions in order to maintain the oils on our skin as well as our hair requires that. And with those products, those items, that are needed for our bodies and our hair, they're about three times as much (if you can even locate a store that sells them)-- there three times as much. And, they are something that should be at every shelter and every outreach for any group. Yet, very rarely do they have them. So you'll see many of our ladies and males going without them and hair falling out and unable to maintain their just basic respect and dignity. And that is something we really strive to provide when we can. But once again, we need, you know, our community partners and our we we need our donation drive (like we did last year) to assure that we can get those into the shelters. And, when we do outreach to the students who may be living in the cars or couch surfing that they have access to them.

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** how could a community member get in touch to locate a resource or to list their community led resource?

22:46

**Ms. Zuri:** Yeah, great question. We have a website which is “CLAPSAC.COM” which is “C” “L” “A” “P” “S” “A” “C” “dot” “com.” And on that website, it's a very user friendly website, that includes a “CALP Connect Forum.” If anybody in the community needed any resource links or supports, they could complete that and fill it out. It also allows for those who may not have regular access to the Internet or phone to meet into the community. We can meet you also within the community. We also have a “Community Corner” that lists all of the community led events and supports that are going on during each week. And we also send out like a small newsletter called “CLAP Weekly” with resources weekly, the community led events that are going on, people would like to participate and interact or dive into or share. And, we encourage sharing. So there's more awareness of what some of these great community led groups and organizations are doing.

24:23

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Oh, that sounds great. Thank you. Well, one last question for you. I know you to be a faith based person. How does your faith help you accomplish what can sometimes seem to be an overwhelming task of helping people find basic needs?

24:40

**Ms. Zuri:** Yes. Faith always is in the forefront of what we're doing. There has to be a route within (faith) with some of the, I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say hopelessness (I do see a lot of helplessness out on our streets and community). And for Black people, we have a lot of hope. We keep going and we are very resilient. And that's rooted in faith, that's rooted for myself and CLAP it is rooted in that faith, on that [faith] that here is something higher that we're trying to achieve: and that's an upliftment and empowerment to our people who have been without and go without and still are the lead in many of these really staggering statistics, across the board. So there has to be a hope and a a belief that it is going to get better. But we need a hand. We we need our allies and our community to come together to be able to do that.

26:06

**Ms. Brenda-Joyce:** Well, thank you so much, Ms. Zuri. This has been very, very informative and I just want to thank you, Mr. Zuri for the vision call CLAP and I want to thank you for your faithfulness. And I thank you for exemplifying a woman of faith the principles in the Bible to do what the Lord requires you to do: and that's to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. And you do all those things. And lastly, Ms. Zuri, I'd like to thank you for providing a resources for the Bible says "the least of these, the widow, the orphan and the sojourner. And listeners, I want to thank you for listening. We hope our ongoing conversations spark understanding, empathy and motivation to join the struggle for a better future for all.

27:00

**Outro Music Lyrics**

No more penalties and no more wars. Based on the actions. Now, time for "Building Justice," "Building Justice." Time for building justice, justice.