

Toward 2050 in California

A Roundtable Report on Economic Inclusion
and Political Participation in the San Joaquin Valley

Julie Ajinkya March 2012

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About Progress 2050

Progress 2050, a project of the Center for American Progress, seeks to lead, broaden, and strengthen the progressive movement by working toward a more inclusive progressive agenda—one that truly reflects our nation's rich ethnic and racial diversity. By 2050 there will be no ethnic majority in our nation and to ensure that the unprecedented growth of communities of color also yields future prosperity, we work to close racial disparities across the board with innovative policies that work for all.

About PolicyLink

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works.® Founded in 1999, PolicyLink connects the work of people on the ground to the creation of sustainable communities of opportunity that allow everyone to participate and prosper. Lifting Up What Works is our way of focusing attention on how people are working successfully to use local, state, and federal policy to create conditions that benefit everyone, especially people in low-income communities and communities of color. We share our findings and analysis through our publications, website and online tools, convenings, national summits, and in briefings with national and local policymakers.

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Introduction and summary

As the country prepares for a substantial demographic shift by the year 2042 that will result in no clear racial or ethnic majority in our population, Progress 2050—a project of the Center for American Progress—and PolicyLink—a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity—have partnered to host a series of roundtables in communities that have already experienced aspects of this population shift. The roundtables are meant to help us learn from these communities about what the rest of the country may have in store. This is the third report in a series documenting these roundtable discussions, cataloging a conversation that took place in the San Joaquin Valley in central California in October 2011. The first roundtable was hosted in Arlington, Virginia, and the second roundtable was hosted in Los Angeles, California.

The San Joaquin Valley roundtable was hosted in conjunction with California Rural Legal Assistance, the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, and the Center for Regional Change at the University of California, Davis, and with support from Climate Plan. Progress 2050 and PolicyLink formed this partnership to initiate a national conversation to explore a new vision of what America can and should be by the year 2050. The longer-term objective of this effort is to learn from local leaders what investments are needed to ensure that our nation embraces its diverse future. We intend for these conversations to inform our policy agendas and ultimately help craft policy that lifts up communities of color and creates a future in which we all can prosper.

The San Joaquin Valley was chosen as a site for this discussion due to the rapid growth it is experiencing, which is outpacing the rest of the state. While most of this growth results from a natural increase in population, as opposed to foreign or domestic migration, the San Joaquin Valley has also been a popular destination for many agricultural migrants. As of 2010 Latinos comprised 48.6 percent of the San Joaquin Valley's population, compared to 37.6 percent of California's population and 16.3 percent of the U.S. population.

This demographic shift has taken place against a backdrop of socioeconomic struggles. The region has some of the nation's highest unemployment and poverty rates, while it is also home to some of the country's lowest educational attainment levels and greatest health disparities between white and nonwhite populations. Additionally, the area suffers from extremely high levels of incarceration that have resulted in the imprisonment of people of color at significantly higher levels than white residents, which consequently has disenfranchised a large percentage of nonwhite residents.

While these struggles may seem insurmountable, there are promising initiatives emerging in the San Joaquin Valley that seek to improve the level of civic engagement within communities of color and, as a consequence, increase their political representation in ways that close these disparities.

The roundtable itself was convened in Fresno County because the county is a major population center, and Fresno is the largest city in the valley. Participants included community advocates, policy researchers, business leaders, academics, foundation representatives, and the staff of local elected officials. Accordingly, much of the conversation and supplementary information documented in this report refers to Fresno-specific statistics, yet it should be noted that much of the analysis applies the broader San Joaquin Valley as well.

We begin this account by providing some demographic context about the San Joaquin Valley. We then proceed to address the four key issues that roundtable participants raised as disproportionately impacting communities of color in central California—employment, education, health, and incarceration.

Lastly, we focus on the conviction expressed by several of our roundtable participants that improving the levels of political representation and civic engagement in communities of color might effectively reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the aforementioned challenges that the region faces.

San Joaquin Valley demographics

The roundtable kicked off with a demographic presentation about the San Joaquin Valley region by Chione Flegal, associate director at PolicyLink. The San Joaquin Valley is an eight-county region of nearly 4 million people, as of 2010, including Fresno, Kern, King, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare counties. The region is made up of several small, rural incorporated and unincorporated communities, as well as Fresno—the sixth-largest city in California.

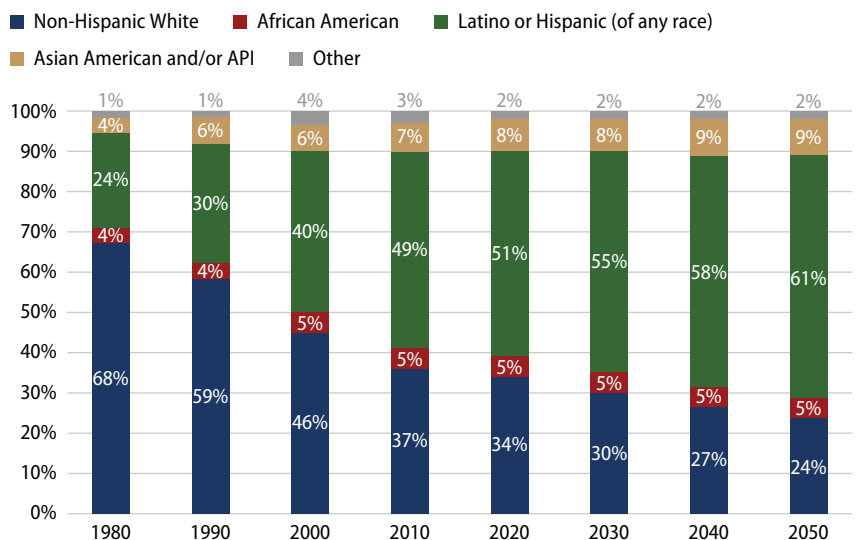
According to Flegal, the region is experiencing unprecedented levels of population growth that far surpass the rest of the state. Most of this increase is due to growing communities of color, particularly Latinos, who as of 2010 represented 48.6 percent of the valley's population. While the Latino population is steadily increasing in the region—primarily due to the predominance of the agricultural sector—the converse is true for African Americans, whose numbers are declining. (see Figure 1)

Flegal's presentation highlighted three main trends in the region:

- **Unemployment:** The region has some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. All eight counties have average unemployment rates of 14 percent or higher. In California people of color are hit particularly hard by unemployment, with Latino unemployment at nearly 15 percent and black unemployment at 19 percent.

FIGURE 1

San Joaquin Valley Demographics, 1980–2040



* Other includes all persons who are not included among the other groups shown, and includes non-Latinos who identify racially as being Native American or Alaska Native, some other race alone, or multiracial.

Source: 1980–2010 decennial censuses and Woods & Poole Economics projections data.

- **Poverty:** The region's poverty rates are also among the highest in the nation and have continued to rise over the past decade in all but one of the valley's counties, the exception being Madera County. A recent 2011 report by the Urban Institute found that more than 20 percent of residents in four San Joaquin Valley counties—Fresno, Bakersfield, Merced, and Visalia-Porterville—live in high-poverty neighborhoods, defined as having poverty rates surpassing 40 percent.
- **Educational attainment:** Educational attainment is extremely low across the valley. Sixteen percent of San Joaquin Valley residents 25 years of age or older have at least a bachelor's degree compared to 30 percent of Californians. Likewise, the high school completion rates are low, with 28.4 percent of valley residents lacking a high school diploma.

The region is unable to offer sufficient economic opportunities to its growing communities of color. This stark reality has only been worsened by the nation's economic downturn. Moreover, racial and ethnic disparities plague employment, income, and education in the valley, an issue which will be discussed in more detail later in our account.

While the San Joaquin Valley is home to distinctive circumstances—including dramatic population growth and an extreme reliance on the agricultural sector that shape its experience—it is important to note that the challenges facing the region as it works to accommodate a rapidly growing population of color offer informative lessons for the rest of the nation as we prepare for a similar demographic shift.

Demographic change presents challenges and opportunities

Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and CEO of PolicyLink, moderated the roundtable discussion that followed this demographic presentation. She started the conversation by asking how the valley's demographic trends have impacted participants' work in the community. Participants responded by outlining four major issue areas that have been impacted by the demographic change—employment, health, education, and incarceration—and described how they believed the region could effectively tackle these challenges.

Diversifying the region's economic base could expand employment opportunities

Given the high rate of unemployment in the valley, it is not surprising that participants wanted to discuss the implications of demographic change on employment opportunities in Fresno. The unemployment rate for communities of color in Fresno has been much higher than the rate for their white counterparts—while the unemployment rate for non-Hispanic whites is 11 percent, the rate is 20.8 percent for African Americans, 18.1 percent for Latinos, and 29.6 percent for American Indians and Alaska Natives.¹ According to roundtable participants, the region's employment challenges are exacerbated by an economy that is dominated by the agricultural sector. They went on to assert that the region could be better served by diversifying its economic base.

One of those participants, Phoebe Seaton from California Rural Legal Assistance, noted that the economic downturn has increased the stakes for those who are employed, many are now reluctant to fight for their workplace rights, for fear of losing their jobs in a climate that has few employment opportunities.

Another participant, Genoveva Islas-Hooker from the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, highlighted the hold that agribusiness has on Fresno's economy and job opportunities. According to U.S. census data from 2009, 17.2 per-

cent of Latinos are employed in “Farming, Fishing, or Forestry” occupations, while only 0.6 percent of non-Hispanic whites are employed in similar jobs.

This disproportionate concentration of people of color in agricultural employment results in disparities in hourly wages, median income levels, and poverty rates in the region. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, agricultural workers in Fresno earn the lowest average hourly wage of all listed occupations. While the average hourly wage in Fresno in 2010 was \$19.76, and employees listed by BLS as being employed in “Management Occupations” made an average of \$46.03 per hour, employees under the “Farming, Fishing, and Forestry” designation made just \$9.20 an hour.²

Not surprisingly, these low wages contribute to low median household income and high poverty rates for Latinos, as compared to their white counterparts. Similar levels of economic insecurity for other communities of color, however, suggest that it cannot only be the fault of the agricultural sector. While the median household income for whites in Fresno in 2010 was \$59,669 (in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars), the median income was significantly lower at \$35,481 for Latinos, \$24,874 for African Americans, and \$29,929 for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Similarly, while only 10.5 percent of whites in Fresno live below the poverty line, this rate rises to 32 percent of Latinos, 35.6 percent of African Americans, and 36 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Diversifying the region’s jobs beyond its reliance upon the agricultural sector could offer more and better economic opportunities to the valley’s residents. Roundtable participant Tate Hill, president of the Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce, argued that there is a serious shortage of incentives for minority employment and minority-owned business growth in the community. The city of Fresno was selected as one of six pilot cities to receive support from the federal government as part of the Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative in which federal agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Economic Development Administration, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Transportation partner with the city to strengthen its public infrastructure and spur economic development. Hill expressed concern that community and grassroots organizations best suited to provide on the ground support to communities of color are marginalized or completely left out of this process.

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Hill also flagged the low rate of minority-owned businesses in the region. In 2007, the most recent year for which business ownership data is available, whites owned 79 percent of Fresno's businesses while only making up 35.7 percent of Fresno's population. In contrast, Latinos owned 21.4 percent of businesses while making up 48.2 percent of Fresno's population, and African Americans owned 3.9 percent of businesses while making up 4.8 percent of the population.³

The city of Fresno has, however, introduced two initiatives in the southwest neighborhoods of Fresno—an area heavily populated by communities of color—that are meant to provide opportunities for business development. The first gives qualified small businesses within the “Historically Underutilized Business Zone” preference in receiving city contracts. In order to qualify a business must be located within the HUBZone, and at least 35 percent of its employees must reside within the zone, which in turn incentivizes local hiring.⁴

The second initiative offers tax incentives to approximately 15,000 businesses in locations throughout Fresno, although it also concentrates on businesses in the southwest portion of the city. Because Fresno received an Enterprise Zone designation, a State tax benefit program for which nearly all businesses, whether large or small, can qualify if they are located within the Zone, businesses may claim hiring credits for employing residents of Targeted Employment Areas, economically disadvantaged individuals, and ex-offenders.⁵

Hill also highlighted the importance of recognizing the growing buying power that exists in communities of color and how ensuring that such communities have better wages and higher household income could contribute to the economic growth of the region. This economic potential is underscored by research on buying power in communities of color, conducted by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia Terry College of Business. Despite being hard-hit by the recession, the buying power of communities of color is projected to rise rapidly over the next few years. At the state level, California is home to the largest Asian and Latino consumer markets in the country, and the fourth-largest African American consumer market.⁶

The more the San Joaquin Valley can diversify its economic base beyond the agricultural sector through initiatives such as these encouraging small business growth and minority employment, the more it may be able to restructure its regional economy for the benefit of all of its residents.

Building a healthier region is necessary for future growth

Cognizant of the fact that the difficult economic climate was exacerbating health problems in the valley, our roundtable participants were also interested in building a healthier region to ensure future prosperity. Two participants in particular—John Capitman from the Central Valley Health Policy Institute, or CVHPI, and Islas-Hooker with the region’s obesity prevention program—highlighted the poor health outcomes in the area and spoke of efforts aimed at improving the health of the region.

Capitman explained that Fresno has some of the highest rates of elective surgery and hospital readmission in the country. This makes sense, he argued, as more people, especially communities of color, have problems accessing more affordable preventive care. These racial and ethnic disparities in access to medical care are a serious concern, he continued. The 2009 California Health Interview Survey documents that 23.7 percent of Latinos and 27.5 percent of African Americans in Fresno lack a usual source of medical care, while only 6.2 percent of their white counterparts lack similar care.

Another health concern is Fresno’s poor air quality. According to a report authored by Capitman, there is a direct link between short-term decreases in air quality in the valley and increased emergency room visits for children with asthma.⁷ The American Lung Association ranked the Fresno-Madera area as one of the Top 10 Most Polluted Cities in America in 2011.⁸

Moreover, there are significant racial disparities when it comes to valley residents afflicted with asthma. The racial breakdown for those suffering from asthma is eye-opening—53.7 percent of Native Americans; 24.4 percent of African Americans; 18 percent of whites; 17.1 percent of Latinos; and 5.3 percent of Asians. The rate for the valley’s black youth population is an astonishingly high 73.4 percent.⁹

These disparities have been linked to environmental hazards in regions with high concentrations of communities of color. West Fresno in particular is disproportionately made up of such communities—as of 2000, African Americans constituted 38 percent of west Fresno’s population while only comprising 5 percent of Fresno’s broader population.¹⁰ According to a report released by the University of California, Davis, Center for Regional Change and authored by a convening participant, Jonathan London, numerous environmental hazards are located in west

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Fresno, including a sewage treatment plant, a number of slaughterhouses, several waste dumps, and hundreds of EPA-designated brownfields.¹¹

Turning to another health issue, Islas-Hooker also raised the severity of the obesity epidemic in the region. She argued that the dire economic situation is leading to poorer health outcomes as people choose food based on economics instead of nutrition. According to a 2010 report by the CVHPI coauthored by Capitman, 35 percent of central Fresno residents are overweight—having a body mass index, or BMI, between 25 and 30—while 50 percent are obese, meaning a BMI equal to or greater than 30.¹² Children of color are also at higher risk of obesity than their white peers. According to 2010 data, the California Department of Education reports that 37.2 percent of African American students and 39.8 percent of Latino students between fifth and ninth grades were above a healthy weight, while 27 percent of their white classmates were above a healthy weight.

Despite these disparities, the CCROPP has still made headway in building a healthier region. The organization works through neighborhood coalitions and partnerships with public health departments to promote physical activity and increase access to healthy food. It has also been instrumental in the creation of farmers' markets in targeted communities, as well as renovating parks throughout the valley.¹³

Another program that has had success in improving the region's health is an outreach program called "Promotores de Salud," which hires health advisors who reach out to populations that have traditionally been excluded from medical care—particularly rural populations. The program focuses on increasing enrollment in health insurance programs, encouraging preventive care services, and establishing familiarity between patients and primary health care givers. Capitman led the evaluation of the pilot program in Fresno County and documented significant improvements in insurance enrollment rates and the establishment of a regular source of care after the outreach program had been in effect for two years.¹⁴

By focusing on expanding access to healthier nutrition, as well as important preventive health care services, these groups have taken important steps towards building a healthier valley and making sure that communities of color are in better health to contribute to future growth in the region.

Improving educational attainment will prepare valley residents for the jobs of the future

Convening participants also highlighted the importance of education in revitalizing the economic future of the region. Currently Fresno County has significant disparities in high school completion rates—50.5 percent of the eligible African American students and 62.7 percent of the eligible Hispanic students graduated from high school in 2010, while 77 percent of their white peers earned high school diplomas.¹⁵ Despite these gaps in high school graduation rates, participants nonetheless stressed the importance of postsecondary educational opportunities in the region and their ability to prepare a strong workforce that will stay in Fresno and contribute to the region’s economic growth.

One of the persistent problems cited by participants related to postsecondary education was a phenomenon they referred to as “brain drain,” where students either leave the region to find better quality education elsewhere and do not return, or students graduate from an educational institution in the region and then leave to find employment elsewhere. Larry Hodges, a financial advisor at Merrill Lynch, underscored the serious problem brain drain represents to the valley, saying it leaves the region with a vacuum in educated youth leadership.

Because employment opportunities in the region are not readily available for students once they graduate, our participants agreed that challenges in both education and employment feed on one another, creating a cyclical problem. Cassandra Joubert, with the Children’s Institute at Fresno State University, said that the region’s schools demoralize young people and create a situation where they doubt themselves and don’t believe they can make a difference in their own education or in the community. Her organization advocates for an increased emphasis on work preparedness to make sure that students are provided with high-quality technical career education programs, along with mentoring programs in the workplace.

Echoing Joubert, Hill said that improving access to college is of vital importance but also noted that sustaining students who are already in college can’t be overlooked. He cited studies show that only 22 percent of African American students were successful in transferring their community college credits to other institutions.¹⁶ He said these types of barriers make it more difficult for students of color to complete their college degrees, preventing them from putting their strongest foot forward in a challenging economic climate.

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In general, participants agreed that more resources need to be targeted to education efforts in the region to ensure Fresno youth will have an interest in remaining in the area and will in turn contribute to its economic resurgence.

Shifting public funding from prisons to investments in education and jobs is critical

Nearly half of California's prison population is locked up in the Fresno area, according to Debbie Reyes of the California Prison Moratorium Project, or CPMP—one of the roundtable participants. She and others argued that the region's high incarceration rates were a prime example of how the state's resources are being misallocated, noting that the money that could be used for crucial investments in education and employment policy is instead going to jails and prisons. What's more, California locks up people of color at alarmingly disproportionate rates.

People of color constitute 74.3 percent of California's statewide prison population, while only accounting for 58 percent of the general population.¹⁷ These same racial disparities are also mirrored in Fresno's arrest rates. While people of color comprise 65.1 percent of the general population in Fresno, they account for 76.3 percent of reported arrests. Specifically, African Americans, who make up 4.9 percent of the region's population, account for 15.3 percent of the total reported arrests, youth and adult, in Fresno County. Likewise, the arrest rates are high for the region's Latinos, who comprise 48.7 percent of the population and 56.3 percent of the total reported arrests. By contrast, whites, who comprise 34.9 percent of the population, account for 23.2 percent of the total reported arrests.¹⁸

Reyes said California has increased prison spending while the amount of money it spends on education, health, and social services has dropped. While crime rates have stabilized, the state's prison spending has skyrocketed by an alarming 571 percent over the past two decades. During that same time period, spending on K–12 education has only risen 33.4 percent.¹⁹ CPMP argues that prison expansion wastes money that could be better used in the community. According to CPMP, for the cost of operating one prison, 341,800 eligible children could receive health care, and 336,469 individuals could utilize vocational rehabilitation, which provides employment services to people with disabilities.²⁰

Participants also felt strongly that disproportionate incarceration rates for communities of color have an alarming ripple effect, particularly when it comes to

reintegrating ex-offenders back into the community. They specifically cited what has been termed as “collateral consequence laws,” which make it difficult for individuals with a felony conviction, including nonviolent drug offenses, to find employment and which restrict them from public housing, from receiving welfare benefits, and even from obtaining student loans for higher education.

Sammy Nuñez of Fathers and Families of San Joaquin also expressed concern that widespread misconceptions about felon voting rights effectively disenfranchise many residents of color. For instance, California law restricts individuals from voting while they are in prison, on parole, or under postrelease community supervisions, but it lifts that ban if they are on probation (unless the probation is an alternative to serving the concluding portion of a sentence in county jail for the conviction of a low-level felony). The American Civil Liberties Union of northern California released a 2008 report that supported Nuñez’s concern, noting that while there may be a quarter million voters who are legally disenfranchised by California’s laws on felon voting, there are countless others who are effectively disenfranchised due to lack of information on voting rights.²¹

The disproportionate incarceration of communities of color was a significant concern in the Fresno area, particularly because participants believed it compounded problems already apparent in employment and education. Instead of investing in the economic security of the region’s residents, the criminal justice system locks away some of the most vulnerable populations and then makes re-entry into society as difficult as possible.

Increasing civic engagement is central to the region's future

When asked to share what else they believed could be done to address the region's challenges in employment, health, education, and incarceration, participants spoke of the need to empower communities of color to tackle these challenges themselves. They consistently underscored the importance of encouraging higher levels of civic engagement in communities of color, which was seen as the path toward not only increasing political participation, but also improving political representation and allowing the voices of this community to be heard.

Sarah Sharpe, from Fresno Metro Ministries, was one of the participants who raised the issue of lack of representation in communities of color. She argued that the problem has only become more acute as demographics shift, particularly regarding decision-making bodies that many people consider to be insignificant such as school boards, planning commissions, and air pollution control boards, among others. However, many important decisions that affect communities of color are made in these venues without any significant input from those most affected.

The mayor of Riverbank, California, Virginia Madueno, explained that in her experience, demographics have never been part of the policy conversation. In Stanislaus County, her home county in the northern region of the valley, a person of color has never been the board supervisor of the county, even though communities of color comprise nearly 60 percent of the county.

That observation sparked discussion about why communities of color have had a hard time securing representation in the region. Some participants pointed to structural problems such as the closure of voting polls due to restricted government budgets. Funding cuts in the summer of 2010 led the Fresno County clerk's office to close many polling stations prior to the November 2010 elections. Between June 2010 and November 2010, the number of polling places dropped to 114 from 222.²² Community advocates argued that the closures disproportionately affected residents in high-density neighborhoods, who found it difficult to vote without more convenient locations at their disposal. Community activists claimed that 75 percent

of polling places that were closed were located in southwest Fresno, an area that is predominantly populated with African American and Latino residents.²³

Another structural problem cited for the limited number of elected officials from communities of color was the use of at-large voting in the valley. A number of participants said that at-large elections, as opposed to district elections, dilutes the political strength of communities of color by allowing everyone in a jurisdiction to vote in elections that affect only a portion of that jurisdiction. While other cities in the valley continue to use at-large voting to elect their school boards and city council members, the city of Fresno's charter prohibited at-large voting in 1981. In 2008, after a court ruled against the Madera Unified School District's use of at-large voting on the grounds that it dilutes certain communities' representation, a number of other jurisdictions in the valley appear to be considering switching from at-large voting to district elections.²⁴

The importance of candidates of color running for office was another issue discussed during the roundtable. Some stressed that there may still be a disconnect between elected officials of color and the people they are supposed to represent. Hill referenced his own campaign for Fresno City Council, which he described as an attempt to help shift the demographics of leadership. He said that civic leaders of color have an obligation to mentor young people of color as a way to plant the seeds of civic engagement.

Finally, a number of convening participants noted that they were active with Communities for a New California, a statewide civil rights advocacy organization that operates in three regions in California—the central coast, the southeast desert, and the San Joaquin Valley. While the bulk of the organization's efforts are focused around voter mobilization and grassroots community organizing, our convening participants involved with the coalition said the group would expand its work to address the issues mentioned above. The initiative planned to start a three-week civic engagement program shortly after the roundtable convening, with the intent of connecting communities of color with one another and building a movement for sustainable change.

Conclusion

Our country is fast approaching the day when there will no longer be a racial or ethnic majority. This demographic shift will have implications on various policies that currently experience significant racial and ethnic disparities. Instead of waiting for this change to exacerbate these inequalities, we can make smart investments now to close the gap and take full advantage of one of our country's greatest assets—diversity.

Looking to regions around the country that have already experienced significant demographic shifts can help us prepare for what lies ahead. While we previously convened two other roundtables in Arlington, Virginia, and Los Angeles, California, on the issue of diversity, the San Joaquin Valley in California provided another opportunity to explore the challenges and the promises of this demographic shift.

Each community, of course, experiences demographic change in its own unique way, informed by the region's distinct characteristics and history. While convening participants at our Fresno roundtable shared many concerns about racial and ethnic disparities in employment, health, education, and incarceration, they also expressed confidence that these challenges can be overcome by encouraging greater political and civic engagement by communities of color.

The views expressed in Fresno echo similar sentiments shared by participants during both previous roundtable discussions. Clearly, the importance of political and civic strength translates across various communities and holds particular promise for communities of color. As our nation moves closer to a day where majority and minority labels lose all meaning, we must make sure we invest in all of our communities and embrace a vision that ensures ours is a country that works for all of us, not just a select few.

List of participants at the convening in the San Joaquin Valley

Walter Ramirez	California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Virginia Madueno	Climate Plan; mayor of Riverbank, California
Jonathan London	University of California, Davis
Anne Price	Insight Center for Community Economic Development
Leoncio Vasquez Santos	Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, or CBDIO
Dave Koehler	San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
John Capitman	Central Valley Health Policy Institute, California State University, Fresno
Esmeralda Soria	California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Carey Knecht	Climate Plan
Phoebe Seaton	California Rural Legal Assistance
Genovea Islas-Hooker	Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program
Sammy Nuñez	Fathers and Families of San Joaquin
Larry Hodges	Merrill Lynch
Debbie Reyes	California Prison Moratorium Project
Sarah Sharpe	Fresno Metro Ministries
Gregory Barfield	Homeless Services Manager, City of Fresno
Kevin Hall	Central Valley Air Quality Coalition
Sandra Flores	Fresno Regional Foundation
Keith Kelley	Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development
Tate Hill	Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce
Keith Woodcock	Community and Regional Planning Center at California State University, Fresno
Cassandra Joubert	Children's Institute at California State University, Fresno
Sabina Gonzalez-Eraña	Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program

About the author

Julie Ajinkya is a Policy Analyst for Progress 2050 at American Progress. Her work focuses on race, ethnic, gender, and immigration politics, and she pays particular attention to the changing demographics of multicultural societies such as the United States and Western Europe.

Prior to joining American Progress, she was an instructor and teaching assistant at Cornell University while earning her doctorate in political science. Her past work has also focused on researching global and local women's movements and the gendered impacts of international financial institution investments in the developing world. She was a New Voices Fellow from 2003 to 2005 at the Institute for Policy Studies, where she coordinated the national outreach for the institute's Foreign Policy in Focus project.

Julie earned her master's degree and doctorate in government from Cornell University, where her doctoral dissertation examined the political behavior of children of Muslim immigrants and their campaigns for gender-justice activism in Europe and North America. She also earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Amherst College.

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