

# TCWF Evaluations

## THE CALIFORNIA WELLNESS FOUNDATION

### Executive Summary

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### Table of Contents

1. [Overview](#)
2. [Impact of the VPI Leadership Programs on Participants and Their Work](#)
3. [Leadership and Systemic Change](#)
4. [Lessons Learned about Developing Leadership Within the Violence Prevention Field](#)
5. [Conclusion](#)

### Overview

In 1993, The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF) launched a 10-year Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) to reduce violence against youth in California. A significant component of the VPI were its three leadership programs—the Community Fellowship Program, the Academic Fellowship Program, and the Peace Prize Award. These three programs were intended to achieve the following:

- Recognize and promote individual leaders of violence prevention;
- Help communities empower themselves by recognizing leadership in violence prevention;
- Support the professional training of ethnic minorities and women in violence prevention and injury control;
- Support and link promising grassroots leaders of community efforts in violence prevention through leadership and professional development; and
- Build a critical mass of community leaders and professionals who are positioned and prepared to advocate for and institute programs and policies to prevent violence against youth and foster safer and healthy communities.

### Methodology and Structure of the Report

Under the auspices of the Leadership Learning Community, the evaluation team used a variety of methods to learn about the programs and their impact: surveys, interviews, site visits, document review and participant-observation. In addition, the evaluation team brought decades of experience evaluating, running and studying leadership programs that provided a backdrop for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the VPI leadership programs.

Information for this report was obtained from 61% of the leadership program participants who received the Peace Prize award or completed one of the fellowship programs from approximately one to nine years earlier. We also spoke to the academic fellowship site principal investigators, two TCWF foundation staff and seven of the leadership program coordinators. We do not know how these individuals' views compare to those who did not participate in the evaluation.

In what follows we describe the impact of the VPI on the participants and their work, contributions that VPI leadership programs have made to long-term systemic impact on reducing violence against youth, and lessons learned about specific leadership development approaches and emerging models of leadership for the field. Interspersed throughout are stories of fellows and awardees. We focus on the most common themes and discuss challenges most frequently mentioned and observed; challenges common to most programs (e.g., staff turnover) are excluded.

### **Merris Obie: A Woman of Two Worlds**

Merris Obie is a woman of two worlds, many worlds, really. Like so many of the community fellows, Merris is a bridge leader who adeptly manages the inextricable web of self—a web woven of history, culture, tradition, family, gender, political status, age and other variables. She travels between the world of Native traditions and the world of cell phones, melding her ancient culture and the mainstream culture. “Early on I recognized that I was the bridge, the connector. I realized I had a gift to go back and forth.”

A Native American from Northern California, Merris was a community fellow from 1995 to 1997. “At the time that Wellness contacted me, I was working in the trenches with at-risk Native American youth doing anything to keep kids in school. I worked with kids who were trying to recover from drugs and alcohol. I worked with the homeless and runaways. I was working as a volunteer. I had just gotten myself out of an abusive relationship... I [moved into] substandard housing, and that’s exactly when The Wellness award came through. Having a stable income for my work provided by the Wellness funds enabled me to take out a loan to purchase my own house. That stabilized my life. Wellness kept telling us ‘use the money to compensate your violence prevention work and improve the quality of your life so that you can better serve your community.’ Finally, hearing this for the sixth time, I realized that I needed to stabilize my personal life in order to move forward and better serve my community.”

As a group, community fellows speak of the crucial task of healing themselves. Many have been deeply wounded by the historical legacy of racism and oppression, and the psychological and economic impact that this has had for them, their families and their communities. “Because of our historical traumas, we are [wounded]. I knew that in order to grow, I had to heal the wounds of the past as well, wounds caused by internalized oppression and the oppression of the community,” It’s one of the great lessons the community fellows have offered each other. “You can’t heal the world unless you heal

yourself.”

Merris speaks of the fellowship with deep appreciation for the abundance and support she received. “They literally took us by the hand and helped us learn how to be our own nonprofit, how to write grants.” Through mentoring and access to resources and foundations, Merris honed her considerable talent to speak powerfully on behalf of the needs of Indian people. Shortly after the fellowship, she wrote grants that brought five million dollars and sixty jobs to the Hoopa Valley community. The money established an Americorps program and a residential Tribal Civilian Conservation Corps program for 18-25 year old Indian youth around the country.

The fellowship also provided Merris with a multi-dimensional experience of diversity, one that both challenged her and comforted her. She remembers walking into the first fellows meeting in San Francisco and being struck by the different cultures represented. Then, as the meeting progressed, she began to hear of the same issues and same problems in very different communities. At that point, she says, “it became a family, a bonding started occurring and continues to this day.”

### **Impact of the VPI Leadership Programs on Participants and Their Work**

In this section, we explore the most common changes that have occurred for individuals who participated in the three leadership programs.

#### **Increased commitment to violence prevention**

The highest reported personal impact of the program was an increase in participants’ commitment to violence prevention work. Approximately three-quarters or more of all participants surveyed reported that the fellowship had a “moderate” to “large” effect on their commitment to violence prevention work.

#### **Improved confidence and self-esteem**

Participants reported improved confidence and self-esteem as a result of the knowledge and skills they acquired during their fellowship, the opportunities they had to share their expertise with others, new experiences in which they engaged, and positive encouragement and input received from colleagues.

#### **Increased credibility and access**

The award or fellowship increased participants’ perceived credibility and access to people of influence such as elected officials, policy makers, foundation staff and national organizations. Participants believed this occurred as a result of their association with TCWF and the VPI, and the recognition they received.

#### **A place for healing and spirituality**

Fellows recognized the importance of healing themselves before they could help others heal. As one community fellow said, “Hurt people hurt people.” Providing a place for

healing and spirituality offered antidotes to the pain of loss, violence and disenfranchisement. This was important since violence had a significant personal presence in the lives of many of the leadership participants.

### **Mentoring and being mentored**

While mentoring of youth was a stated goal of the VPI and was built into the Community Fellowship Program, the fellows were also personally impacted by the act of mentoring. Community fellows described how important and validated they felt because the young people whom they mentored respected their opinions and heeded their advice about decisions in their lives. The value of the experience is demonstrated by the fact that nearly 80% of these fellows reported that they continue to mentor their “mentee.”

Academic fellows were more likely than community fellows to be mentored. Academic fellow principal investigators and colleagues at fellowship sites, and academic fellowship coordinators, were frequently mentioned as mentors or role models who inspired, and in some cases, transformed the fellows’ sense of self and life direction. Fellows described how these individuals provided encouragement and guidance both professionally and personally, access to key individuals and resources, and examples/opportunities about how to pursue violence prevention as a career and integrate it into their existing work.

### **Learning**

New learnings focused on a variety of topics and tools to prevent violence including the public health approach to violence, the root causes of violence, policies to reduce gun injuries, how to use the media to promote policy change, and greater awareness about different community perspectives on violence and its prevention. More than 50% of the community fellows and more than 74% of the academic fellows reported that the fellowship program had a “moderate” or “large” effect on their knowledge about these areas. Learning about the public health model of violence prevention, media advocacy, and policy was especially high. Academic fellows reported a significantly larger program effect on knowledge development than community fellows, most likely because this was a specific focus of their fellowship. The most frequent types of learning that were mentioned were informal learning from peers and more structured learning through such venues as workshops and conferences.

### ***Peer learning***

Fellows said that peer learning offered them the opportunity to learn new ideas and strategies that were transferable to their work. The richest peer learning took place within fellowship cohorts. Community fellows talked about the ways they brought their personal struggles to fellowship gatherings and learned that others were often having the same problems as they were. They used each other’s experiences and knowledge to help solve problems. Peer learning was also reported to occur across leadership programs and with others in the VPI, although a number of fellows and Peace Prize awardees reported that learning across programs could have been enhanced if there had been more intentional efforts to foster exchange and peer learning beyond gathering at annual conferences.

### ***Structured and experiential learning***

Some of the learning opportunities the fellows had were formal trainings, such as media advocacy and policy advocacy. Formal training, when combined with experiential learning (e.g., through their individual learning plans and research projects) was said to reinforce and extend the knowledge and skills that were acquired during formal sessions. The media advocacy training offered by the Berkeley Media Studies Group was the most frequently and positively mentioned learning activity. Seventy-five percent of community fellows and 82% of academic fellows said the media advocacy was “moderately” or “very” effective. Training in policy advocacy was also positively mentioned. Sixty-eight percent of academic fellows and 75% of community fellows said that this training was “moderately” or “very” effective. While reactions to the training were overwhelmingly positive, far fewer participants reported the application of what they learned to their violence prevention work.

### **Boundary crossing**

The leadership programs often sought to mix participants who did not share common cultures, classes, disciplines, backgrounds and experiences. Leadership participants exercised leadership across these different types of boundaries. While not always comfortable for participants or staff, they said that the experience led to a greater appreciation and broader perspective of self, others and strategies for their work. On a personal level one community fellow commented that she overcame her fear of people who were different from her. On a strategic level, another community fellow discussed building bridges between Latino and African-American communities in order to promote understanding and minimize opportunities for fear and resentment that occur when only one community is being served. Other fellows spoke about being a bridge between their own culture and the mainstream culture—bringing resources and knowledge from the mainstream culture that can benefit their community, while at the same time sharing cultural wisdom with and bringing balance to the mainstream culture. Some boundaries, such as the ones between community leaders and academic professionals, seemed particularly difficult to cross.

### **Malcolm “Jerry” Williams: The Lollypop Cop**

In 1992, Jerry Williams was a tough undercover narcotics officer, working the Lockwood/Coliseum Gardens public housing complexes in East Oakland California, a community that had one of the top homicide rates in the nation. By his own admission, Jerry was “a very aggressive police officer” where success was measured by number of arrests. Jerry went through a personal and professional transformation when he was introduced to community policing. After an initial training, Jerry returned to Lockwood and started talking to people. I thought I would begin by asking people to call me ‘Jerry.’ I brought lollypops for the kids and stuck them in my trunk to hand out. That’s why the kids call me the Lollypop Cop. Jerry began to open himself up to the community. He talks about how he really listened “not just to people’s words, but beyond those words to the feelings. I felt like I was finally graduating from the real Police Academy and that I was becoming a ‘Peace Officer’ and not simply a ‘Police Officer.’” It took about eighteen months for the adults in the community to trust him. Together they transformed the

community, which was free of homicides for eight years.

In 1997 Jerry received the California Peace Prize Award. National and local news profiled Jerry, community policing and Lockwood/Coliseum Gardens, dubbing it the “Miracle on 65th Avenue.” The award and resulting media coverage expanded Jerry’s influence on violence prevention. He was in demand at police departments around the country, provided technical assistance to cities that wanted to replicate his form of community policing, and taught college courses on violence prevention and the role of police. For Jerry, the greatest benefit of all the attention was “the media put the community in a positive light, when it had only gotten negative publicity before.”

## **Leadership and Systemic Change**

The leadership programs of the VPI have seeded enduring and systemic changes. The full impact of these changes will unfold over time, and may never be fully documented. This section of the report captures some of these changes that will make a significant difference to young people, their families and communities, and to the field of violence prevention. Six dimensions of enduring change are discussed.

### **Leadership for violence prevention**

One of the goals of the initiative was to “build a critical mass of leaders and professionals who are positioned and prepared to advocate for and institute programs and policies to prevent violence against youth and foster safer and healthier communities.” The VPI has accomplished this in several ways.

#### ***Numbers of leaders***

The VPI has recognized and provided support to 148 leaders in violence prevention. These leaders touch hundreds of people in communities and institutions in the state of California and around the nation.

#### ***Sustaining leadership in the field***

The sustained engagement of these leaders in the field over time is another indicator that a critical mass of leaders is being built. Over 90% of community fellows and Peace Prize awardees report that they are still involved in violence prevention. Nearly 70% of academic fellows have an on-going involvement. Many of the community fellows and Peace Prize awardees work long hours to save lives even though it takes a toll on their personal well-being and that of their families. Receiving recognition and resources from The Wellness Foundation was reported to increase well-being, and support many to continue their violence prevention work. Some of the academic fellows stated that the demands of their professional jobs make it difficult to integrate violence prevention into their work, however, most academic fellows have found ways to bring their commitment to violence prevention with them, such as serving as a member of a child death review team or chairing a statewide psychology conference focused on violence prevention.

### **Inspiring and developing the next generation of leaders**

Building a critical mass of leaders requires not only sustaining leaders who are currently in the field, but also inspiring and developing the next generation of leaders. Numerous stories were told about the ways that community fellows positively impacted the lives of the young people who they mentored. Among those fellows who mentored a young person during their fellowship, 80% reported that their “mentees” are still involved in violence prevention work.

### **Social capital**

In order for a critical mass of leaders to be an effective force for change, numbers are a necessary, but not sufficient condition of change. The influence and power of leadership is in the relationships and networks that nurture, connect and mobilize resources to get things done. In turn, relationships and networks are an important foundation for creating collaborations that will have a sustained impact for communities and for finding solutions to violence.

### **Relationships and networks**

The VPI leadership programs, in particular the Academic Fellowship Program and Community Fellowship Program, provided a structure that nurtured bonds of trust among cohorts of fellows in the same program. Eighty-eight percent of the community fellows and 82% of the academic fellows reported that the “opportunity to develop relationships with other fellows in my cohort” was “moderately” to “very” effective. Since the Peace Prize Award did not involve participation in a program, awardees had very few opportunities to build relationships with one another, or others in the VPI, unless they personally took it upon themselves to come to VPI conferences.

There was a difference in how academic fellows and community fellows described the value of their relationships. Academic fellows emphasized being part of a network that had professional benefits. Community fellows characterized their relationships as providing an on-going resource for friendship, personal support, inspiration and learning.

Very little social capital was generated between academic and community fellows. Only 11% of community fellows indicated that they had continued communication with academic fellows, compared with 72% who maintained connections with community fellows. Likewise, only 8% of academic fellows had continued communication with community fellows, compared with 76% who maintained relationships with academic fellows. There are diverse reasons why long-lasting relationships between academic and community fellows did not develop. These include having few formal opportunities for interaction and significant class and cultural differences between the two groups that are unlikely to be bridged without intentional effort.

### ***Collaborations***

Collaborations occurred both among individuals and between organizations. Sometimes collaborations were intentionally formed to address a particular problem or issue; at other times the opportunity to collaborate emerged out of the relationship itself. Although collaboration was not actively supported by the programs (e.g., through mini-grants), some fellows did create collaborative opportunities. One academic fellow spoke about

how the Academic Fellowship Program enabled her to collaborate with two other Latinas to address domestic violence issues in the Latino community. A community fellow described how the fellowship contributed to her efforts to form an organizational collaboration within her community.

### **New and shared knowledge**

Knowledge is a powerful tool to influence social norms about violence, to increase support for interventions to decrease violence, and to inspire others to get involved in violence prevention. Knowledge was generated from exposure to new ideas and information; reflection about one's own experiences and the experiences of others; and implementation of research and community-focused projects.

### ***Promoting a public health approach to violence***

One of the goals of the VPI was to promote violence prevention as a public health issue. This viewpoint was new for many of the leadership participants. Three quarters of the academic fellows and 42% of the community fellows reported that the fellowship program had a "large effect" on their understanding of the public health approach to violence prevention.

### ***Sharing and disseminating knowledge***

The power of knowledge to catalyze change increases when it is shared. It is fundamental for personal, organizational and policy transformation. Fellows and awardees report sharing knowledge through publications, presentations, public testimony, the media and art.

### ***Using research for policy impact***

Research has raised awareness about the seriousness of problems, such as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome among youth at the California Youth Authority and the challenges institutions face in addressing problems like this. Research has also been used to advocate successfully for changes in policy, such as gun safety legislation throughout California and domestic violence laws in Japan.

### **Discourse and policy impacts**

Academic and community fellows received training in positioning their message through the media, and in influencing policymakers and the policymaking process. Peace Prize awardees were given a media platform to bring visibility and attention to their work. Some of the fellows have used these strategies to contribute to change in their communities including changing the discourse about violence; organizing and activism, particularly around gun violence; mobilizing and leveraging of media attention; and taking on leadership positions. Each of these strategies appears to have raised the visibility of violence prevention and, in some cases, led to policy change.

### **New resources for violence prevention**

Many fellows and awardees used TCWF funds and/or the recognition that they received to leverage additional resources for their work. Fellows reported that the fellowship increased their credibility with other funders. More than half of leadership participants

reported that their participation in the program resulted in a “moderate or large effect” in their ability to attract or leverage funds for their organization.

### **Institutionalizing changes**

Long-term sustainable change requires innovations and new ideas to become embedded in organizations, institutions and the practices and policies of a field. Leadership program participants accomplished this by creating their own nonprofit organizations; establishing new programs and approaches to violence prevention within existing institutions; and increasing the prevalence of violence prevention courses, presentations and publications.

#### **Geno Tellez: Listening and Leadership**

In 1993, the year that he was awarded the TCWF Academic Fellowship, Geno Tellez was a successful trauma surgeon in private practice in Atlanta. “When I entered medical school, I always planned on going back to my community and practice. Instead, I found myself in a different city, with a different sort of community, but in terms of violence, it was very much the same,” Geno remembered. He started working with community groups, feeling more satisfaction in focusing on violence prevention. He knew then that private practice would not be enough for him. That’s when he got a call from Bob Mackersie asking him if he was interested in the fellowship. Despite taking a 70 percent cut in salary, he accepted the fellowship and moved to San Francisco.

The transition into the fellowship was humbling. Tellez laughingly relates the persona of a trauma surgeon. “You’re arrogant, strong-willed, and able to make death-defying decisions in a single second.” Suddenly, he found himself “at the back of the class,” struggling to understand “the public health model.” Most of the other fellows had greater knowledge and more experience than Geno, but for that, he became increasingly thankful. He credits the other fellows—“what they had between their ears”—for teaching him things he could not have learned in fifty years on his own.

During his fellowship, Geno began attending meetings of RAP (Real Alternative Programs), a youth-focused community program in the Mission District that surrounds San Francisco General Hospital. Geno felt a connection with the youth, but he was also very aware that he had “crossed the line” when he went to college and became a physician and it would be no easier for him to cross back over that line than it was for fellows from middle-class Anglo backgrounds. So he sat and listened. For months. The strength of Geno’s quiet leadership is his ability to listen. He distinguishes between the dominant paradigm of leadership that drives people to push too fast, dismissing something called “community time” that moves more slowly. Attuned to the rhythm of “community time,” slowly the community began to trust him and seek out his opinion.

One of the lasting contributions of his fellowship was the media advocacy skills that Geno learned. “The media advocacy has been invaluable because I have interacted with the media so much. It has helped me know what the media wants and be able to teach others [how to do media advocacy] ... I was a good person to talk about violence

prevention because I was a doctor and a trauma surgeon. There was that hard copy and visual recognition tied to the fellowship and to my profession.”

## **Lessons Learned about Developing Leadership Within the Violence Prevention Field**

### ***Impact of the broader VPI on the leadership programs***

- Situating the leadership programs within the broader VPI added value to the individual experiences of participants and enhanced their collective impact on violence prevention efforts.
- To have an enduring impact within a field, leadership programs need to develop a critical mass of committed leaders that have the breadth of perspective to develop multi-solution approaches and the ability to build cross-sectoral and multi-ethnic partnerships. The VPI increased these opportunities for leadership participants.
- A strength of the VPI leadership programs was its recognition that there was no “one size fits all” leadership model for the reduction of violence.

### ***Program design and delivery strategies***

- The use of diverse adult learning principles, e.g. peer learning, core curriculum and individual learning, self-reflection, and experiential learning, maximized the development of skills and capacities of participants.
- The inclusion of non-traditional leaders (e.g., ex-convicts and priests) and design elements (e.g., a focus on healing and spirituality) enriched the leadership programs.
- Community fellows identified personal qualities, such as listening, humility, empathy, and respect as more important for leadership than traditional field specific competencies.
- Utilization of participants’ experiences and skills strengthened individual and cohort learning.

### ***Comparisons of the three different leadership programs***

- The benefits of leadership recognition outweighed the concerns (e.g., resentment from colleagues) and should be integrated into leadership programs for maximum impact.
- Peace Prize awardees could have benefited from a cohort convening experience.
- Mentoring cultivated the next generation of leaders and benefited the mentors; the expansion of the mentoring component for academic fellows to mentor others and community fellows to have a mentor would have been beneficial.

### ***The role of financial resources***

- Personal financial stability increased community leadership capacity; unrestricted funds are a particularly effective strategy for achieving this outcome.
- Community innovations were effectively supported by identifying and distributing resources to social entrepreneurs.

### ***Building boundary crossing capacity***

- Bringing together people from different backgrounds, classes, gender, cultures and sectors created dynamic learning opportunities; however, there was a widespread feeling that more intentional efforts would have had increased these benefits.

### ***Sustainability***

- Efforts to sustain leadership networks and alumni connections can enhance leadership investments. There are currently no formal plans in place to sustain the VPI network.

### **Key innovations of the VPI leadership programs that are instructive for the field of leadership development**

- \* Connecting leadership programs to a broader Initiative magnifies impact.
- \* Providing unrestricted award funds supports innovation at the community level.
- \* Mentoring young people develops the next generation of leaders and also strengthens the leadership capacity of the mentor.
- \* Paying attention to healing past wounds empowers leaders to give back to their community.

## **Conclusion**

The story of the leadership program is one story but many voices. These voices tell us about enduring changes that have taken place. Participants have been changed forever by their VPI experience both personally and professionally. They are more connected with another, and, by and large, feel part of a larger movement. Most individuals continue to work to prevent violence and mentor the next generation of leaders. Some have played important leadership roles that brought about systemic changes to mitigate violence in their organizations, professional specialties and communities.

The VPI leadership program goals were largely met: leaders were recognized and promoted, communities empowered through this recognition, and leaders supported through multiple types of learning, convening and training. Innovative practices were identified that will inform leadership development strategies. As a result of speaking with these leaders, we have a deeper understanding of some of the crucial components of transforming change and the leadership tasks required of that change.