



RACIAL EQUITY COALITION: Harnessing the Power of Community for Love and Liberation

March 20, 2023

Executive Summary for 2021 Report, authored by members of the Racial Equity Coalition, funded by United Way of King County and supported by King County Department of Community and Human Services and Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA).

Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) organizations in King County are using community-based approaches rooted in cultural identity to improve the educational outcomes of BIPOC students. And not only are they making strides to close the disparities among BIPOC youth, but they're generating better outcomes for all youth, regardless of race.

At the heart of that success is the **Racial Equity Coalition** (REC), a self-formed group of 14 BIPOC organizations funded by United Way of King County. REC has developed a systemic approach to funding community work that is designed to keep BIPOC youth engaged in and persisting with education—an approach that involves those organizations and the youth they serve as authentic leaders and partners every step of the way, from definition and design to funding direction and evaluation.

Recognizing the need for innovation, REC conducted a participatory research study to probe ways in which youth, families and community-based organizations can come together to cultivate well-being across all levels.

Through a process they often call **love and liberation**, REC has created in- and out-of-school youth services organized around positive identity development that will build the power and voices of future BIPOC leaders.

United Way partners with 14 organizations that comprise REC:

- [4C Coalition](#)
- [ACRS](#)
- [All Girl Everything Ultimate Program](#)
- [Community Passageways](#)
- [Education With a Purpose for Pacific Islanders](#)
- [El Centro de la Raza](#)
- [Falís Community Services](#)
- [FEEST](#)
- [Filipino Community of Seattle](#)
- [Glover Empower Mentoring](#)
- [Open Doors for Multicultural Families](#)
- [Para Los Niños](#)
- [Powerful Voices](#)
- [Red Eagle Soaring](#)

So, what's Love and Liberation?

“Love and liberation” is a term that embraces a holistic approach to learning. It employs methods that support the liberation and well-being of young people as well as their families and the community. With love and liberation, all students thrive when BIPOC youth are provided with academic support and resources that address such factors as cultural identity, social emotional skills and coalition building.



The partnership between United Way and REC organizations represents a collaborative and innovative approach to philanthropy, with all partners coming to the table as equals. REC members organize themselves around their common vision of addressing the lack of equitable support services in the education system.

Nine of the Racial Equity Coalition organizations participated in a six-month research process that involved interviews targeting the following areas:

- Understanding each REC organization and the communities served.
- Identifying commonalities and shared struggles to inform collective action.
- Documenting accomplishments and lessons learned to be used as a model for other communities, organizations, potential funders and other stakeholders investing in youth programs.
- Probing ways to share the impact of REC.

This report serves as a backdrop for the creation of REC, its development of their love and liberation-based after-school programming and the research that has gone into ensuring its effectiveness. Throughout the entire process, commitment to approaches that were youth- and/or community-centered were a recurring theme, as was listening to community priorities to inform program development.

Racial Equity Coalition Themes

- **Providing individualized and holistic support:** Such support included helping participants find affordable and safe housing, offering academic support, giving pre-employment training and fostering social/emotional development.
- **Being culturally responsive and youth centered:** REC organizations hire staff who share language and cultural backgrounds of the youth they work with and/or have shared life experiences, hence know how to break the cycle of intergenerational harm, the sense of unworthiness, broken spirit, and inability to be whole that is passed down.
- **Centering youth leadership:** Seen as “experts of their own experience,” youth are part of processes in which they are decision-makers in content development and community organizing, leading to a positive sense of identity.
- **Building community support and partnerships:** Collaborating with school administrators, teachers, employees in or associated with the juvenile justice system, clergy, and university officials can result in referrals as well as innovative and affordable programming.
- **Engaging in advocacy efforts:** REC organizations are strong advocates of social and systemic change, namely the need to de-center white supremacist values and patriarchal practices.

REC organizations’ holistic approach to education supports BIPOC youth who often don’t have opportunities for advancement and success in an education system tailored to their white counterparts. Not surprisingly, BIPOC youth become discouraged and frustrated in a system that doesn’t cultivate their gifts and talents, and that’s where REC has stepped in. Infusing cultural identity, family guidance and community into curriculum, REC helps youth liberate themselves from the effects of an education system ill-suited for them.

REC provides an innovative, practical and exciting approach to a traditional education system that was never designed to serve the diverse, multicultural and multi-ethnic populations that now comprise most public schools in America. REC has not reinvented the education process but bolstered students’ learning with an approach that ensures more parental involvement and community support—facets of the work that can only yield success in years to come.