

# Inland Empire African American Migration

*I had crossed the line. I was Free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom.  
I was a stranger in a strange land.  
Harriet Tubman*



**An Unspoken Dilemma Facing Inland Empire's African  
American Population in 2008**

## **Introduction**

Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (**COPE**) designed this pamphlet as a supplemental document in support of its efforts to build a regional community organizing network of African American Congregations in the Inland Valley communities of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. COPE's efforts are being undertaken to address the growing need to build a broad based approach to the disenfranchisement of poor families in these communities.

## **What is COPE?**

COPE is a intermediary that trains clergy, lay leaders, and community leaders in the art of community organizing, public policy formation and program development. COPE accomplishes its work through intentional organizing efforts in the areas where COPE congregations are located and through the development of local and regional public policy initiatives coordinated through staff and COPE leadership.

***The Mission of COPE is to build the capacity of clergy, lay leaders, and community leaders in small to mid-sized congregations to participate in faith-based community organizing to protect and revitalize the communities in which they live, work, and worship...***

## **What is COPE's Analysis?**

Business interests and public policy changes are at the center of gentrification in the Inland Valley communities of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The result is a mass migration of African American families from the urban core, from cities like (**South Central, Compton, Lynwood, Gardena, Watts, Inglewood, and Long Beach**) . The impact of migration has long term social, economic, and political implications for African American families and faith based institutions. Most African Americans do not understand the magnitude of the gentrification or its consequences on their quality of life.

## **Where Are COPE's Efforts Concentrated?**

COPE has concentrated its efforts in two Counties in Southern California. Those two Counties are, San Bernardino and Riverside. San Bernardino County communities of (**Ontario, Pomona, Rialto, Fontana, San Bernardino, and Highland**). In Riverside County communities of (**Riverside, Moreno Valley, Perris, and Hemet**).



## **Inland Empire Communities African American Social Make Up**

The Inland Empire Counties of San Bernardino and Riverside are the two largest counties geographically in the United States and California. These two counties also have the largest population of African American in the state of California in two counties combined. In San Bernardino County they populate the following cities in large numbers; Rialto, Pomona, Fontana, San Bernardino, Ontario, and Highland) in Riverside County they populate the following cities; Riverside, Moreno Valley, Perris, and Hemet. COPE has connected itself to each one of these communities through its work with local congregations.

African American families migrated to these communities in the three separate fuses. In 1965 due to the Watts riots, 1992 the Rodney King Up-Rising, and the Housing Boom from 1995 to 2003. Inflated housing values in the urban core and variable rate mortgages with low introductory rates made homes attractive in these suburban communities.

African American movement to the suburbs has been motivated particularly by the intensity of problems they experienced in the central city: gangs and guns, drugs, poor schools, racial profiling, and frequent robberies and other crimes. Moving to these distant communities of the Inland Empire still created another challenge. The time-consuming commute back into Los Angeles or Orange Counties to work has turned these communities into bedroom communities leaving children alone and vulnerable. This impact weakens African American families and institutions.

African Americans are 7.4% of the student population in Riverside County and 10.6% in San Bernardino County but, they represent 4.9% of all drop-outs in Riverside County and 7.1% in San Bernardino County.

### **Parolee Population:**

- In the State of California there are 304,000 formerly incarcerated persons
- San Bernardino County is number 4 on the Departments of Justice 50 communities over represented by the formally incarcerated and Riverside is number 6.

### **Health Conditions of California Inmates:**

- 4 times greater rate of Active TB
- 9-10 times greater rate of Hepatitis C
- 5 times higher rate of AIDS
- 1.5-5 times higher rate of mental illness
- Higher rates of substance abuse
- Higher rates of chronic diseases



## **Inland Empire African American Political Landscape**

The vast and different geographies of California have made it difficult for Californians African American population to develop a sense of oneness in these mega-suburbs. With the regional population changes continuing it adds further complications, shaping the how political power in the future will be shared among various regions. For African Americans, Los Angeles and the Bay Area are traditional political and economic powerhouses, but the Inland Empire is poised as the fastest growing region in the state of African Americans.

San Bernardino County voter registration and voting patterns lean to the Republican Party, with Lyndon Johnson in 1964 being the last Democrat to win a majority in the county. However, the county is split between poorer, heavily and heavily Democratic areas and wealthy suburbs. For example, the heavily African American cities of Ontario and San Bernardino, Rialto, Fontana, and Highland went for John Kerry in 2004. However, these cities had abysmal voter turnout; in 2006, San Bernardino's population exceeded 201,000, and in 2004, cast a mere 42,520 votes. In 2006, strongly Republican Rancho Cucamonga had over 145,000 people, and cast 53,054 votes. Similarly, Riverside is a Republican-leaning county in Presidential and Congressional elections. The last Democrat to win a majority in the county was Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

So the Inland Empire African American community is in a great place to organize and build a base of publicly skilled leaders to begin to develop and implement policies in their own interest. In the Inland Empire there is a small amount of African Americans serving in various political offices. Here is a list:

### **San Bernardino County:**

- San Bernardino City Council - Rikki Van Johnson
- San Bernardino City School Board - Danny Tillman
- State Assembly - Wilma Amina Carter
- Fontana City Council - Acquanetta Warren

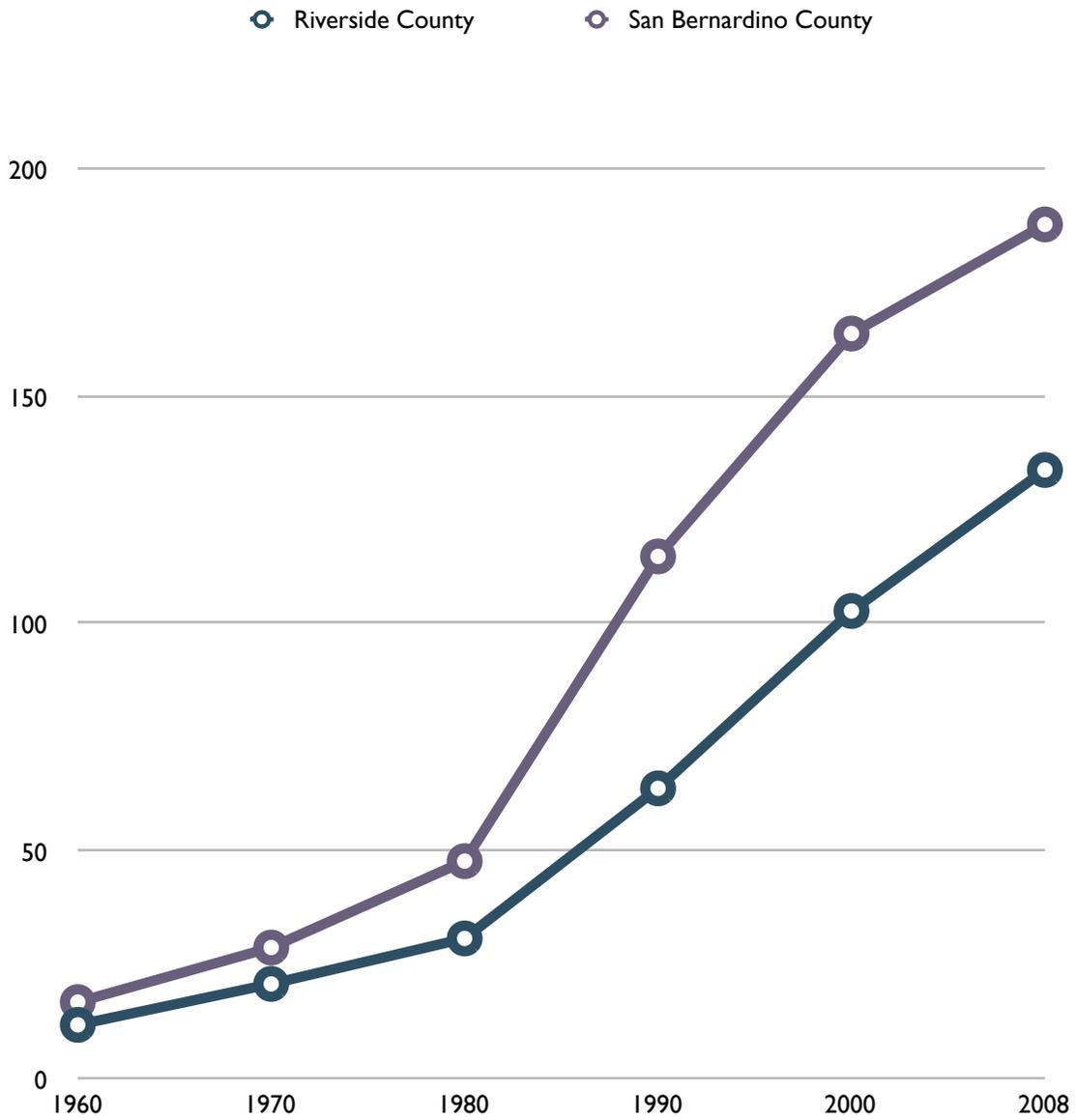
### **Riverside County:**

- Moreno Valley Mayor - William Batey III
- Perris City Council - Rita Waters



First, policy concerns in the Inland Empire that disproportionately affect low-income African American communities have lost some relevance and urgency to state and local policy makers. Second, significant numbers of Black Angelenos have moved eastward, into the Inland Empire, in search of better housing and quality of life.

Yet the civic and social networks that have provided an essential foundation for African American community improvement in Los Angeles are weaker in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, where many Black families have relocated. There is a critical need for increased capacity building among African American community residents in the Inland Empire.



### African American Growth In The Inland Empire

Numbers in 000's

