The Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) Press Kit
October 2014

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BACKGROUND

USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) conducts research and facilitates discussions on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion, and social movement building. Since 2007, we have conducted high-quality research in our focus areas that is relevant to public policy concerns and that reaches those directly affected communities that most need to be engaged in the discussion. PERE is situated within the University of Southern California’s Dornsife College of Letters, Arts & Sciences.

WHY PERE?

PERE’s work is rooted in the new three R’s: rigor, relevance, and reach. In general, we seek and support direct collaborations with community-based organizations in research and other activities, trying to forge a new model of how university and community can work together for the common good.

CURRENT RESEARCH TOPICS

- **Social Movements**: Sustained groupings that develop a frame or narrative based on shared values, that maintain a link with a real and broad base in the community, and that build long-term transformation in systems of power;
- **Regional Equity**: A young field of study that asserts that it is at the regional level – i.e. Los Angeles County – where real progress can be made to reduce socio-economic disparities;
- **Environmental Justice**: A field that seeks environmental equity in low-income communities and communities of color, those that typically experience disproportionate burdens;
- **Rapid Response**: A capacity that allows us meet the immediate research and data needs of our community partners.

DIRECTOR

Dr. Manuel Pastor is a Professor of Sociology and American Studies and Ethnicity at USC where he serves as Director of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) and Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII). In recent years, Pastor’s research has focused on the economic, environmental, and social conditions facing low-income urban communities in the United States. In January 2002 he was awarded a Civic Entrepreneur of the Year award from the California Center for Regional Leadership. In May 2013, he received the Liberty Hill Foundation’s 2012 Wally Marks Changemaker Award. 

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PERE Leadership

A full staff directory of all PERE/CSII staff bios can be found at [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/staff/](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/staff/)

**Manuel Pastor, Director of PERE and Co-Director of CSII**
*Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California*

Dr. Pastor currently directs the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at USC and co-directs USC’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII). He holds an economics Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In recent years, his research has focused on the economic, environmental, and social conditions facing low-income urban communities in the United States. His most recent book, *Just Growth: Inclusion and Prosperity in America’s Metropolitan Regions*, (co-authored with Chris Benner) argues that growth and equity can and should be linked, offering a new path for a U.S. economy seeking to recover from economic crisis and distributional distress. He is also a sought-after speaker on issues of demographic change, economic inequality, and community empowerment. (Full CV and bio available at [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/pastor](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/pastor))

**Rhonda Ortiz, Project Manager**

Rhonda Ortiz is a Project Manager at PERE and the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) at USC where she both manages research projects and conducts research. Ortiz holds a Masters in Urban Planning from UCLA. She previously worked as an Evaluation Associate for The California Endowment, working closely with evaluators serving the Hmong immigrant community of the Central Valley, evaluating initiatives targeting policy and advocacy work and grassroots organizations. Prior to The Endowment, Rhonda worked in varied capacities, such as, a Research Analyst for SEIU Local 399, conducted research on living wages for the living wage ordinance in Santa Monica and coordinated an environmental education program. (Full bio available at [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ortiz](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ortiz))

**Jennifer Ito, Project Manager**

Jennifer Ito is a Project Manager at the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity where she manages various projects in research areas such as regional equity, social movements and environmental justice. Ito holds a Masters in Urban Planning from UCLA. Before PERE, Ito worked as the Research Director at Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), a grassroots organizing and movement building organization based in South Los Angeles. Her areas of focus included clean energy, economic and workforce development policy, campaign development, tax and fiscal policy reform, healthcare career training, community health and leadership development. Ito also provided trainings and capacity-building support to other community-based organizations. (Full bio available at [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ito](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ito))
We believe that long-term change is made when communities are empowered and hold decision-makers accountable. Community organizing does just that – it builds capacity in communities that stays beyond election cycles and can grow over years to form a different type of force for change. And when communities come together across race, space, and place, movements for change build and have an impact on greater scales of governance.

The PERE Story

The Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) was founded in 2007 to support communities working to build stronger, healthier, and more just communities by adding to their work rigorous research with relevancy to policy debates.

One of the many elements required to make this sort of change is research – PERE’s niche. Social movements always have an intellectual side wherein root causes are explored and strategies are weighed. As a university-based research organization with reach to affected communities, PERE has contributed reliable data in the areas of environmental justice, immigrant integration, and regional equity that is academically rigorous as well as relevant to policy debates.

In 2008, PERE took into account the growing intensity of the immigration debate. To create space for this body of research, the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) was born from within PERE and took on its own branding – a deep engagement of the many excellent immigration researchers at USC, a developing ability to be responsive to just-in-time data requests, and an intentionally cross-sectoral approach to building broad alliances. Longtime USC faculty Dowell Myers (Price School of Public Policy) joined PERE founding director Manuel Pastor (Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity) to co-direct CSII in those first few years, then passed the co-directorship to Ange-Marie Hancock (Political Science) and in 2013 to Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (Sociology).

With immigrant integration now housed at CSII, social movement research – which was always the thread line through PERE’s issue areas – became, explicitly, one of the three priority research areas: regional equity, environmental justice, and social movement building. Because of its many community partnerships, PERE is well situated to not just provide data analysis but also to study the development of contemporary movements for social justice. To date, PERE has over 300 interviews with community leaders on making change through social movement organizing.

Today, PERE/CSII has grown to an organization of ten full-time staff; many affiliated faculty at USC and other universities; strong relationships with most social justice organizations and philanthropic partners in Los Angeles, many in California, and others throughout the nation; and the capacity to provide quantitative and qualitative data on issues of environmental equity, regional development, immigrant integration, and best practices for building social movements.
PERE is currently on the cutting edge of the following areas of thought:

- **Equity and Growth**: In partnership with Dr. Chris Benner (UC Davis), we are trying to better understand the relationship between equity and growth in regions throughout the U.S.

- **Transformational Organizing**: In partnership with the NDWA along with others, we are documenting nascent efforts at transformational organizing and how this model can lead to sustained leaders, organizations, and movements.

- **Climate Justice**: In partnership with Drs. Rachel Morello-Frosch (UC Berkeley) and James Sadd (Occidental College), we are examining how climate change will impact vulnerable communities in the U.S. and how that can be incorporated into cumulative impact tools in California.

- **Progressive Research Centers**: With Dr. Ange-Marie Hancock (USC) we have undertaken a project to understand how to strengthen the infrastructure for progressive, community-engaged research centers like ourselves – of which there are only a handful in the nation.

Some of our hallmark community partnership projects include:

- **The Los Angeles Council for Immigrant Integration** where, with the California Community Foundation, we convene multi-sectoral leaders to create a unified voice for Los Angeles on the need to integrate immigrants.

- **From the Ashes: The 1992 Civil Unrest and the Rise of Social Movement Organizing** conference of nearly 500 university, community, and philanthropic attendees that brought together the heads of the organizations that have made Los Angeles a hotbed for social movement innovation and newer organizers to celebrate the past and chart the course ahead.

- **The Environmental Justice Screening Method** project in which we are developing an advanced GIS mapping tool to identify environmentally vulnerable communities with the ongoing input of our community partners (Communities for a Better Environment, among others).
The relatively young field of regional equity shows that working for equity is most effective at the regional level. Metropolitan patterns of development are regional – in terms of housing, transportation, and business patterns – and cause pockets of wealth and poverty that can only be captured at this scale. Community economic development strategies in tandem with organizing, coalition building, and policy making at the regional level have been particularly effective over the last two decades.

PERE’s work in the area of regional equity includes:

1. Advancing academic theory on regional equity, in particular the relationship between regional economic strength and equity
2. Maintaining robust databases through which it conducts analyses at the regional level, for the entire nation, reaching back several decades
3. Creating research partnerships with community organizers to advance regional policy campaigns

Our partners include CAUSE Ventura, Community Coalition, the Ford Foundation, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, PolicyLink, and many others.

PERE’s Regional Equity Projects include:

- Building Resilient Regions
- Just Growth
- PolicyLink/PERE Partnership
- Regional Equity Profiles
- A Roadmap to Green Manufacturing in Los Angeles
- Transportation Equity
- Solar Equity research with the Los Angeles Business Council

Learn about PERE’s Regional Equity research: [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/regionalequity](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/regionalequity)
PERE Research Area
Environmental Justice

While all communities can be at risk from environmental stressors, communities of color—often located in areas with concentrated poverty and cumulative socioeconomic disadvantage—experience a disproportionate burden. While impacts are typically visible to the naked eye, in order to change public policy, organizers need scientific evidence to prove what they know is real.

PERE’s work in environmental justice includes:

1. **Determining** localized impact and broader patterns of environmental inequality by analyzing government environmental databases
2. **Collaborating** with community organizations to check the data against the facts on the ground and make policy recommendations
3. **Convening** community organizers, researchers, and funders to advance the field together

Our partners include Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), California Air Resources Board (CARB), California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), Liberty Hill Foundation, research partners from Occidental College and UC Berkeley, and others.

**PERE’s Environmental Justice Projects include:**

- Air Pollution and the Environment
- Environmental Justice Screening Method
- Environmental Justice and Climate Change

Learn about PERE’s Environmental Justice research: [https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ej/](https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/ej/)
PERE Research Area
Social Movements

PERE’s social movement research illuminates in detail the vital elements necessary for movement building, alliance formation, and leadership development. Social movements—which occasionally produce protests, marches, and demonstrations—are actually sustained through groups of people that develop a frame or narrative based on shared values, maintain a link with a real and broad base in the community, and effect long-term transformation in systems of power.

PERE’s work in the area of social movements includes:

1. Providing guideposts for both foundations and the field to think through what makes for successful social movements
2. Bringing together philanthropy and organizers to co-create movements and metrics for social change
3. Building up the research scaffold to support the movement’s ecosystem of change

Our partners include: Atlantic Philanthropies, California Calls, The California Endowment, Florida New Majority, Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, Labor/Community Strategy Center, National Domestic Workers’ Alliance, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), UCLA Labor Center, and countless community organizers who have shared their wisdom with us.

PERE’s arc of research in this area has been developed in the following order:

- Movement Building and Change Models
- Building Alliance Capacity
- Measuring Movements
- Integrated Voter Engagement

Building the research scaffold: Bridging Progressive Research, Policy and Organizing

Learn about PERE’s Social Movements research: https://dornsifecms.usc.edu/pere/socialmovements/
Legislators call for union factory jobs to close women’s wage gap
By Gale Holland, L.A. Times – October 22, 2014

Estudio: urge dar más oportunidades educativas y laborales a hispanos en sureste de Texas (Study urges more education and employment opportunities for Hispanics in Southeast Texas)
By Alvaro Ortiz, La Voz de Houston – October 16, 2014
http://www.lavoztx.com/news/2014/oct/16/un-estudio-aconseja-la-region-sureste-de-texas/?page=1

Vice President Biden Backs LA Mayor’s Plan to Raise Minimum Wage to $13.25
Manuel Pastor interviewed by Elex Michaelson, ABC 7 News L.A. – October 7, 2014

Los Angeles Proposes a Higher Minimum Wage
Op-Ed by Manuel Pastor, Huffington Post – September 2, 2014
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/manuel-pastor/los-angeles-proposes-a-higher-minimum-wage-b_5745760.html

The Color of Carbon: How the EPA Clean Power Rule Could Help Communities of Color

Are Latinos Really Turning White?
Op-Ed by Manuel Pastor, Huffington Post – May 29, 2014
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/manuel-pastor/are-latinos-really-turning-white_b_5394232.html

New map could refocus state’s pollution battles
By Tony Barboza, The Los Angeles Times – April 22, 2014
http://www.latimes.com/science/la-me-0423-pollution-neighborhoods-20140423-story.html#page=1

What Latino Plurality Means for California
KCRW’s Which Way L.A.? Radio show – February 12, 2014 (Audio segment begins at 13:00 minute mark)
http://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/which-way-la/the-race-to-replace-waxman

What Obama’s Promise Zone Could Mean to L.A.

State of the Union Preview: Obama to address income inequality
KPCC’s “Take Two” morning radio show – January 27, 2014
http://www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2014/01/28/35750/state-of-the-union-preview-obama-to-address-income/
PERE Publications

Visit [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/publications](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/publications) for a complete list of reports.

- **Regional Equity Profile for the Houston-Galveston Region**
  - October 2014
  - By PolicyLink and PERE
  - [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/houston-regional-equity-profile/](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/houston-regional-equity-profile/)

- **Regional Equity Profile for the Southeast Florida Region**
  - June 2014
  - By PolicyLink and PERE
  - [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/SE-florida-equityprofile/](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/SE-florida-equityprofile/)

- **Sharing Solar's Promise: Harnessing LA’s FiT to Create Jobs and Build Social Equity**
  - April 2014
  - By PERE and UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation for the LABC Institute
  - [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/sharing-solars-promise/](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/sharing-solars-promise/)

- **Minnesota’s Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model**
  - March 2014
  - By Jennifer Tran and Sarah Treuhaft
  - PolicyLink
  - [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/minnesotas-tomorrow](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/minnesotas-tomorrow)

- **There’s Something Happening Here... A Look at The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities Initiative**
  - February 2014
  - By Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito, and Anthony Perez
  - [https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/tce-bhc](https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/tce-bhc)

- **A Foot In Both Worlds: Institutionalizing Progressive Community-Engaged Research Centers within Universities**
  - February 2014
  - By Jeffrey O. Sacha, Jared Sanchez, Ange-Marie Hancock, and Manuel Pastor
  - [http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/a-foot-in-both-worlds/](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/a-foot-in-both-worlds/)

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An Agenda for Equity: A Framework for Building A Just Transportation System in Los Angeles County

November 2013
By Vanessa Carter, Manuel Pastor and Madeline Wander

http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/transportationequity/

Moments, Movements, and Momentum: Engaging Voters, Scaling Power, Making Change

March 2013
By Manuel Pastor, Gihan Perera, and Madeline Wander

https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/m3/

Equity Issue Brief: Advancing Environmental Justice Through Sustainable Planning

December 2012
By Manuel Pastor, Madeline Wander, and Mirabai Auer

https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/efb/0017163121

Facing the Climate Gap: How Environmental Justice Communities are Leading the Way to a More Sustainable and Equitable California

October 2012
By Ellen Kersten, UC Berkeley; Rachel Morello-Frosch, UC Berkeley; Manuel Pastor, USC; Marlene Ramos, Columbia University

https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/facingtheclimategap


April 2012
By Manuel Pastor and Michele Prichard with Jennifer Ito and Vanessa Carter

https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/larising/

Koreatown: A Contested Community at a Crossroads

April 2012
By Jared Sanchez, Mirabai Auer, Veronica Terriquez, and Mi Young Kim
Prepared in collaboration with the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)

http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/koreatown