



**Project Cornerstone's  
Outreach & Listening Campaign: Volume II**

**Report on Focus Groups with  
Restorative Justice Program (RJP),  
Filipino & African American Community Members**

May 2002

**Background**

**What is Project Cornerstone?**

Project Cornerstone is a county-wide, collaborative, community movement with the mission of motivating and empowering all individuals and organizations to come together to nurture and develop caring, competent and responsible children and youth. Cornerstone uses the developmental assets approach of building on the strengths of children and youth and recognizing them as valuable members of our community rather than problems.

Cornerstone convenes and supports individuals and organizations from all sectors of the community, from neighbors and community groups to policy makers and elected officials, from youth service providers and teachers to business leaders, to work together to build positive connections between adults and youth. Cornerstone provides training and guidance to assist and challenge individuals and organizations to put the asset approach into action for all children and youth throughout Santa Clara Valley.

Cornerstone is committed to identifying and enhancing the assets of all children and youth. This shall include, but not be limited to, characteristics such as ancestry, color, creed, disability, economic status, gender, gender identity, incarceration or probationary status, immigration status, language, parenting/family status, race religion or sexual orientation.

Cornerstone's Diversity Team leads and guides outreach to and partnership with diverse communities to ensure that Cornerstone builds an inclusive community movement for all our children and youth.

### *What are Developmental Assets?*

Most people think of assets in terms of property or financial resources. Developmental assets are also valuable resources. Assets are positive experiences; opportunities, values and skills children and youth need to become healthy, caring responsible adults. Through years of research Search Institute, a non-profit education and research organization, identified the 40 developmental assets as the essential building blocks of healthy youth development. The asset approach provides us with a blueprint for building strong communities. Cornerstone is one of nearly 600 developmental assets initiatives throughout North America.

Last year Cornerstone conducted Search's survey with local students. The results are a call to action for us to reclaim our responsibilities and opportunities to support the healthy development of our youth. Search's research shows that youth need 30 or more of the 40 assets to thrive. Only 6% of our youth have 30 - 40 assets, and the 7,000 students surveyed had an average of 18.2 assets. All our youth need more assets, and we have the power to make a difference - each of us must be asset-builders for all children and youth.

### *What is the Outreach & Listening Campaign?*

Project Cornerstone's Diversity Team is leading "waves", or phases, of outreach in order to engage in meaningful discussion and partnership with a small number of targeted communities at a time. Our hope is that each "wave" of outreach will result in new partnerships to support the growth of Cornerstone's community movement including self-initiated asset-building efforts within and across the various communities.

The first diversity wave report was completed in the Spring of 2001 and focused on groups with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT), Latino and Vietnamese communities. The first diversity report has been widely disseminated and used by policy makers, funders, program providers, and community organizations throughout Santa Clara County and the Bay Area.

Project Cornerstone launched its second wave of outreach starting in November 2001 through April 2002, members of Project Cornerstone's collaborative Diversity Team focused on the African American community, Filipino American community and the Restorative Justice Program (RJP). These communities lead 22 focus groups with approximately 350 community members providing input about their individual communities.

During November and January 2002, members of Cornerstone's collaborative Diversity Team and other community volunteers led 10 focus groups in various parts of Santa Clara County between Morgan Hill and Mountain View. Participants included approximately 30 youth and 20 adults (Probation Officers, Community Coordinators, Youth Intervention Workers) connected through Santa Clara County Probation Department's Restorative Justice Program.

Project Cornerstone is grateful to all of the community members who participated and to the organizations that hosted the focus groups:

*Restorative Justice:*

- Restorative Justice - Cupertino
- Restorative Justice - Mountain View
- Restorative Justice - Morgan Hill
- Restorative Justice - Washington & Catholic Charities - YES
- Restorative Justice - San Jose (95125 and 95122) & MACSA
- Restorative Justice - Sunnyvale

*Filipino American Community Focus Groups:*

- Filipino Youth Coalition (FYC)
- Filipino American Movement in Education (FAME)
- Northside Community Center
- St. Elizabeth Milpitas Filipino Group
- Filipino American Round Table
- Youth from Independence High School
- FAPESCO

- Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI)
- Asian Pacific Family Resource Center (APRC)
- Asian American Recovery Services, Inc. (AARS)

*African American Community Focus Groups:*

- Ujirani Family Resource Center
- Ujima Adults and Family Services, Inc.
- Fathers Who Care
- SSA Dept. of Family and Children's Services
- Santa Clara County Black Chamber of Commerce
- Alliance African American Community Organization
- Students from the African American Studies Dept., San Jose State
- NAACP of Santa Clara County
- 100 Black Men of Silicon Valley

### **Common Issues Across Communities**

The RJP, Filipino and African American communities each have unique experiences and traditions. On the other hand these three communities are not mutually exclusive as RJP youth and adults come from all cultural, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, and our community is becoming increasingly multicultural/multiracial.

While each community has distinct experience and values, some common themes emerged across the three unique and overlapping communities. Youth and adults in all three communities expressed:

1. Concerns about the challenges for youth and parents to feel safe in school and their neighborhoods, respected, understood and maintaining their cultural identity.
2. High value for, and some concern about families as the foundation of support and guidance for youth;

3. The importance of youth having positive identities and the need for adults to support and guide them in developing a positive sense of self and RJP youth repeatedly expressed concern about being stereotyped and “profiled”, not being accepted as individuals, and being blamed as a group for the problems in the community.

Following are highlights from each of the targeted communities in five areas of common interest and priority: 1.) Peers & Youth Programs; 2.) Families; 3.) Positive Values, Social Competencies; 4.) Other Adults; 5.) Positive Cultural Identity & Positive Identity.

The sections with highlights from each community include focus group participants’ recommendations for changes in programs and policies to support asset building in schools, youth programs and the community. The section that follows the focus group highlights and summary /conclusions, includes focus group participants’ suggestions about concrete actions individuals can take to build assets I in children and youth.

### **Restorative Justice Program (RJP) Highlights**

During November and January 2002, members of Cornerstone’s collaborative Diversity Team and other community volunteers led 10 focus groups in various parts of Santa Clara County between Morgan Hill and Mountain View. Participants included approximately 30 youth and 20 adults (Probation Officers, Community Coordinators, Youth Intervention Workers) connected through Santa Clara County Probation Department’s Restorative Justice Program.

The Restorative Justice Program (RJP) provides diversion, prevention and early intervention services to youth in all areas of the county. The program targets youth who engage in at-risk and delinquent behaviors and are referred by law enforcement who are then provided comprehensive and culturally considerate services in an effort to prevent entry into the formal justice system. The youth are held accountable directly to the victims and community to repair harm caused by negative behavior. Youth are also directed to competency development programs provided through partnerships with local community based organizations. The curriculums and activities of these programs are designed to focus on development of resiliency and risk-avoidance skills, empathy for those caused harm, and building positive, healthy relationships.

RJP youth have particularly interesting perspectives about their experiences, their needs, the conditions in their communities, and their outlook for the future. As a group, they were surprised and appreciative that Project Cornerstone wanted their input, and that it was considered valuable to the greater community in Santa Clara County.

Many were empowered by the experience of participating in the focus group, and seemed genuinely energized for further involvement and action. This was similarly observed during the March 2002 Forum when a larger group of RJP youth (60) heard the results of the earlier focus groups and were asked to consider what they believed needed to change in their communities and what they could do about it.

The following highlights include the perspectives of RJP youth and adult focus group participants as well as the youth who participated at the March Forum.

- 1.) **Families** are seen as providing both the material necessities of life as well as the support and guidance for youth to learn to “be responsible” and to manage their behavior and relationships with others. Youth and adults emphasized the following as important and desired for family asset building:
  - Supporting with love, through involvement, and by modeling behavior.
  - Providing boundaries and privileges to learn appropriate behavior
  - Providing a safe environment
  - Being aware of assets and how they’re developed
  
- 2.) Relationships with **Other Adults**, outside of their family, are new experiences for many RJP youth. While RJP staff and partners see adults as valuable resources for support and modeling for youth, the youth themselves generally reported a different experience. Youth repeatedly expressed concern that adults about being stereotyped and “profiled”, not being accepted as individuals, and being blamed as a group for the problems in the community. Youth expressed surprise and being “touched” by the “niceness” and interest shown to them by the Neighborhood Accountability Board members. RJP youth desire more support, involvement, and interaction with adults through the following:
  - Spending more time with youth and helping with activities
  - Mentoring
  - Contributing ideas and being involved in community events
  - Providing work experience opportunities and job mentoring
  - Operating “youth-friendly” businesses
  - Providing more resources and places for youth to gather

- Treating youth with respect
- Stopping racial profiling
- Telling the truth about what youth do

3.) RJP youth are very concerned about how they are regarded and treated in the **school** environment. They perceive that they are not valued in ways they'd like to be and indicate they are impacted by some of the negative attitudes held by teachers and administrators. Wanting support and acceptance, the RJP youth stressed the importance of the following to their adjustment and learning at school:

- Knowing and understanding school rules
- Being accepted for who they are, rather than judged stereotypically
- Being listened to and having their perspective valued
- Learning resistance and decision-making skills

RJP staff and adults identified the need for increasing school connections for youth and focusing on youth's talents and interests. They emphasized that school administrators need to be more willing to address and work through problems with youth at the school level as long as safety at school is not jeopardized.

4.) RJP youth experience support from their **Peers** in ways that they want to be supported at school and in the community at large. This includes:

- Help with hobbies/activities/school work
- Have someone to talk with, to listen, and to give advise
- Provide support and reminders about following rules
- Provide encouragement and protection

They repeatedly indicated the need for safe, "youth-friendly" after school places to "hang out" and engage in recreational activities. They value that youth not get into trouble, that they and their rights be respected, and that they not be "profiled" as trouble-makers just because they are "kids".

5.) **Positive Values, Social Competencies, and Positive Identity** are the highest priorities for RJP youth. These youth, as a group, generally do not feel accepted or valued for the most part. They repeatedly expressed their desire to be respected, especially as they act on or express their beliefs. They value responsibility,

achievement-motivation, support and honesty. Interestingly, developing social competency is as much their concern as it is for the adults working with them in RJP. The following were identified as important social competency assets to develop as they grow up:

- Planning and decision making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Resistance skills

On a more individual level, RJP youth value having high self esteem and personal power so “not to be taken advantage of” and stated that they have “got to have a purpose”. The following are assets RJP youth and staff recommends to be added to the framework of 40 developmental assets:

- Freedom of expression
- Self reliance
- Employment opportunities
- After school activity centers

### **Filipino Community Highlights**

During November and January 2002, members of Project Cornerstone’s collaborative Diversity Team and other community volunteers lead seven focus groups in various parts of Santa Clara County. The Filipino community is scattered throughout the valley and most of the outreach and coordination efforts centered around the main cities with the largest Filipino population but outreach efforts were also done to the surrounding area:

City	No#	% of Total Pop.	Asian Pacific Islander Population % total
Milpitas	9,381	15.0	52.4
Mt. View	2,224	3.1	20.9
San Jose	48,149	5.4	27.3
Santa Clara	5,819	5.7	29.7
Sunnyvale	6,050	4.6	32.6

The Filipino American focus groups were vocal and wanted to take their input into some form of action. The focus group participants voiced their concern about the majority of the Filipino community doesn't know what is going on in the community.

Many who were part of the focus group agreed that they had something to contribute but concerns arose around the lack of coordination within the community to minimize duplication of services and effective outreach to educate and inform the Filipino community about various services and activities to help the community.

1. **Family** is considered the foundation of the Filipino culture and the Filipino community in Santa Clara County. Filipino cultural values and traditions focus on supporting and honoring the family, and family is traditionally defined to include the extended family network.

Youth and adults expressed the importance of:

- Spending more time with family
- Parents and other adult extended family members passing on values and cultural traditions

Youth and adults expressed the challenges of:

- Cultural and generational gaps
- Limited time
- Concept of "Heya" – Cultural shame that serves as a barrier to progress

*"It takes a village to raise a child - a value that was brought from our homeland." – Filipino Adult*

*"Parents can show support by attending their kids' events and make time to be with them"- Filipino Youth*

*"Families are important and youth must make the effort to get involved with parents interests as well and learn about the culture and customs to help create a healthy environment for the whole family." Filipino Adult*

*"Parents need to participate and seek out to understand different issue youth are dealing with in order to help them more effectively." –Filipino youth*

*"Parents should acknowledge youth have a more pressure growing up here in the United States then they did growing up in the Philippines. Parents must be able to be flexible to adapt with "American ways"." – Filipino youth*

2. **Relationships with Other Adults**, outside of their families, are especially important to Filipino youth for specific reasons.

Youth value relationships and communications with other adults for support and advice. Other adults are important as “mentors and people to listen to them” when they may not feel comfortable talking with their parents or other adults in their families.

Both youth and adults expressed the importance of other adults teaching and modeling cultural values and traditions. Youth feel that other adults often are able to teach about culture in positive ways different from their parents who sometimes make them feel pressured. Adults feel it is important for other adults in their extended family to model cultural values to support parents’ effort and to build relationships through the extended family network to their children.

*“Extended families are important to the core values of the Filipino family. Most extended family members whether they are neighbors or members of churches are often called ate/kuya or manang or manong (older sister or older brother) if that individual is not much older. And also can be called auntie or uncle or even Lolo or Lola (grandpa or grandma) out of respect.” – Filipino Lola*

3. **School** is a high priority for the Filipino community. Filipino adults have expressed the importance that all Filipino youth do well in schools as a primary goal/responsibility for the Filipino family and extended family.

In Cornerstone’s survey of student’s attitudes and behaviors, Asian Pacific Islander (API) youth, including Filipinos, had the highest levels of all of the five assets in the commitment to learning category. For example, 74% of API youth have achievement motivation versus 66% among all youth surveyed.

Filipino teachers and youth have expressed concern about the increasing problem of Filipino youth drop outs and ideas to educate parents about the importance to balancing achievement motivation and high expectations with support and acceptance so that youth do not feel so pressured about school performance.

Both youth and parents expressed serious concerns about how to create a caring school climates culturally appropriate and made the following recommendations:

- Teachers, administrators and staff should be trained to understand, respect and support Filipino and other cultures.

- Teachers, administrators and staff should support culturally appropriate after school programs or partner with Filipino organizations to provide cultural appropriate/awareness after school programs or events.
- Teachers, administrators and staff should have quarterly outreach evening meetings with Filipino parents or guardians to educate them on the issues facing the youth and allow parents to openly talk about challenges in parenting “Americanize children”.

*“Family involvement in school and life is hard because some parents work two or even three jobs and kids turn to one another for support and rely less on parents input on their lives and lose contact with one another.” – Filipino youth*

4. Supportive **Peers & Youth Programs** are especially important to the Filipino youth because it helps many youth have a sounding board for their ideas and frustrations and someone or a place to ask for help. Youth recognized and voiced that their peers are important for acceptance and understanding, especially because of the generation gap and cultural differences they experience with their parents and some other adults.

In Cornerstone’s developmental assets survey, Asian Pacific Islander (API) youth, including the Filipinos, had the highest level of positive peer influence, 79%, of any of the racial/ethnic groups reported and compared to the aggregate of 66%.

Filipino youth and adults also expressed the need for innovative programs, again with different focuses coming from different generations. The following are their recommendations:

- Filipino youth expressed the need to have better education programs for Filipino adults to learn about positive parenting.
- Filipino youth expressed the need to have better outreach to inform youth and the community about existing programs. In addition, youth felt that outreach and education to Filipino adults is critical to provide them with information that can help them become better, positive, active parents in youth’s lives.

*“A bigger part of the Filipino community doesn’t know what is going on in the community – lack of connectivity”. – Filipino youth*

5. **Positive Values, Social Competencies & Positive Identity** are high priorities for the Filipino American community who expressed that the following assets from these asset categories are most important to them individually and to the Filipino community:

- Family support
- High expectation
- Responsibility
- Honesty
- Positive peer influence
- Religious Community
- Service to others

In addition, the focus groups expressed concerns about the following challenges to building/experiencing these important assets:

- Balancing Filipino and American culture
- Feeling respected and supported

*“Parents are afraid that their kids become too “Americanize” and will discard the traditional values of family defined by the Filipino community and ultimately lose respect for them.”  
Filipino Father*

*“Filipino parents expect their children will care for them when they grow old as they did for their parents and so on. But living here in the United States, that doesn’t happen. Parents feel they are discarded once they are old and become a burden to their children. Therefore, we as parents feel the need to be harder in our way to discipline to teach our kids that family is the most important part of their lives not just their friends.” Filipino mother*

### **African American Community Highlights**

During October 2001 and January 2002 members of Cornerstone’s collaborative Diversity Team and other African American community volunteers led focus groups in various parts of Santa Clara County. African Americans make up less than 4% of the total population of Santa Clara County; less than 10% of the population in any given zip code. Given that the population is

scattered throughout the region, outreach and coordination for the focus groups was handled through civic organizations and agencies specifically serving the African American community.

The African American focus groups appreciate the strength in our community despite the fact that sometimes families (regardless of their socio-economic status) have to travel great distances to get the support or services needed. There are some significant organizations and agencies that mutually share the charge of seeing about the well-being of our families.

Many members of the focus groups expressed that program and services could be increased and enhanced to serve our African American children, youth and families. In particular, that forums to educate and inform are imperative to the ongoing well-being of, our families and our community if we are going to survive in this valley.

1.) **Family** is highly important to African American youth and adults. African Americans have held families together with love and a sense of deeply ingrained values. Focus group members shared that family can be very extensive. This is to say that a nuclear family can include what others perceive to be an extended relatives, such as grandparents/godparents, aunts/uncles and cousins all living in the same household.

In Cornerstone's survey results show that African American youth have higher levels of family support than many other youth, 69% as compared to the aggregate 54%. The African American community members expressed that the following are very important for families to be asset-builders for young people in their community.

- Family support with positive family communication.
- Parents or primary caretakers involved with school to assist the youth as they face various challenges.
- Family and social lives involved in religious communities.

*"Need more family to family mentoring"- African American Adult*

*"Parents need to support other parents". - African American Adult*

*"I fear not being able to keep-up" -African American Adult*

2. **Other Adults** in the lives of young people are important to African American youth. As mentioned earlier, extended family members and other adults provide valuable support and guidance to youth in addition to the support they receive from their parents or primary caregivers. African American youth have relationships with adults outside their families than other youth, 48% as compared to the aggregate of 35%.

The church/faith community also has been an integral part of the youth and adult life. Church allows youth to be expressive and empowers them. Some youth encounter their first leadership experience, which allows youth to receive positive values outside of their home life.

In Cornerstone's county-wide survey of students' attitudes and behaviors, African American youth experienced more religious community than most other youth, 66% compared to the aggregate of 62%.

*"Important to empower our community and provide them with positive models."- African American adult*

3.) **School** is a high priority for the African American community. Yet, at school some of the African American youth are concerned about how they are regarded and treated in the school environment. They perceive they are not valued and indicate they are impacted by preconceived ideas/stereotypes held by teachers and administrators.

The Cornerstone's survey of student attitudes and behavior reflected that the African American students are committed to learning. Parents shared they are interested in learning about higher education options for their children, which they see as an opportunity for building successful futures.

African American youth experience many barriers to school success, and parents face barriers to involvement in their children's education. The community members made the following recommendations:

- Schools need to improve their caring climates to welcome and respect the African American students and parents.
- The curriculum needs to be decided by youth, parents, teachers and administration to ensure the needs of the students and their cultures are met.
- School's needs to be less political in the decision-making process and make children and youth educational need a priority.

*"African American youth are facing double standards – school was a place for youth to express themselves but yet are restrained by various rules, (i.e. clothing guidelines)". African American youth*

*"Our ancestors risked their lives to learn to read and write. Our grandparents and parents made enormous sacrifices so our children would with education live better lives and help uplift each other. Revering education isn't acting white-its acting smart". African American adult*

*"We need small groups of people who are dedicated to provide information to our people on how to maneuver through the education process to help our youth succeed!"*

*African American adult*

4. Supportive **peers & youth programs** are important to the African American community. Youth described the importance of support and understanding from friends with whom they spend much of their time. Youth and adults both stated the need for more culturally appropriate youth centers where youth can learn about their history and share their life experiences. Adults expressed the need to have programs support youth with education and college exploration opportunities. In addition, the adults shared the need to have parent education classes to understand the challenges their youth face today and be able to guide them through these challenges.

African American youth and adults included churches as important resources for their community. It is a place where they can receive assistance in life challenges.

Cornerstone's survey, African American youth had higher levels of time spent in religious community than most other youth, 66% compared to the aggregate of 48%.

*"Youth need a sense of purpose and understanding who they are." – African American adult*

*"We need a place we feel safe, welcomed and appreciated for our individualities." – African American youth*

5. **Positive Values, Social Competencies & Positive Identity** are high priorities for the African American community, but because some youth and adults feel there is no central neighborhood or center for the African American community to gather, it becomes difficult for the community to share their cultural and stories.

The African American youth and adults expressed the following assets to be important. Also included are suggestions for adding new assets or redefining existing assets to include specific values, skills/competencies and sense of identity:

- Integrity
- Other Adult relationships/extended family should be specified/distinguished (add)
- Cultural Sensitivity training (add)
- Equality and Social Justice/Civic engagement (add)

*“African American youth and adults feel suppressed with their history and behavior/culture because other cultures do not understand.” African American adult*

*“The African American community doesn’t affirm positive behavior, but when negative behavior occurs the community acknowledges and reacts.” African American adult*

*“We need state of the art community center that focuses on reading, homework, role models careers, teaching, that is community based designed and ran with a theater and low income housing.” African American youth*

## Conclusion

As we conclude the second wave of the Diversity Outreach and Listening Campaign, Project Cornerstone and our partners can value and share the new information shared by RJP, Filipino and African American communities life experiences, challenges, aspirations for their families and youth.

With both campaigns each focus group participants of all ages and roles from various backgrounds expressed support for the developmental assets approach which the participants shared their own individual and community connections to asset-building. Many community members shared their diverse ways to building assets in youth from generations-old, cultural traditions to new ways that are needed to support youth in our increasingly complex society.

With the RJP, Filipino and African American focus groups specifically, they shared ideas in adding or redefining the following assets to make the asset framework reflective of their own experiences and values:

- Other adult relationships – Extended family should be specified/distinguished.
- Caring School Climate- Young person feels to have this support that schools provide culturally appropriate education and teachers.
- Personal Power-Young person believes “freedom of expression” helps them develop their positive identity.
- Respect-Young person has respect for themselves, others adults, family and community members.

- Civic Engagement – (not just promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty in the community) – Young person understands that civic engagement is the foundation to help create a healthy thriving society for all people.

The RJP, Filipino and African American focus group participants made strong recommendation to policy-makers, schools and program providers that are summarized and listed below:

1. Caring school climates are critical to the academic, social and emotional success and well being of all youth, and RJP, Filipino and African American youth and adults need:
  - Educate/train school administrators, teachers, and staff who need to be more willing to address and work through problems with youth at the school level and not to stereo type the youth or use racial profiling.
  - School administrators, teachers, and staff who are knowledgeable and respectful of RJP issues and Filipino and African American cultures, and model respectful and inclusive behavior to all students.
  - Add parent/primary caretaker educational classes to provide an opportunity for parents to learn about higher education options for their children and be able to provide information and assistance on becoming better active parents in their youth's lives.
2. More programs are needed to provide youth with support and opportunities to participate in safe, healthy activities and to have better outreach to inform youth and community about culturally appropriate programs. This includes:
  - Youth, family and community programs that welcome and celebrate diversity.
  - Better outreach by the programs to inform youth about community programs and resources.
3. More ways for youth to have civi engagement in their community to share their ideas and concerns. This includes:
  - Elected Officials/ Policy Makers become more accessible to the youth.

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