



Black Health Equity

Thursday, October 5, 2023

Speaker Biographies

Shakari Byerly, MA, MPP, is managing partner and the principal researcher at EVITARUS. She has more than 20 years of experience designing and conducting research on behalf of foundations, research institutes, advocacy organizations, universities, and public agencies. Before EVITARUS, Byerly was a senior vice president with FM3 Research, a national polling and strategy firm. In addition, she is an active member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, where she serves on the Strategic Planning Committee and is the founding chair of the affinity group on research among Black and African American populations.

Byerly earned a bachelor's degree in government from Dartmouth College, where she was an Andrew Mellon Fellow; a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Luskin School of Public Affairs; and a master's degree in political science also from UCLA. Byerly is a National Research Council Ford Foundation Fellow, a University of California Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellow, an American Political Science Association Fellow, and a Reverend James Lawson Teaching Fellow in the UCLA Department of Labor and Workplace Studies.

Kenna Chic is a health equity fellow at CHCF, where she works with the State Health Policy Office to identify policy opportunities to foster better care and outcomes for Californians while centering that work on improvements in equity. Chic is focusing on deepening CHCF's understanding of California's health equity policy landscape.

Before joining CHCF, Chic was a legislative advocate for Disability Rights California, working to remove social barriers faced by people with mental health issues and various disabilities. She has served on multiple advisory boards and task forces, including the Mental Health Strategic Initiative and Mental Health America. As a voting member and stakeholder representative of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Behavioral Health Integration Task Force, she worked on integrating behavioral health and primary care services, promoted the expansion of peer support, and voted to increase congressional relief funding for telehealth grant programs during the pandemic. Chic received a bachelor's degree in foreign service at Georgetown University.

Katherine Haynes, MBA, is a senior program officer on CHCF’s People-Centered Care team, which works to ensure that Californians — particularly those enrolled in Medi-Cal — receive responsive, comprehensive, and coordinated care that supports their health and well-being. Before joining CHCF, Haynes worked as program director at the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, where she led systematic thinking about health and health care futures among executives of public and private organizations. Previously, Haynes built Kaiser Permanente Northern California’s diversity department — with the mission to advance language access and health equity — and served as its executive director. She also served as the founding director of the technology and information exchange core at the UCSF Center for AIDS Prevention Studies.

Haynes received a bachelor’s degree in humanities from UC Berkeley, and a master’s degree in business administration from the Anderson School of Management at UCLA.

Sandra R. Hernández, MD, is president and chief executive officer of CHCF. Prior to joining CHCF, Hernández was chief executive officer of The San Francisco Foundation. She previously served as director of public health for the City and County of San Francisco.

In February 2023, Hernández was appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom to serve on the state’s Health Care Affordability Board. From 2018 to 2023, she served on the Covered California board of directors, after having been appointed by Governor Jerry Brown. In 2019, she was also appointed by Governor Newsom to the Healthy California for All Commission. During her time at the San Francisco Foundation, she cochaired San Francisco’s Universal Healthcare Council, which designed Healthy San Francisco. It was the first time a local government in the US attempted to provide health care for all of its constituents.

Hernández practiced at San Francisco General Hospital in the HIV/AIDS Clinic from 1984 to 2016 and was an assistant clinical professor at the UCSF School of Medicine. Currently, she serves on the board of the company 23andMe. Hernández is a graduate of Yale University, the Tufts School of Medicine, and the certificate program for senior executives in state and local government at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Traco Matthews, MBA, is the chief health equity officer for Kern Health Systems (KHS). Working with the executive team, he provides leadership in the design and implementation of KHS’s business strategies, stakeholder relationships, and community programs to ensure health equity is prioritized and addressed. Matthews continually seeks to improve culture, processes, and outcomes through his work at KHS and in the community. He uses his experience in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to contribute human-centered strategic analysis, effective leadership development, and expertise in building trust with Kern Family Health Care members and other important stakeholders including providers and community partners.

Matthews also teaches business courses at California State University (CSU), Bakersfield; mentors leaders on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; and serves as a local pastor and community advocate. He graduated from UC Davis with a bachelor's degree in economics and from CSU Bakersfield, with an MBA.

Brenda Shipp, MBA, is the chief operations and chief compliance officer of WellSpace Health, a Federally Qualified Health Center in the Sacramento region. In her role, she creates strategic alliances with organization leaders to support key business initiatives. Shipp serves as the internal leader of the organization and coordinates the annual operations plan and budget. She also leads the performance management process that measures and evaluates progress against goals.

Before joining WellSpace Health, Shipp was the chief operating officer of Lifelong Medical Care in Berkeley, California. She holds an MBA from St. Mary's College, Moraga, California.

Mary Watanabe is the director of the California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), the state entity that oversees health plans that provide health care services to nearly 30 million Californians. Watanabe joined the department in 2015 as the deputy director for health policy and stakeholder relations, where she was responsible for fostering proactive and effective relations between the DMHC and its stakeholders while serving as primary advisor to the director on critical issues and providing strategic planning and policy direction on emerging issues and industry trends.

Before joining the DMHC, Watanabe served as deputy director for the sales division at Covered California, where she oversaw the implementation of the Navigator Grant Program, the Outreach and Education Grant Program, and the engagement of community partners to educate individuals and small business owners about available health care options. Before joining Covered California, Watanabe served with the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board. She also participated in the implementation of the Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan, a federally funded high-risk pool for medically uninsurable Californians. Watanabe holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University, Sacramento.