

Good morning. I'm Chris Essel, President and CEO of Southern California Grantmakers. Welcome, everyone to this year's Annual Conference.

It is my honor to open today's series of conversations about "Our Common Humanity."

As I look around the room at this amazing community of leaders, the deeply collaborative nature of our work comes into sharp focus.

Each of us comes to this moment from a different professional perspective – a foundation, a corporate funder, a government agency – from here in la, or around the region or, for some, even farther away.

We also bring our personal backgrounds and experiences, which shape our perspectives, our way of seeing the world.

And we focus our day-to-day work on different matters – education, homelessness, health, immigration along with so many other vital issues.

And yet, despite the varying demands we face, we are here this morning because we know that our successes -- and our failures -- are innately intertwined.

Even as we grapple with the deep divisions that challenge our communities and our country, we nonetheless still belong to a common humanity. there is an "inherent dignity" shared by all members of the human family -- and that spans across our differences.

Our common humanity gives us hope, powers our work and binds together so many of us, including the scg staff, our members, our partners, and the communities where we live and do our work.

And yet, as we examine our work in this moment, we must ask ourselves some challenging questions:

- Why is it that the the same problems, and the same inequities continue to persist and re-emerge, over and over again, for so many of the same communities?
- Why are schools and neighborhoods still segregated, more than 50 years after the end of jim crow?
- As we fund programs that provide shelter or food or education or housing for those in need, are we not addressing – perhaps not even seeing – the *deeper challenges* that enable these inequities in the first place -- including

the harsh realities of racism as well as gender discrimination, ableism, age discrimination and homophobia?

- And is this inequity inherently baked into the systems and institutions, or the policies and practices that perpetuate the very problems we are trying to solve?

We approach today's conference in response to questions like these which we have heard from you, as our conferences over the past few years have delved deeper into the underlying inequities that create and recreate these unacceptable conditions.

Many of you have said to us, "thank you for the insight – and "now, what can we do about that?"

In fact, 87 percent of members surveyed late last year asked us to focus on "diversity, equity, and inclusion" as a top priority.

Hearing this call from you, SCG is embracing "Our Common Humanity" and translating that core message into action throughout the year.

Over the past few months, under the Philanthropy California Banner — which is our Alliance with San Diego and Northern California Grantmakers, both in attendance today – we took action to help coordinate an ad campaign opposing the separation of parents & children at our Southern border.

In addition, we endorsed a statement from Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, issuing a public condemnation of family disruption.

And, in so doing, we became part of a wave of civic engagement that ultimately forced a change in that misguided policy. Together we were able to leverage our financial resources, our knowledge of the issues and our unique voice to good effect.

As another example: This summer, our Philanthropy California delegation sat down with leaders in Sacramento to draw attention to the crucial importance of adequately funding a fair and accurate 2020 Census in which, literally, everyone counts.

As a result of our delegations timely discussions with key policymakers, we successfully helped to secure \$90 million in the California budget, more than doubling the governor's proposed funding for the census. It is clear to us that our Participation, along with the work of our allies, was essential in this victory.

This year also saw us make great strides on the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation - Los Angeles initiative.

As you may know, the Kellogg Foundation (also with us today) has selected SCG to serve as the backbone organization for this multi-faceted partnership of philanthropy, nonprofits, government, business and community leaders.

Our vision is to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, by addressing the historic and contemporary effects of racism in our region.

All these advances give me hope and help to provide us with a path forward.

So, whether you know these truths through lived experience, or you're already on this journey, or perhaps you're just beginning to explore these issues, you are in the right place.

Throughout the conference, we'll learn from dozens of leading speakers and from each other, across keynotes and breakouts focusing on today's 3 tracks – conceived with an equity lens, and, of course, with a heavy emphasis on racial equity.

Because, in the end, true equity cannot be achieved without addressing the racism that persists in our society.

This is a very different conversation than we had 5 years ago at my 1st Annual Conference! We have grown so much together, in our scope and impact, and courage.

of course, there is much that has not changed – like the values that drew us to this field in the first place -- and our deep belief that effective philanthropy can help create and inspire meaningful change in the world around us.

However we are seeing, a bit more clearly now. we are seeing the truth of the work that is ahead of us.

We are seeing each other more clearly – in our own organizations, across the scg network, in our communities and our country.

We see how connected we truly are. we see... Our Common Humanity.

That is what brings us here today – and it will lead us forward. together.

Thank you.

In that spirit of connection, i want to take a moment to give thanks to those who make our work possible, today and every day.

First, let's recognize our presenting sponsors for this Annual Conference:

- The Annenberg Foundation
- The California Community Foundation
- The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and
- The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation

And our Gold sponsors:

- Amgen Foundation
- Citi Community Development
- The Walt Disney Company
- KPMG
- Weingart Foundation, and
- Wells Fargo

In addition, we have a record number of silver, bronze & donor level sponsors. please join me in thanking them all for their generosity.

I'm also extremely grateful to our operating funders who truly sustain our work throughout the year.

And now I'd like to thank the incredibly talented scg team, who inspire me every day and who have worked so very hard on this Conference - especially Tuly Martinez, our amazing Director of Programs & Conferences. Let's give them all a round of applause.

Last but certainly not least, please recognize our thoughtful, strategic and stellar Board of Directors.

And now, join me in welcoming someone to the stage who exemplifies the humanity and heart of this work we all do -- our wonderful Board Chair, Dr. Beatriz Solis.

Bea, we all thank you for everything you do.