

2023 CHEAC Annual Meeting Workshop Session Biographies

Operationalizing Equity through Community-Based Participatory Research

Harold Dela Cruz, Filipino, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Health Equity Coordinator

Harold Dela Cruz grew up in the westside of Long Beach and graduated from St. Lucy's in 2008 and later from the California Academy of Mathematics and Science in 2012. He received a bachelor of arts degree in Urban Studies and Planning from the University of California, San Diego where he discovered a passion for fighting for justice in the world through community based participatory research (CBPR). He then trained as a community organizing fellow with Tramutola to pass the soda tax in San Francisco in 2016 and continued his organizing career training low-income parents to build political power and fight for an equitable education for their children in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Harold has been involved with the Long Beach Filipino Festival, the Long Beach Parol Lantern Festival, and is the Vice Chair of the board of directors for Public Health Advocates. He is excited to have his journey come around full circle and have the opportunity to continue fighting for equity with his community in Long Beach as the Filipino Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Health Equity Coordinator for the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services. He is responsible for creating structures of shared power between the Filipino and NHPI communities and the LB Health Department to ensure that the community is engaged in every aspect of the research process.

Romeo Hebron, Executive Director

Romeo Hebron graduated with a B.A. in Organizational Communication from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and has served as the Executive Director of the Filipino Migrant Center (FMC) since 2019. Prior to this, he was an FMC member and volunteer for eight years where he led various fundraising efforts and programs for youth and immigrant workers. He is passionate about community organizing and the empowerment of others, especially around workers' rights. He currently sits on two Community Advisory Boards – one with the City of Long Beach to address the needs of the Filipino community and the other with researchers from USC, UC Irvine, and AAPI nonprofit leaders to address health issues within the AAPI community. He also works in close partnership with the Los Angeles Dept. of Public Health through their Public Health Councils initiative established in 2021.

Johann Ortizo, MSW, Director of Programs

Johann began his career at a non-profit, community-based organization, providing psychoeducation, paraprofessional counseling, and intensive case management services that focused on vulnerable populations, such as people living with HIV/AIDS; individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues; people experiencing or at-risk for homelessness; people involved with the justice system; Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and gender non-conforming community (LGBTQ+). Equally adept at confronting public health issues, Johann served as a Chair for four years of the local HIV planning and recommending body for HIV funding and policy. He joined the management team as the Director of Programs, overseeing and managing the operations at Access to Prevention Advocacy Intervention & Treatment (APAIT), a division of Special Service for Groups, in Orange County. As part of his diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, he developed partnerships with local community-based organizations and institutions to address the gaps in services, racial inequities,

lack of culturally competent resources, and health disparities among the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ community.

The Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) selected Johann as a Master's level student for their Minority Fellowship Program whose purpose is to "reduce health disparities and improve behavioral health-care outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse populations." He was invited to join the Alpha Zeta Chapter of Phi Alpha National Honor Society to promote social work values and humanitarian goals.

Johann is currently a doctoral student at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology for Applied Clinical Psychology, focused on LGBTQ+ research. Additionally, he is a practicum student and therapist, supervised by Dr. Katie Moore, at Psychological Affirming Services, providing LGBTQ+ affirming therapy.

Shiraya Thompson, Racial and Health Equity Data Analyst

Shiraya Thompson (she/her) currently serves as the Racial and Health Equity Data Analyst for the Long Beach Health Department. In this role, Shiraya builds collaborative narratives around data, designs research and evaluation procedures, and conducts analyses to identify community health needs and inform department planning. She is passionate about building community and using data for public good. In conducting the Long Beach Filipino Community Health Needs Assessment, Shiraya has been instrumental in establishing the research methodology and developing data collection tools in partnership with the Filipino Community Advisory Board. Shiraya holds a Master of Science in Epidemiology from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health and has contributed to public health research through studies spanning Denmark, India, the state of California, Los Angeles County, and now, the city of Long Beach.