



INLAND EMPIRE LABOR & COMMUNITY CENTER
EXECUTIVE
REPORT
2024-2025

**Addressing critical issues facing working people and
their communities in the Inland Empire and California.**



ABOUT THE INLAND EMPIRE LABOR & COMMUNITY CENTER



MISSION

The Inland Empire Labor and Community Center (IELCC) at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) brings together workers, students, faculty, labor and community organizations, and policymakers to address critical issues facing working people and their communities in the Inland Empire and California. By Inland Empire, we refer to the communities within Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, including High Desert communities and other areas. Through our research and our engagement with local communities and UCR students, we seek to promote good jobs and to improve employment opportunities for all workers in the region and state and to do so in ways that are beneficial to our communities and are environmentally sustainable. Through our activities, we also strive to educate and empower the next generation of community and labor leaders, to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within our regional and state economy, and to expand and improve the rights of workers and immigrants.

BACKGROUND

The IELCC is administratively housed within the UCR College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. The IELCC strengthens and expands the labor movement and serves working people and their communities through advanced research, education, and strategic partnerships with workers, labor and community organizations, policymakers, tribal organizations, and the broader Inland Empire region. We place the empowerment and wellbeing of workers, their families, and their communities at the forefront of our curricula, community engagement, public programs, and publications. We focus attention on the unique socio-economic circumstances of the Inland Empire region, including large immigrant communities and Indigenous nations in the region. Our research offers innovative policy perspectives that support workers and their communities while our worker-centered approach advances the goals of fair working conditions, living wages, and climate, gender, and racial justice. UCR is a world-class research university with an exceptionally diverse undergraduate student body that provides routes to educational success for underrepresented and first-generation college students.

2024-2025 EXECUTIVE REPORT

This report details the programs and accomplishments of the Inland Empire Labor and Community Center (IELCC) at the University of California, Riverside for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Established through the UC Workers Rights Policy Initiative and supported by the James Irvine Foundation, the IELCC plays a key institutional role in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Our region, characterized by a younger workforce with lower levels of formal education compared to the rest of California, continues to experience high levels of income inequality along gender, racial, and ethnic lines. In response, **the IELCC collaborates with labor unions, community organizations, and worker centers to promote quality jobs and improve employment opportunities** across the region and state, while educating the next generation of labor and community leaders.



Founding IELCC Faculty Advisory Committee Members

The IELCC's principal report, *State of Workers in the Inland Empire 2025*, found that the region has a slightly younger workforce, with 12.9% of workers in the college-age range (18–24), compared to 12.0% in the rest of California and a slightly lower share of older workers (55–65) at 18.7%, versus 19.0% in California overall.

In terms of racial and ethnic composition, **the Inland Empire's workforce is majority People of Color**, with a Latino workforce share of 37.5%, higher than the 30.7% statewide. The Inland Empire also has a slightly higher share of Black workers (5.5%) than the rest of the state (3.8%). Though educational attainment has risen across the region, **the Inland Empire still trails behind in higher education levels**, with 33.8% of the Inland Empire's workforce having not attended any college, compared to 29.9% statewide. Overall, the Inland Empire remains defined by a younger and more Latino workforce with lower levels of formal education.¹

In this landscape, **the IELCC partners with our 14-member Community Advisory Committee and local environmental justice, migrant justice, and workers' rights organizations to provide critical research and educational opportunities.**

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Educated **189 undergraduate students** through Introduction to Labor Studies (LABR 001), Labor Studies internships, and paid Labor Summer fellowships.



Produced **two policy-relevant "State of Work" reports** co-authored by our staff and core faculty.



Hosted three student-centered campus events, including two **"Know Your Rights in the Workplace"** workshops and an introduction to immigrant-owned cooperative businesses models with a collective attendance of nearly 250 students.



Co-hosted "Voices of Justice," a Black History Month event and panel featuring **local Black labor leaders**, with the Inland Empire Black Worker Center.



IELCC Executive Director featured as a **key regional labor leader** by the IE Labor Council in their "Labor of Love" film project and public exhibit.



Provided 9 opportunities for **graduate and undergraduate student employment** directed towards regional workers' rights-focused research and programs.

LEADERSHIP

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTORS

Cheylynda Barnard | Executive Director



Cheylynda Barnard is the Executive Director of IELCC and has held this position since the start of 2024. An 18-year resident of Moreno Valley, Cheylynda grew up in the Inland Empire and attended Cal State San Bernardino, graduating with Political Science and Criminal Justice degrees. Cheylynda was a social worker in Riverside County for almost a decade, and during that time she served as Vice President for SEIU Local 721, where she negotiated quality contracts for her union. Cheylynda also served as an executive board member of the Inland Empire Labor Council. Outside of her work in labor organizing, Cheylynda serves on the board of directors for the Riverside Community Health Foundation and as the District 4 councilmember for the City of Moreno Valley. Currently, Cheylynda is serving as the Mayor Pro Tem for Moreno Valley. Mayor Pro Tem Barnard lives by the philosophy of doing good, even when nobody's looking. Mayor Pro Tem Cheylynda Barnard, or "Chey" as she is known to her loving husband, Jay, is the proud parent of two wonderful young boys.

Jesús "Chuy" Flores | Policy & Strategy Director



With over a decade of experience in the urban planning and policy field, Chuy brings an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to his work with organizations committed to improving the lives of working people, their communities, and the environment. His previous work included advising public agencies, multi-sector coalitions, and other groups in developing actionable, inclusive economic development and climate-resilient strategies throughout the state of California. Proudly born and raised in San Bernardino, he firmly believes in centering frontline workers and communities to develop holistic and effective policy solutions that enhance their quality of life. Chuy received a Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Environmental Policy from Occidental College, a graduate certificate in Applied Policy and Government from CSU-Sacramento, and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. In his spare time, Chuy enjoys attempting to cook family recipes, visiting local panaderías, and supporting community arts.

David Mickey-Pabello | Research Director



"Mickey" earned a PhD in Sociology from the University of Michigan. He was most recently a simultaneous postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University and the University of California, Los Angeles. Mickey served as the Director of the California Initiative on Civil Rights at UCLA's Civil Rights Project. He is also currently appointed as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University. His work is mainly quantitative, specializing in causal inference methods, geospatial analysis, and inference for non-probability samples. His previous work has been published in *Sociology of Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, *American Journal of Education*, and the *Journal of Higher Education*. The American Sociological Association, *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and National Public Radio have featured his work.

FACULTY DIRECTORS

Ellen Reese | Faculty Co-Director



Ellen Reese is Professor and Vice-Chair of the Department of Society, Environment, and Health Equity, and Chair of the Labor Studies program at the University of California, Riverside. Her research focuses on gender, race, and class, welfare state development, social movements, poverty, and work. Among other publications, she is co-author of *Unsustainable: Amazon, Warehousing, and the Politics of Exploitation* (2023, University of California Press) and co-editor of *The Cost of Free Shipping: Amazon in the Global Economy* (Pluto Press, 2020), which won the 2020-21 Award for Best Book Related to Labor Education from the United Association of Labor Education. Her work has been widely cited by the media, including *The Press Enterprise*, *San Bernardino Sun*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *LAist*, *the New York Times Magazine*, and *The Washington Post*.

Marissa Brookes | Faculty Co-Director



Marissa Brookes is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Political Science department at the University of California, Riverside. Her research focuses on transnational labor activism, workforce development, and the politics of work and employment in the global economy. Her research has appeared in outlets such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *Development and Change*, *the Global Labour Journal*, and *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research*. Her book, *The New Politics of Transnational Labor: Why Some Alliances Succeed* (Cornell University Press) analyzes the causes of success and failure in transnational labor campaigns. On invitation, she has presented her research at the Center for Advanced Study in Oslo, the ILO in Geneva, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Berlin, The Worker Institute in New York, USAID in Washington, DC, and the ILR School at Cornell University, among other venues. Marissa teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in international political economy, labor studies, and qualitative methods and has lived in Riverside since 2013.

Housed within a world-class research university with an exceptionally diverse undergraduate student body, the IELCC supports our university's mission to provide routes to educational success for underrepresented and first-generation college students through internship and fellowship opportunities where they play a key role in addressing inequality in the Inland Empire.

During the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the IELCC doubled its full-time staff with the addition of the Center's inaugural **Research Director and Policy & Strategy Director**. Our Faculty Co-Directors continued to strengthen the Center's academic foundation by expanding the faculty advisory committee to nine members and growing our network of affiliated faculty to fifteen. Since its founding in 2023, the IELCC has played a central role in expanding and enriching the UCR's Labor Studies program. To date, **381 students have participated in Introduction to Labor Studies courses, Labor Studies internships, and Labor Summer fellowships**. This year, the IELCC provided **9 opportunities for graduate and undergraduate student employment**, including opportunities for students to participate in research for two "State of Work" research reports. In collaboration with the Inland Empire Labor Council, the Center awarded its second annual **Bill Perez Scholarships** of \$3,000 each to three outstanding student labor leaders.

The Center also deepened community engagement through a series of events. Highlights included the 2024 Year in Review celebration honoring Labor Summer graduates and Bill Perez Scholars; "Voices of Justice," a Black History Month event and panel featuring local Black labor leaders; and "Know Your Rights in the Workplace for Young Workers," our first student-focused event on campus. In addition, Executive Director Cheylynda Barnard's interview about the work of the IELCC was featured in the IE Labor Council's "Labor of Love" film project and its Labor Day public exhibit, which was attended by more than one hundred local labor leaders, policymakers, and community members. **Altogether, the IELCC-sponsored events reached over 400 students and community members.**

The IELCC continues to meet the pressing research needs of the region by developing **policy-relevant research** reports. Last Summer and Fall, the IELCC and former Center for Social Innovation at UCR produced a Labor Market Analysis and Strategy Sheets for Thrive Inland SoCal, an inclusive regional economic development effort focused on high-quality job creation and wealth building for all residents in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. This research informed the development of the *California Jobs First Economic*

IN THE FIELD

IELCC-affiliated researchers presented our findings to local policy-makers, labor and community organizations, labor educators, and the press.

IELCC researchers have represented the Center at major state and national convenings, including:

- **UC Workers' Rights Policy Initiative Leadership Convening**
- **UCLA Strategic Labor Research conference**
- **Inland Empire Community Foundation Policy and Philanthropy Summit**
- **American Sociological Association conference**
- **California Sociological Association conference**
- **United Association of Labor Educators conference**
- **Southern California NIOSH Education and Research Center at UCLA**
- **Good Tech for Good Jobs: Strategies for Building Worker Power in the Age of AI**
- **Making Tech Work for Workers: A Conference on AI, Labor, and the Future of Work in California**



Labor Summer Opening Retreat, 2024

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1

Thrive Inland SoCal: Phase 2 Strategy Sheets

ielcc.ucr.edu/thrive-inland-socal-phase-2-strategy-sheets

2

The State of Work: Home Care Providers in the Inland Empire

ielcc.ucr.edu/research/state-work-home-care-providers-inland-empire

3

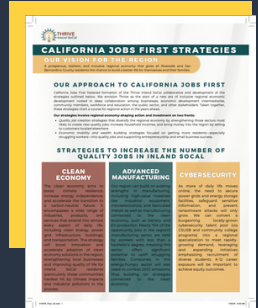
Taking the High Road in the EV Logistics Transition: Workforce Development Strategies for the Inland Empire and Beyond

ielcc.ucr.edu/research/taking-high-road-ev-logistics-transition-workforce-development-strategies-inland-empire-and-beyond

4

The State of Workers in the Inland Empire 2025

ielcc.ucr.edu/research/state-workers-inland-empire-2025



Voices of Justice Panelists

Blueprint, a statewide plan “to drive sustainable economic growth, innovation, and access to good-paying jobs over the next decade.” In Winter 2025, the IELCC released *The State of Work: Home Care Providers in the Inland Empire*², sharing findings with local unions representing home care and In-Home Supportive Services workers. In May and June 2025, the Center released two reports, *Taking the High Road in the EV Logistics Transition: Workforce Development Strategies for the Inland Empire and Beyond*³ followed by *The State of Workers in the Inland Empire 2025*⁴, a comprehensive annual report that provides wide-reaching demographic and industry information on the regional workforce. To further support timely and impactful research, the IELCC plans to launch a **policy brief series** targeting policymakers, labor organizations, and

community stakeholders. The Center has received additional research requests from labor and community partners and hopes to expand capacity to meet these needs in future years.

As we look ahead, the IELCC remains committed to advancing research, education, and leadership development in the region—and to playing a central role in shaping a more equitable Inland Empire.



Know Your Rights in the Workplace for Young Workers

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR LONG-TERM IMPACT

Since its founding, the IELCC secured significant support to establish its foundation and expand its impact. The center was grateful to receive funding over its first three years from the UC Workers Rights Policy Collaborative as well as a two-year capacity-building grant from the James Irvine Foundation. In addition, IELCC faculty leaders have helped to secure external research grants to support the center's growing research portfolio. IELCC partner, the Inland Empire Labor Council, AFL-CIO, raised funds to establish the Bill Perez Scholarship, which awards \$3,000 annually to three undergraduate students at UCR.

Looking ahead, we are proud to announce that the IELCC will serve as Regional Co-Lead—alongside the Inland Empire Labor Council—for the upcoming 5.0/6.0 cycles of the California Workplace Outreach Project. This role reflects our growing leadership in convening regional initiatives. While the IELCC has secured funding for its initial three years, the long-term



Labor Summer Opening Retreat, 2025

success and sustainability of the center depend heavily on continued investment—especially through the UC Workers Rights Policy Initiative. Potential reductions or eliminations in state funding would significantly jeopardize the IELCC's operations and regional impact. Risks include the loss of nine staff positions, including unionized and student workers; termination of UC-wide research initiatives with statewide impact; discontinuation of the Inland Empire's State of Work reports and data infrastructure; and halted momentum on green jobs research and technical assistance.

To keep pace with the urgent research and educational needs of the Inland Empire, **the IELCC must secure additional public and private funding.** Investing in the IELCC means strengthening policy-relevant research, worker-focused programming and events, and regional economic equity in one of California's historically under-resourced areas. We urge our partners and stakeholders to support the UC Worker's Rights Policy Initiative and continued funding for the UC Labor Center Network.

- 1 Hutchins, G.B., Kim, J., Khvat, M., Mickey-Pabello, D., Parra-Rios, A., Rivas-Bautista, L., (2025). *State of Workers in the Inland Empire 2025*. Riverside, CA: Inland Empire Labor and Community Center, University of California Riverside.
- 2 Barnard, C., Buenavides, M., De La Torre, E., Flores, J., Hutchins, G.B., Mickey-Pabello, D. and Reese, E. (2024). *The State of Work: Home Care Providers in the Inland Empire*. Riverside, CA: Inland Empire Labor and Community Center, University of California Riverside.
- 3 Allen, K., Barnard, C., Brookes, M., De La Torre, E., Marquez Duarte, F., Flores, C., Hutchins, G.B., Joyner, C., Khan, S., Mickey-Pabello, D., Reese, E. (2025). *Taking the High Road in the EV Logistics Transition: Workforce Development Strategies for the Inland Empire and Beyond*. Riverside, CA: Inland Empire Labor and Community Center, University of California Riverside.
- 4 Barnard, C., Brookes, M., Flores, J., Hutchins, G.B., Kim, J., Khvat, M., Mickey-Pabello, D., Parra-Rios, A., Reese, E., Rivas-Bautista, L., (2025). *State of Workers in the Inland Empire 2025*. Riverside, CA: Inland Empire Labor and Community Center, University of California Riverside.



Labor Summer Fellows, 2025

