OUR STORY of COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and SOCIAL CHANGE
“This community is experiencing a surge of violent crimes and declining graduation rates.”

“This is Casey, a member of the community which faces the threats of violence and poverty today. Tell us what you’ve been experiencing, Casey.”

“Living here is getting difficult. It doesn’t feel safe to even walk the streets. So many want to get involved and make a difference, but when you can’t even sit on your front porch without fear how can we expect people to thrive?”

“It didn’t used to be like this... We are fighting this the best we can, but we need to see each other again. We’ve lost something important... We know we are valuable, and we need resources that empower, not maintain the status quo!”

“We need to reconnect, to do something together again, to make our community what it could be.”

“We once had a real neighborhood, where people looked out for each other. Now neighbors hardly talk to each other.”

“Become Community Engagement and Social Change”
Thanks for meeting me here today.

Happy to meet you, Rey. Can you tell us a little bit about why you called us?

It's my community. Kids are dropping out of school, violence is on the rise...

A colleague was at one of your workshops and thought your philosophy was different, and you might be able to help us.

We have a process that we go through to help communities that have been short changed.

Miguel, would you like to explain the C.E.I.?

At BECOME, we believe that a community heals just as the individual heals—through introspection and relationship building.

We start by sparking dialogues and reconnecting people in the community through our C.E.I., or Community Engagement Initiative.
YOU SEE, EVERY COMMUNITY HAS ITS OWN CULTURE. THIS CULTURE HAS ITS OWN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. WHEN THE WEAKNESSES OVERPOWER THE STRENGTHS, WE SEE PROBLEMS ARISE.

"WHEN A COMMUNITY IS DISENFRANCHISED, YOU OFTEN SEE TEARS IN THE STRENGTHS OF A CULTURE.

"REJUVENATING THESE CULTURAL STRENGTHS IS PART OF THE CURE.

"AT BECOME, WE BELIEVE TRUE HEALING AND REBUILDING THE COMMUNITY STARTS FROM WITHIN.

"A COMMUNITY THRIVES WHEN IT WORKS TOWARD A COMMON GOAL.

"WE WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS IN THE COMMUNITY WHO ARE LOOKING TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT THEY LIVE IN.

"OUR MISSION IS TO HELP DEFINE THAT AND PARTNER WITH THEM TO TURN THEIR IDEAS INTO ACTION AND THEIR TALENT INTO SUCCESS.

"A DIRECTOR AND STAFF ARE RECRUITED FROM THE COMMUNITY TO LEAD THE WORK IN THE COMMUNITY.

"TOGETHER, WE BEGIN DOING THE WORK OF THE C.E.I.

"THEY WORK CLOSELY WITH VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN THE ROOT PROBLEMS THAT THEY ARE FACING, THE HOPES AND STRENGTHS THEY HAVE, AND WHAT MOTIVATES THEM.

"THIS IS WHERE THE REAL GROUNDWORK BEGINS."
"THE DIRECTOR AND STAFF WILL CONDUCT INTERVIEWS COMMUNITY-WIDE.

"FOCUS GROUPS ARE HELD WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

"THE DIRECTOR AND STAFF ALSO TRAIN THE VOLUNTEERS TO INTERVIEW, SO THEY CAN CONNECT WITH MORE PEOPLE.

"THAT INFORMATION IS THEN ANALYZED BY OUR TEAM AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES BASED ON THE COMMUNITY'S CULTURE, NEEDS, AND TALENTS, INFORMED BY RESEARCH.

"REAL SOLUTIONS.

"THEN, WE WORK ON PUTTING THOSE SOLUTIONS INTO ACTION WITH THE COMMUNITY.

"HOW DOES THAT SOUND TO YOU, REY?"

"GREAT. I'M GLAD YOU CAN HELP US.

SANDRA, MIGUEL, I'D LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO MY COMMUNITY."
I think the community next to ours could use our help. Let’s go take a look.

I can hardly stand it here. People don’t have respect for each other anymore.

Excuse me ma’am, is everything alright?

The violence, the kids... I just... I don’t know how to fix it.

It’s going to be OK.

We can rebuild the village.

Together.
Thank you for reading this comic book about our Community Engagement Initiative (CEI), the first step in our model of Culturally Responsive Community Transformation. From youth to elders, gang members to police, a typical CEI may include talking to over 800 people in a neighborhood through interviews and focus groups that get at the heart of the issues that matter most to the community. Each neighborhood has core assets and talents. For example, community includes formal and informal teachers, counselors, health providers, and spiritual guides; socially conscious businesspeople, social entrepreneurs, spiritual leaders, and community organizers. There is untapped talent in engineering, agriculture, culinary arts, construction, business development, and conflict mediation. The CEI unearths this talent and supports the development of “home grown” solutions and systems.

Become is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and professional practice dedicated to fostering equity, justice, and actualization with marginalized communities. Our work is based on the process and science Culturally Responsive Evaluation.

For more information about Become or our Community Engagement Initiative please visit our web site at www.becomecenter.org, email us at info@becomecenter.org or call us at 312-620-0474.

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