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America's First Economic HUB Dedicated To Advancing People Of Color Opens In California

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Kim Carter, Founder, Black and Brown Opportunities for Profit PHOTO CREDIT: MAYA DARASAW

In 2022, Kim Carter and the Time For Change Foundation (TFCF) broke ground on the Black and Brown Opportunities for Profit (BBOP) Center in San Bernardino, California. The 10,350-square-foot space houses a first-of-its-kind economic HUB in the Inland Empire.

Opening its doors in March to 16-hour days, the [BBOP Center](#) is home to 14 offices, a cafeteria, shared workspaces, and a children's play area. Additionally found are fast-pitch rooms where women entrepreneurs can pitch their ideas to in-house venture capitalists. Every woman has an opportunity from there to sign negotiated deals in specially designated one-on-one rooms within the building. Legal guidance is also available for contract review, ensuring the women are getting what they've been working for, not just what the market says they deserve.

"I believe that people need to engage and have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership," Carter remarked in our recent interview. Having founded the TFCF in 2002, the [CNN Hero](#) and Affordable Housing Developer is using the BBOP Center to carry on her decades-long work of assisting homeless women and children in their journeys toward self-sufficiency. Formerly incarcerated, exposed to childhood trauma and having battled addiction, Carter has gone from experiencing homelessness herself to advocating for those faced with similar issues.

The same year she broke ground on the BBOP Center, Carter released *Waking up to My Purpose*, a memoir focused on the themes of recovery, repair, atonement, and joy. "The way that I've been successful over the years is with the understanding that great leaders don't create followers," she stated. "They create other leaders." With half of all proceeds from book sales going directly to [TFCF](#), Carter's passions and vision can be clearly seen in her outreach efforts.

"One thing about leadership is that everyone has their own unique set of qualities," answered Carter when asked how she carries out her empowering style of leadership. "Instead of trying to replicate your qualities in someone else," she continued. "The best thing to do is identify their qualities and help show them how those qualities form leadership. Once they believe that they can be a leader, then it's easy for them to start exhibiting leadership."

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A Lasting Impression of Advocacy

Carter recalled her first encounter with advocacy taking place at around five years old. One of four children being raised by a single mother, she remembers a strike at her elementary school as her earliest memory of the act that has gone on to define her purpose.

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“As a child, I didn't really see it as advocacy,” she explained.

“What I did see were women in my community who were having detailed discussions with our public school system. And I can recall my mom and her friends talking about what the school district needs to do to better support teachers. Because our parents didn't have anyone to stay home with us, they pretty much were very vocal about the school system not supporting teachers, which in turn meant that we could go to school so they could go to work.”

The “trickle-down effect” that Carter says she witnessed but didn't have a word for at the time, solidified her understanding of her motto, “Taking care of those who will take care of the rest.” In

our conversation, the author, speaker, and mother admitted that it wasn't until later in life that she realized the importance of rest and self-care as part of the emotionally-taxing labor of fighting for equitable rights and justice. Describing the work of a community organizer as one bearing a heavy toll, Carter believes that having access to better resources creates the space for critical decompression and growth. This is especially true for the front-line workers she pinpointed as the reason for the BBOP Center's groundbreaking development.

Setting An Unprecedented Leadership Example

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Carter explained how she'd watched many women who had been overcomers of abuse and other gender-based issues be forced to show up for jobs that were becoming increasingly difficult to do. "They had to figure out child care, how to get the Internet for all the kids, and how to go to work too," she mentioned of the women she regularly encountered. "The world still needed them to show up to work, but everyone else [was] hiding out from the disease outside."

"I thought, 'Why is it that the women who have the least to give are being asked to give the most during this pandemic?' And I said, 'What do we need to do as women to create for ourselves an economic platform that will allow us to be in charge of our future?'" Upset with the growing "local hero" narrative and lack of adequate pay or PPE for essential workers, Carter commenced building a safe space for Black and brown women to establish and scale investable businesses.

Despite having no prior experience in creating a space of the BBOP Center's magnitude, Carter's life and experiences are proof that she was the perfect person to spearhead the endeavor. While in prison, it was an innovative drug and alcohol program that Carter quotes as being the stepping stone to the life she lives today. As the President & CEO of the Center for Housing

Advancement and Motivational Projects (CHAMP), she's been addressing the needs of women of color for years with the help of the resources she was exposed to in the 90's.

"I realize there are so many women right now who are held back by the idea that somehow, some way, we're responsible for what happened to us when we were younger, when we are not," Carter exclaimed. "So many people have not had the luxury or opportunity to have a therapist to help them process and go through some feelings and issues. Some have not had an opportunity to even get back into mainstream society.

"My job and my purpose," she continued, "are to make sure that there's a door open, to show them that there is light, to show them, 'here is a path that works for me and might work for you.'" Recently featured in the Italian film, "[Tell it Like a Woman](#)," Carter's path has been illuminated with help of producer Taraji P. Henson and Academy Award-winning actress Jennifer Hudson. Showcasing some of her most intimate moments of survival and personal triumph, the included short entitled "Pepcy and Kim" has left Carter feeling seen and astounded. "I get to stand on all of that pain and suffering and actually use it as a part of my passion and purpose to help other women who are entrapped and enslaved the same way that I was," she insisted.

Looking Ahead To Help Future Generations

Carter shared that she's been able to assist over 3,500 women in their transition from homelessness and incarceration to lives of self-sufficiency. She's also helped over 300 children in foster care reunite with their mothers through specialized housing and support services. But it's the TFCF's support of legal policies like CA AB570 and '[Ban The Box](#)' that are its impetus to change family court systems, employment structures, healthcare, and education across the US.

Having pivoted from corporate America to the nonprofit world, Carter remains adamant that women entrepreneurs lean on support systems, do their best to eliminate distractions, and “stay focused on the vision that’s going to pay you,” she said. “You’re going to need to put your passion, your heart, your love into whatever you’re doing. You can’t do that if you’re distracted.”

For Carter, the next level of her life’s work includes the future of technology. She’s interested in how the businesses created today will be influenced by the artificially intelligent programs and robots of the future. In the meantime, she notes that apps like Salesforce and ChatGPT are being included in offered training and integrated into everyday operations to keep entrepreneurs up to speed with today’s fast-paced technological landscape.

Whatever they’re learning, Carter explained that the women utilizing the BBOP Center can take in the aesthetically pleasing murals of dynamic women of color adorning the building to remind them of how they can rise above inequities and systemic oppression to create, build, and thrive. “It doesn’t matter what your past is,” she concluded. “Your future can still be bright.”

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