coming **clean**

Health Equity Impact Convenings Impact Story
Partnership Between Imani Energy & Central Baptist Development Corporation

In April 2016, Jeffrey Richardson, CEO of Imani Energy, joined a Coming Clean panel presentation at Health Care Without Harm's CleanMed conference in Dallas, Texas, called **Protecting People of Color and Low Income People in Hospital Neighborhoods: Two Interventions**. According to Health Care Without Harm, "CleanMed is the premier national environmental conference for leaders in health care sustainability who are on the leading edge of greening the health care sector. It's the one time each year for businesses with environmentally preferable products and services or nutritious, sustainable foods to connect with the health care leaders who make purchasing decisions for their facilities." Mr. Richardson was on hand to share the green energy intervention his company is making with local leaders in Wilmington, Delaware, described below in more detail.

Imani Energy, incorporated in Los Angeles in 2009, exists to increase the participation of low-income and people color communities in the solar and renewable energy sectors through job creation and training. "Imani" is based on the Kwanzaa principle: Faith in the future and in the desire of most of the people, most of the time, to do that which is fair, honest, just and healing for our world. The company's mission is to increase the deployment of solar energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

In 2013, the company located their primary operations in Wilmington, Delaware. A year later they entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Wilmington-based, Central Baptist Community Development Corporation (CBCDC), a faith-based community development group that is taking a comprehensive approach to community revitalization, that includes housing, construction job creation, and bringing fresh fruits and vegetables to the predominantly African-American, Eastside of Wilmington, through their Urban Acres program.

Imani Energy's practice is to work with local and national groups that are directly engaged in their communities and that are reflective of those communities in their vision leadership, planning and implementation efforts. Imani Energy and CBCDC launched a partnership as a result of multiple discussions, which revealed synergies in both approaches to community transformation and commitment to values rooted in social and economic justice. The CBCDC embraced Imani Energy's focus on solar power installation, job creation, community revitalization and environmental health so the formalization of our relationship was a natural

outcome.

The US Census Bureau reports that 47.2% of the households on the Eastside of Wilmington earn less than $15,000 as compared to the City of Wilmington's household average of 22.2% earning the same amount. Additionally, the Eastside is predominately residential with few neighborhood stores and businesses to support local demand for products and services. Lack of commercial and retail advantages has had a damaging impact on economic benefits -- there is a lack of "good paying" jobs and unemployment is high.

It is also important to note, the Eastside is home to many of Wilmington's brownfields. Studies show, Wilmington has about 26% of the state's brownfields, of that a good portion are located on Wilmington's Eastside. These brownfields are the results of tanneries, shipyard activities, chemical plants and rail yard operations. In addition, there are landfills and contaminated fill of wetland sites where some housing communities are located. The community is also home to the only public high school that black people could attend prior to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, where DE was one of the plaintiff states. Although the Eastside is rich in history, it is also rich in economic disparity and for these reasons became a focus of Imani Energy and CBCDC's solar project.

The Imani Energy solar training collaboration with CBCDC offers several advantages in the local solar marketplace. The company's approach to solar training is informed by discussions with solar industry representatives, Imani Energy's three decades of community-based project experience and the industry standard learning objectives crafted by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP). Their methodology combines rigorous classroom instruction with hands-on solar installation skills. The program ensures that participants have direct contact with industry professionals and potential employers before the training program is completed. Participants benefit from relationship building, which provides program participants with significant employment advantages. In addition to NABCEP certificate focused instruction, participants gain important knowledge of the latest solar industry trends and benefit from straight forward discussions about how to leverage their solar training in the employment arena.

The initial project in Wilmington will consist of seven homes and one building that will be converted to a community-based training center and venue for hands-on skill development. The buildings will be developed by the Central Baptist CDC, and Imani Energy, in addition to supplying the equipment, managing the installation and certification-based training, will work to secure financing and/or community funding for the project.

As part of their comprehensive revitalization initiative, Central Baptist CDC has set-up an employment intake process where they recruit and screen community residents to assess their job readiness and identify the participants for the solar training. Their goal is to train 40 community members for skills-based jobs in construction and green technology sales and installation. The CBCDC focuses on key areas of personal development that position community residents for employment success, including; resume writing and interviewing skills, math and reading, counseling, computer support and trade skills.

This partnership provides a visible and concrete demonstration of an approach to solar energy which integrates, job training, energy savings, ground up community participation, effective partnerships and a long-term commitment to comprehensive economic and environmental health.

Imani Energy looks forward to continuing collaboration with the Central Baptist CDC in East Wilmington and expanding solar energy pilots to other areas in collaboration with Coming Clean, based on principled engagements with low income, people of color community residents.