Justin Knighten: Hello. I'm Justin Knighten, Director of External Affairs at FEMA. Since 2015, the Resilient Nation Partnership Network has strived to build partnerships that expand capacity and achieve collaborative outcomes. Now, more than ever, investing in partnerships is critical to increasing the nation's resiliency. In April, the network, with support from NOAA released the Building Alliances for Equitable Resilience Resource. This resource is the result of a significant collaboration by 26 partners across the fields of equity and resilience. Together, we inspire communities to advance equitable and resilient practices. The story you're about to hear is from an extraordinary leader who we are honored to call a partner. You will hear from Jake White of the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders.

Jake White: “Nothing about us without us”, hearkens to a dark history but also to our present, where policies are imposed on people without engaging those that the policies would impact. Credit to the disability movement, this theme has grown to incorporate multiple types of marginalized communities and subgroups. It has now a reframe that has grown louder as more and more vulnerable communities have battled with rampant increases in costs for dwindling amounts of property. While governing bodies produce partly multipoint plans to benefit the people and the land. Being rooted in this phrase is essential to ensuring equitable development. If you represent the “us”, it is also essential to know what you need to sustain yourself and to thrive once you are asked what you need.

As a trained planner, I've used many types of indicators that diagnose a neighborhood is struggling. Most of the signs of a struggling neighborhood can be attributed to local disinvestment, but just because a neighborhood does not receive local investment does not mean that the neighborhood does not create a community with inherent worth. The difficulty those communities face is translating that worth into something that can be understood by those in decision making roles. At the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders, that is where we focus our energies. We build the capacity of local nonprofit agencies to translate qualitative values into quantitative reasons for stakeholders to support the resilience of marginalized and vulnerable communities. We aim to redirect the flow of capital to serve those communities in a manner that benefits them. In my position it is not uncommon to engage with an organization that is looking for a way to explain to leaders that, although their community floods, its small businesses have value beyond the cost of the building in which they reside. Although a large mixed income development may boost my neighborhood's appeal. My community may lose residents for whom this is the only affordable area where they can get services in their primary language.

 At the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders, we see this as a challenge to be addressed from multiple fronts. While our mission is to strengthen the economy by advancing economic mobility in Latino communities, we do this through building assets, as our names states. This has taken the form of building place-based cohorts, allowing them to connect to their communities and project their needs, and then helping them build plans of action that will serve their community. By doing this, our communities can be prepared to use their own analysis and voices to strongly advocate for what is needed in the service of “us”.

Justin Knighten: Jake's story presents a unique perspective on the role resilience plays. His story reminds us that we are truly in this together, because every action moves our country forward to build resilience. We thank Jake for sharing his story, and we hope it inspires you to work toward meaningful change, to make equitable resilience possible for all.