



County of Los Angeles  
**Anti-Racism,  
Diversity,  
& Inclusion**

CREATING AN LA COUNTY  
WHERE WE ALL THRIVE

# AB 3121 Task Force Meeting: Bruce's Beach December 14, 2022



**D'Artagnan Scorza, Ph.D.**  
Executive Director, Racial Equity



# LA County's Commitment to Racial Equity



# ANTI-RACISM, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION (ARDI) INITIATIVE



In July 2020, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion that created the Board's Eighth-Board directed priority known as the Anti-racism, Diversity, & Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative. The Board's motion boldly articulated an anti-racist agenda that will guide, govern, and increase the County's ongoing commitment to fighting racism in all its dimensions.

# So... why *Equity*?

When it comes to understanding the importance of equity, we start by acknowledging that **institutions and their systems** have been **intentionally designed to benefit or exclude certain populations.**

- These systems have been in place for so long that the outcomes people experience may appear **unintentional**, but are actually rooted in **discriminatory practices and beliefs.**

## Equality

“The idea that each individual or group of people is **treated the same**, given the same resources or expected to take advantage of the same opportunities.”

## Equity

Acknowledges that each person has a unique background and circumstances, and starts from a different place.

“The idea that differences matter, and that systems must be balanced to distribute resources and opportunities needed to reach equal outcomes **by treating everyone justly according to their circumstances.**”

**Come! See! Hear!**



**SENATOR  
EUGENE McATEER**

**ASSEMBLYMAN  
W. BYRON RUMFORD**

AND

**Tarea Hall Pittman  
Regional Secretary NAACP**



**SPEAK ON THE CAMPAIGN FOR**

# **A FAIR HOUSING LAW IN CALIFORNIA**

**and Other Human Rights Legislation**

**IN 1963**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1963 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Ben Franklin Junior High School**

GEARY AND SCOTT STREETS, SAN FRANCISCO **Ample Parking**

**California Committee  
for Fair Practices**

C. L. Dellums, Chairman  
William Becker, Secretary  
Terry A. Francois, Meeting Chairman

**Sponsoring Organizations:**

S. F. Branch NAACP  
S. F. Committee for Fair Housing  
Catholic Interracial Council  
Community Service Organization

**Benefit:** California Committee for Fair Practices - 2940 16th St., San Francisco - MA 1-7742

# **ANTI-RACISM**

- Anti-racism is... the “active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.”

Source:

National Action Committee on the Status of Women International  
Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity

**At left: Racially restrictive covenants were written into housing deeds, to ensure that homes could not be sold to (or occupied by) people not considered to be white. In response, activists organized, strategized, and galvanized public support for legal remedies.**

# LA County Vision for Racial Equity & ARDI Mission



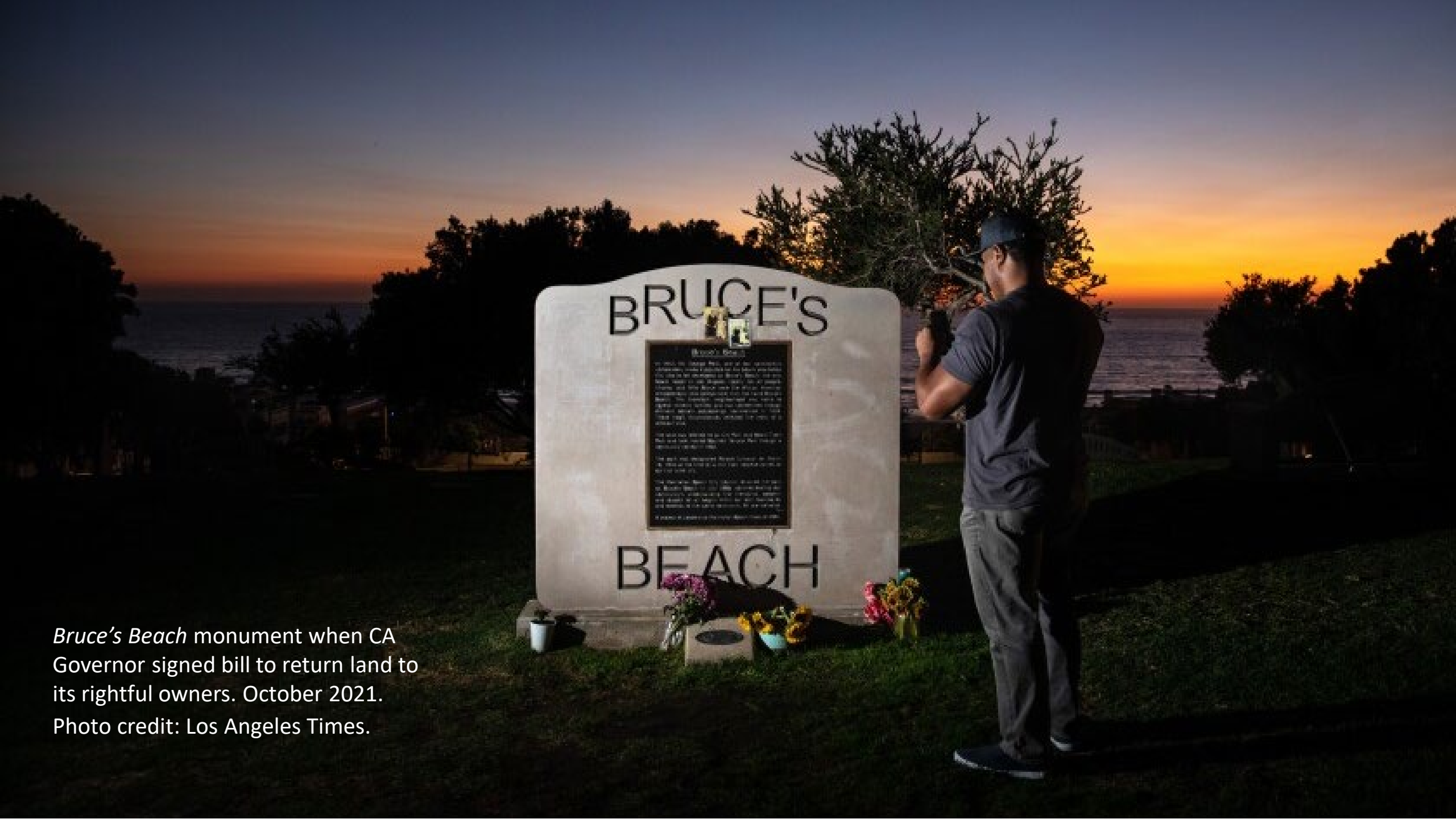
**Vision:** Los Angeles County is a place where all residents are healthy, experience justice and thrive.

**Mission:** To end structural racism and its consequences in Los Angeles County. To boldly articulate an anti-racist agenda that will guide, govern, and increase the County's ongoing commitment to fighting systemic and institutional racism in all its forms and dimensions by directing, building capacity for, and sustaining the development of equitable policy, workforce culture, data analysis, and resource distribution.



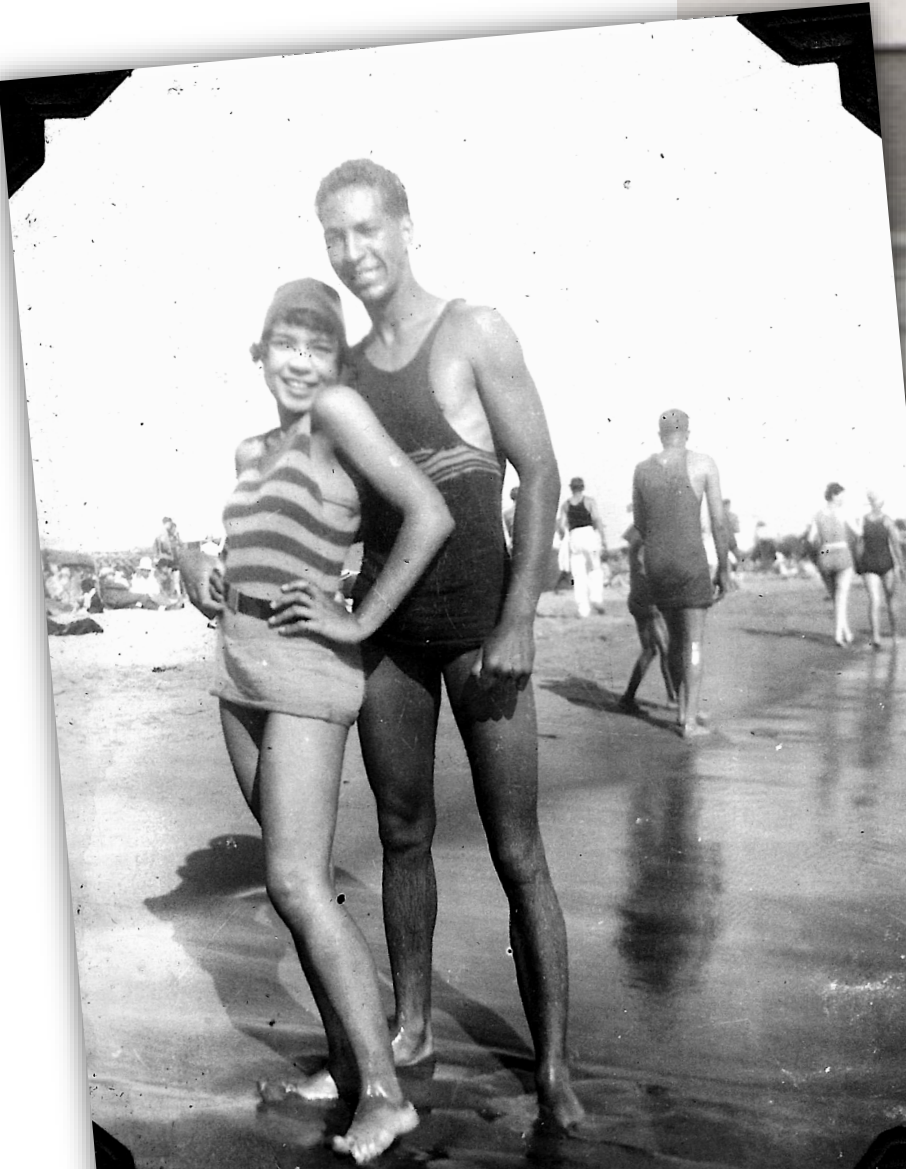
# The Rational for Returning Bruce's Beach





*Bruce's Beach* monument when CA Governor signed bill to return land to its rightful owners. October 2021.  
Photo credit: Los Angeles Times.





Visitors to *Bruce's Beach* in the 1920s.  
Photo credit: Miriam Matthews  
Photography Collection, UCLA.



# Improper Use of Eminent Domain

Historical documentation drew a direct line from the harassment and treatment of the Bruces to the taking of their land.

In 1924, the Manhattan Beach City Council used eminent domain over the Bruce property for the claimed purpose of building a public park. It is well documented that the real reason behind the eminent domain process was racially motivated with the intention of bringing an end to the successful Black business in the predominantly white community.

Twenty years after the Manhattan Beach City Council voted to condemn Bruce's Beach and the surrounding land through eminent domain, one of the Councilmembers, Frank Doherty, wrote an article for the Redondo Reflex newspaper reflecting on the motivation behind the eminent domain process:

***“We thought that the Negro problem was going to stop our progress... We had to acquire these two blocks to solve the problem, so we voted to condemn them and make a city park there. We had to protect ourselves. Our attorney advised members of the council never to admit the real purpose and establishment of the park, especially during the council meetings.”***

# MAP OF PROPERTY INCLUDED IN THE 1924-1929 CONDEMNATION PROCEEDINGS



## MAP LEGEND

- BLACK-OWNED PROPERTY
- STRUCTURES

## LA COUNTY OWNED LAND

NAME	PLOT NUMBER
B.H. Dyer, R.L. Rice, & H.M. Eichelberger	1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
C.W. Stone	3
G.W. Yarrow	4, 6
L.D. Dosta	7
W.A. Bruce	8, 9

## CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH OWNED LAND

NAME	PLOT NUMBER	NAME	PLOT NUMBER
M.B. & A.E. Johnson & E.K. Barnett	1	R.C. Ruperd	10
B.H. Dyer, R.L. Rice, & H.M. Eichelberger	2, 3, 5	G.W. Yarrow	11
E. Patterson	4	G. Stuart	13
Maj. G. & E. Prioleau	4	L.A. Dreisbach (M.W. Mitchell)	14
M.R. Sanders	6	C.M. Monroe	15
S. I. Ambrose, M. R. Wyser (So. Calif. Bond & Finance Corp.)	7	H.A. Eccleston	16



Aerial view of *Bruce's Beach*, including park and LA County Fire and Lifeguard facility in 2022.

Photo credit: Los Angeles Times.

Why is it important for government to redress & remedy harms?

# Return of Bruce's Beach: Key Legislative Findings

- The legacy of the **intentional structuring of opportunity**, implementation of policies and practices, and **assignment of value based solely on skin color** and other physical characteristics, has created and continues to **create unfair disadvantages for African Americans.**





# Return of Bruce's Beach: Key Legislative Findings

- **Racial discrimination** has prevented entire communities **from achieving their full potential** due to the implementation of Black codes and Jim Crow laws, the widespread and condoned practices of **lynching** and **sexually assaulting** African American men and women, **voter suppression**, the myth of separate-but-equal schools...

# Return of Bruce's Beach: Key Legislative Findings

- The **fraudulent appropriation of land** from private persons is **against the public interest** and denies individuals and communities the right to enjoyment, the right to own property alone as well as in association with others, control of one's property.



# Return of Bruce's Beach: Key Legislative Findings

- That government has a **responsibility** to maintain equal protection under the law and **to ensure that all persons are entitled to security against forced removal, harassment and intimidation** by entities who seek to deprive individuals of their rights to self-determination and dignity **on the basis of their race.**





# Return of Bruce's Beach: Key Legislative Findings

- That states and local governments **must prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms** and to guarantee, for all its citizens, the rights of equality before the law, the right to inherit and **the right to housing.**



# Return of Bruce's Beach: Key Legislative Findings

- **That government must act in the public's interest to ensure that communities can access to justice and an effective remedy including the potential return, restitution, resettlement, rehabilitation and compensation for unlawful displacements.**



# Legal Challenge:

## *Ryan v. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors*

Joseph Ryan, an attorney from Palos Verdes Estates filed a complaint with the court in November 2021 seeking an injunction against the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Ryan argued the land transfer does not serve a public purpose, would be a gift to the Bruce family, and the state law enacted to enable it, S.B. 796, was therefore unconstitutional under California law.

The petition was denied.

- The California Supreme Court held that there is no gift of public property “if a direct and substantial public purpose is served and non-state entities are benefited only as an incident to the public purpose.”
- The Court considered SB 796 in the public’s purpose because the land was taken fraudulently as an act of racism.
- “Government must act in the public’s interest to ensure that communities can fairly access justice and effective remedy, including, when appropriate, the potential return, restitution, resettlement, rehabilitation or compensation, for unlawful and race-based displacements.”



## Steps to Return Bruce's Beach



**FIRST STEP  
TOWARD  
JUSTICE:**

Return property  
to Bruce Family



**BRUCE  
FAMILY**

(Owned property  
1912 to 1929)



**CITY OF  
MANHATTAN  
BEACH**

(Took property in 1929  
via eminent domain)

**LOS ANGELES  
COUNTY**

(State transferred property  
to County in 1995)



**STATE OF  
CALIFORNIA**

(Acquired property  
from City in 1948)



# Land Transfer Goals

By returning the land to the legal heirs of the Bruce family and restoring their opportunity to benefit from previously owned land, the County will be able to:

- Address an act of racism that was motivated by the desire to drive out a successful Black businesses and homeowners in the City of Manhattan Beach when land was taken from Charles and Willa Bruce under the false pretense of building a park.
- Right this historic wrong and address generational inequality and anti-Black racism by returning the land to the legal heirs of the Bruce family.
- Advance the public's interest by working to eliminate structural racism in the County's structures, processes, operations and services.

View of *Bruce's Beach* on day that LA County completed return of coastal land to its rightful owners. July 2022.

Photo credit: CNN.

ARDI played an important role in the *Bruce's Beach* return.

What were some of our key steps?

**NEW TONIGHT**

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY RETURNS BEACH PROPERTY SEIZED FROM BLACK OWNERS DURING JIM CROW ERA IN 1924**



**DON LEMON TONIGHT**

# County Actions to Return the Land

Enact County Board Motion



Amend Deed



Conduct Land Assessment



Evaluate Operational Impact



Assess Property Tax Implications




Determine Legal Heirs





# Enact Board Motion and Amend Deed



From left, State Sen. Steven Bradford (authored state bill), Gov. Gavin Newsom, LA County Supervisor Janice Hahn and family descendant Anthony Bruce at *Bruce's Beach*, when Newsom authorized returning the property to the Bruce family. September 2021.  
Photo credit: Jay L. Clendenin/ Los Angeles Times.

# Conduct Land Assessment and Evaluate Operational Impact

Aerial view of *Bruce's Beach*, including park and LA County Fire and Lifeguard facility in 2022.

Photo credit: Los Angeles Times.

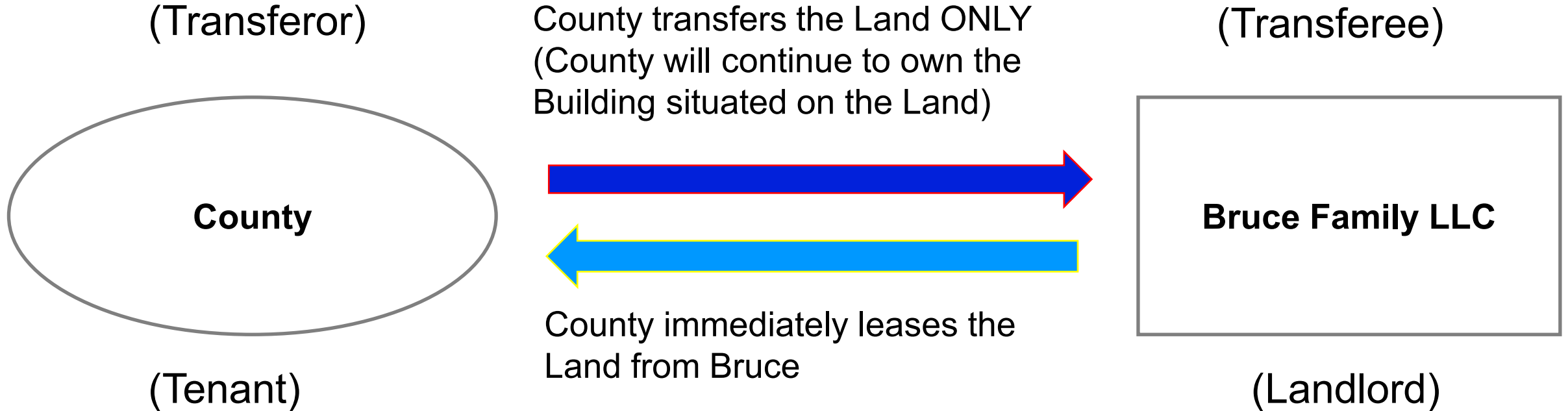


# Assess Property Tax Implication and Determine Legal Heirs



Photo by Brittany Murray, Press-Telegram/SCNG

# Transfer and Lease Back



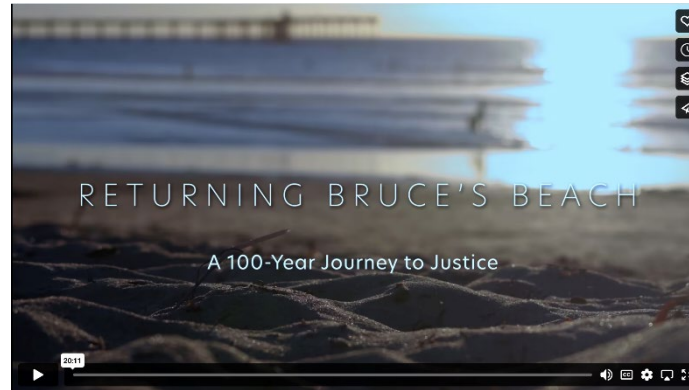
**Deal Points:** The County and the Bruces agreed to a 24-month lease agreement, with an annual rent of \$413,000 plus responsibility for all operation and maintenance costs, to lease the Property back to the County. The lease agreement also includes the Bruces' right to require the County to acquire the Property within a certain timeframe, and the County's right to require the Bruces' to sell the Property to the County within a certain timeframe, for a purchase price not to exceed \$20 million.

The Lease Agreement will allow the Bruce family to realize the generational wealth previously denied them, while allowing the County's lifeguard operations to continue for the foreseeable future without interruption.

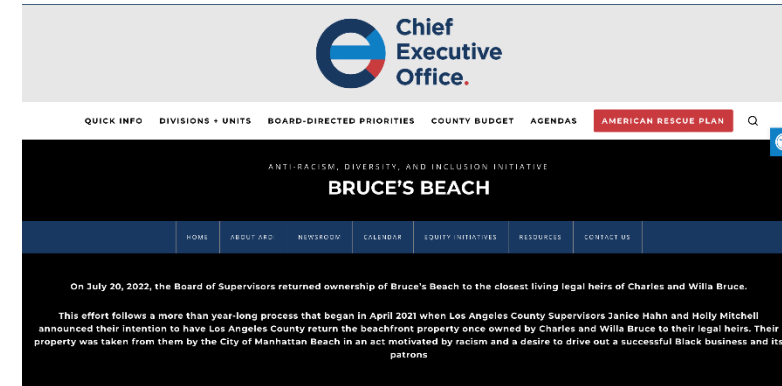


**Anthony Bruce**, a great-great grandson of Charles and Willa Bruce, holds up the title deed of the oceanfront property known as *Bruce's Beach* during a dedication ceremony. He is joined by wife, Sandra, to his right, and LA County officials. July 21, 2022. Photo credit: Jae C. Hong / AP.

## Returning Bruce's Beach: A 100-Year Journey to Justice



## ARDI's Bruce's Beach Website



# For More Information





## Questions?

**Contact:** D'Artagnan Scorza

**Email:** [DScorza@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:DScorza@ceo.lacounty.gov)

**ARDI Website:** <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/>