

Mike Young is a Community Health Worker, Cultural Anthropologist, the Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for The Center for Community Health Alignment overseeing the Equity through Meaningful Community Engagement (EMCE) initiative, a screaming word artist, published poet, proud PhD dropout, storyteller, and self-described “recovering academic.” Mike conducted research with remote indigenous communities in the jungles of Guatemala spending almost an entire year living with them, participating in their typical daily life activities, and was irreversibly altered through the process of earning the trust of entire communities, being the only outsider, and collaborating with them in ways that worked best for them. After reaching ABD status in his doctorate program, he decided to leave academia. Mike wasn’t interested in only studying community, how people connect, share, support, and understand one another. He is passionate about putting these principles into action and positively impacting the livelihoods of others. Mike enjoys infusing advocacy in creative ways and understands the power that storytelling has for humanizing others, generating empathy, and ultimately changing people and structures. Mike is a Diversity Leaders Initiative at the Riley Institute Fellow, a Board of Directors Member for South Carolina Community Economic Development (SCACED), the DEI Chair for the Board of Directors of the Blue Ridge Institute for nonprofit leaders, member of several equity and inclusion coalitions, and regularly gets invited by state, regional, national, and local governmental and nongovernmental entities to speak about diversity, equity, inclusion, implicit bias, anti-racism, and other social issues. Other interesting bits of info about Mike- his mom is from El Salvador, he used to keep bees, he has a giant tortoise, he won the okra eating contest at the Irmo Okra Strut six years in a row, and he is the singer of a socially conscious rock band- The Haves.