SOLIDARITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS
BUILDING THE FUTURE WE DESIRE
/ 2015 ANNUAL REPORT
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Dear Friends and Family,

Your love, hard work, partnership, and financial gifts made it possible for Causa Justa :: Just Cause have a powerful impact in 2015!

We won grassroots victories against racialized displacement, including stopping immigrant detainers, protecting Sanctuary City status, beating back the corporate development “Monster in the Mission”, and gaining new rights against evictions and harassment of tenants. We anchored movement-building work including the development of two citywide groups fighting gentrification in Oakland, a regional civic engagement vehicle called Bay Area Rising, a regional formation of tenant rights organizations, the national Right to the City Alliance and Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, and the international World March of Women.

Our tenant rights victories, when fully enforced, will cut down racialized displacement and keep people in their homes and stabilize longtime communities. Our success in maintaining past gains for immigrants will mean that fewer people are living under the threat of deportation & detention. Our contributions to building a movement strengthen the work and ideas we care about, so that they are much deeper and stronger than just one organization or issue. Step by step, we are supporting the stability and well being of our Black, Latino, and working class communities, and increasing the leadership we exert in the movement as a whole.

These victories also call into question the culture and system that prioritizes the development of capital at all costs, while neglecting or threatening our human development. When we really begin to imagine what it would be like to live in a world where human development is more important than the development of capital, we renew ourselves in the struggle for a better world. We do not simply fight against gentrification, against anti-Black racism, against evictions and displacement, against forced migration and criminalization. We fight for a beautiful, more just, more loving world. For each other, for ourselves, for all of us; we recognize the ways our present and our future are already interdependent, and we mobilize the power that is there, towards the world we wish to see.

In Solidarity,
Maria Poblet
Executive Director
In 2015 we forged more alliances, built relationships, and became part of a stronger, more organized housing movement. As big development grew, and tenant harassment became relentless, so did our resolve. We added urgency to the debate around housing rights, gentrification and displacement through proactive campaigns and direct action, while building the movement of forces demanding Development without Displacement.

CJJC anchored the launch of a Citywide Development Network in Oakland, and a regional tenants’ formation alongside Urban Habitat and Faith in Action. We brought together our leaders for a joint summit in early summer and kicked off a regional week of action in October. The pinnacle of our fall work was “Speak out to Stay Put!,” which brought together over 600 Oakland residents and more than two dozens groups for a day-long event that sparked education and conversations about gentrification, displacement and strategies to fight for our right to stay.

We worked as part of the Oakland United Coalition to ensure that the Coliseum Development benefits East Oakland residents rather than accelerating the displacement of Black and working class communities. Our multi-sector coalition created a powerful platform of demands and pressured our target, developer Floyd Kephart, to include those in his plan for the development. Floyd refused our platform, and, under great community pressure, the City refused his plan for development. Organizing gets the goods!
In San Francisco, we continued to build the dynamic Plaza 16 Coalition, organizing hundreds of community stakeholders to demand the right to shape development planned for 1979 Mission Street. Our coalition held dozens of actions to stop the Maximus’ “Monster in the Mission” and other dangerous market-rate developments in the district. By the fall of 2015, we had driven Maximus out of the project, tied it up in litigation, and the Plaza 16 coalition began a genuine, community-driven development planning process.

Simultaneously, CJJC fought for stronger tenants’ rights through two key legislative fights. As an anchor of the SF Anti-Displacement Coalition, we successfully expanded Just Cause protections in a package called Eviction Protections 2.0. In the East Bay, as part of the Refund Coalition, we won an investment of $350,000 from the general fund for tenants rights and minimum wage enforcement—an unprecedented amount of funding from the general fund that will ensure these policy wins are real on the ground and in our members’ lives. This win opens the door for increased future resources that will give teeth to the ordinances that protect tenants in Oakland.

These activities firmly put our Development without Displacement framework into action! Our framework resonated with a number of other neighborhood-led efforts against development, including the Eastlake United for Justice neighbors that used our framework to fight for a People’s Plan for the 12th Street Parcel on public land at Lake Merritt, and the Oakland Creative Neighborhood Coalition that launched a bold intervention in the development of Oakland’s downtown area.

**Myriam Trujeque, member, Housing Rights, Immigrant Rights**

“The work I’ve seen that Causa Justa does impacted me. I began to understand that as immigrants and tenants we have rights here, that there are protections and organizations dedicated to helping immigrants. The community is part of this organization. It makes decisions, organizes actions, makes plans — members have a voice.”

**Lynne Parker, member, Housing Rights, Black Priorities**

“I’m passionate about the work being done here. I was displaced after living in the same house for 26 years. I have a roof over my head but I got gray hairs fighting a landlord I was loyal to and [was], never late on the rent. It’s a lot of gentrification going on all around the area. When this housing change came, the game changed and the whole neighborhood changed.”

We worked as part of the Oakland United Coalition to ensure that the Coliseum Development benefits East Oakland residents rather than accelerating the displacement of Black and working class communities.
We serve the community with culturally competent Know-Your-Rights information and advocacy to solve daily problems that threaten their housing security including evictions, rent increases, harassment, and foreclosure. Our services are rights based, and our approach supports clients making their own decisions as they became protagonists in their Right to Remain.

Our Clinic and Immigrant Rights teams shared efforts to provide training for immigrant tenants, where specificity around immigration status, needs specialized workshops. For example when a landlord threatens to call ICE or the police to harass an undocumented tenant with the motive of pushing them out of housing.

San Francisco

In 2015 our rights based services in San Francisco continue to work with long-term allies, fomenting relationships at the Mayor’s Office of Housing Tenant Rights Advocacy Working Group meetings, while engaging in outreach and preventative work. Community based engagement included hosting more than 20 Know Your Rights Workshops for partner agencies, at school sites, and proactively offering group counseling for particularly vulnerable populations, such as subtenants and tenants in boarding homes and/or un-zoned units.

Our clinic saw 737 cases, a combined number of new and ongoing cases, advocating for over 2,438 individuals. Engaged in the local anti-displacement and development fights, we supported campaign work around Plaza 16. We fought hard and won Just Cause 2.0 protections.

We tracked an increase in Owner Move-In Evictions and a growing number of rent increases, some surpassing 70%, issued under Costa Hawkins to single family homes; an increase in eviction and harassment cases coming out of the Excelsior, Outer Mission, and Ingleside neighborhoods, as well a growing number of clients seeking support from the Hunters Point (Bayview) zone.

Fire disasters hit the concentrated area of the Mission District. We supported tenants asserting their right to return and with the assistance of Human Services Agency found them temporary housing. We continued to work towards improving our collective citywide response to these disasters and participated in designing recommendations as part of the Fire Safety Task Force to encourage transparency and systematize interagency communication.
About 41% of our cases were eviction cases. Landlords used other tactics to push people out of their homes. Among them: avoiding necessary repairs - leaking ceilings, mold, non-working toilets, faulty wiring, no heat or working stoves. Our data showed that 36% of cases coming through the clinic were repair cases, affecting the health, safety and quality of life of tenants.

Many landlords also used harassment to make life so stressful for the tenants that they drive them out of their units, such as threatening to call immigration, verbal abuse and intimidation. Tenants seeking relief from serious landlord harassment made up more than 22% of our cases in 2015.

Unscrupulous landlords may be inventive and profit-hungry, but we have some powerful tools on our side, too. In some cases we used the Tenant Protection Ordinance to successfully derail harassment tactics used by landlords against tenants by simply citing the ordinance in our letters. We also used the Rent Adjustment Program (RAP) to support tenants to organize their buildings and saw more tenants grouping together to present their cases at RAP hearings.

We saw evictions rise through the use of faulty Owner Move-Ins. This trend spurred proposals to strengthen the Just Cause ordinance in Oakland by drawing up plans to include more stringent Owner Move-in regulations with the goal of it being implemented in the near future.

Our participation in the Anti-Displacement forum helped build an alliance with the Oakland Tenants Union as well as strengthened our relationship with the Alameda County Public Health Dept.

Our Oakland clinic also started outreach efforts, group counseling and member recruitment opportunities through our Know Your Rights workshops that started in 2015 and continuing in 2016.

Oakland

Our Oakland clinic saw 637 new and ongoing cases in 2015, almost half from Fruitvale and East Oakland, but we continued to see cases from throughout Oakland, in total supporting some 1,575 individuals. About 41% of our cases were eviction cases. Landlords used other tactics to push people out of their homes. Among them: avoiding necessary repairs - leaking ceilings, mold, non-working toilets, faulty wiring, no heat or working stoves.
2015 was a whirlwind of challenging circumstances and a powerful year for immigrant communities. Immigrants were scapegoated by local, state and national figures; distraught by the potential loss of hard-won legislative and policy gains offering protections; and threatened by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who continued to build upon its unconstitutional police-ICE collaboration programs such as Pep-Com. The divisive actions widened the gap between those deemed deserving of rights and respect and those seen as disposable and our communities pushed back against this faulty narrative.

ICE intensified deportation sweeps and the chorus of xenophobia swept the country. Through these challenges our membership rose up, with people growing more committed to fighting, winning and providing vision for our work beyond the storm.

We successfully defended Sanctuary and Due Process – policies that protect civil rights while prohibiting unconstitutional practices. We met with lawmakers; showed our strength and tenacity at city and state hearings; educated and organized immigrants in scores of Know-Your-Rights trainings at schools and community centers; we hit the streets, passing out information to impacted communities.

Together with our Black Priorities Project and Youth in Power program, we successfully fought the effort to build a new jail in San...
Francisco while asserting the need for public services instead of criminalization.

Our community and allies held strong, fortified and unwavering from our vision beyond this defensive fight. Our immigrant members grew in their leadership and ability to provide guidance from the grassroots to our local alliances and immigrant rights social movement.

As more members connected with us, two of our beloved immigrant members Norma Pelayo and Gloria Esteva joined our staff to meet the needs of a growing membership, the growing challenges against our immigrant families, and the growing desire to build alternatives and re-focus government efforts towards prioritizing immigrant families in our cities. We emerged from 2015 burnished, brighter and more determined to work for a just world that honors the leadership of immigrants and fights for all human beings.

“I am from there. I am from here. I am not there and I am not here. I have two names, which meet and part, and I have two languages. I forget which of them I dream in.” — Mahmoud Darwish

Member Voices

Margarita Acho, Immigrant Rights Committee & Merger Committee

“Causa Justa inspires me that they fight for the rights of tenants, immigrants. Well, you know, ‘la unión hace la fuerza,’ and so if we were all united we would change many laws that are anti-immigrant, anti-Black — because it’s not only Latinos being affected. There is always a cause to fight for that’s why I keep coming back. When there are many, our voices are heard.”

Ana Segovia, Housing & Immigrant Rights committees

“I called Causa Justa for a housing problem and they helped me and out of that, grew a great love for Causa Justa. Since then I’ve been a member. I like the organization. It’s just not about housing but many different things that open your eyes. I learn so much in the meetings — how to fight for your rights as a woman, as an immigrant, as a tenant — I value this.”
We invest in the leadership of working class Black and Latino families to build the community power that will ensure long-term economic, racial and gender equity. We create spaces for our members to learn with each other and build relationships, to step forward as protagonists and voice their experiences and visions.

Our members dove into engagement in various campaign leadership spaces such as Merger Committee (formed as a result of our merger with POWER); New Member Orientations at our Cafes; and Community Engagement programs. We advanced member leadership by investing in developing their understanding of our campaigns in order to shape decisions about strategy and tactics. We launched assessments of our recruitment and retention practices to transform recent clients of our clinics into committed, long term members and leaders within the organization.

Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC) currently has 2,500 members with approximately 250 new members joining every year. Our 150 active member leaders participated in monthly campaigns, neighborhood outreach cycles, direct actions and marches, celebrations, and led trainings for their peers.

We led the Community Planning Leaders Program, a year-long training program of 40-50 working class Black and Latino residents of East Oakland. These leaders engaged in the creation of a human development framework that empowered and grew their confidence and ownership that they are the best people to speak to strategies that build, uplift and carry their voice.

Our members shared their stories and visions as leaders, organizers and powerful people fighting displacement, gentrification and members participated in a storytelling project for Powerful Together, Pa’lante, CJJC’s 5th anniversary celebration. The storytelling
Ana Ortega, member

“I think it’s very important for all of us to fight for our rights. We all deserve basic human rights – a right to secure housing, food, education. La unión hace la fuerza!”

Member Voices

Zane Burton, member

Zane Burton came into our Oakland clinic and after learning of his legal rights as a renter, he was able to remain in his home. He became a member and testified for tenant rights at City Hall! He told us he was excited, and felt very “empowered” and has been active with us ever since.

Our work to build relationships, community & political unity across cities, generations, and between Black & Latino member leaders laid the groundwork for members and their communities to not just survive the crises of today, but to thrive and emerge stronger and more resilient than ever.

CJJC youth and adult members also worked together on an ambitious civic engagement program in San Francisco during the Fall of 2015, as part of the San Francisco Rising electoral alliance. We coordinated outreach teams with member leaders, targeting low-income Black and Latino voters. Through this effort, SF Rising reached thousands of voters to promote Proposition I, a measure that proposed an 18-month pause on luxury developments in the Mission district.

While the campaign lost to a well-funded opposition, we shifted public dialogue by engaging thousands of voters and talking with Spanish language voters. We built consciousness about the need for development that meets community needs, and challenged the corporate narrative that claims building luxury housing will somehow serve the needs of all people.

Our project engaged a multilingual, multiracial group of 14 youth and adult member leaders who learned creative strategies for telling compelling personal stories. They shared about the pain and loss caused by gentrification and displacement as well as the power gathered from organizing for community-led development. Participants performed their stories on stage at CJJC’s anniversary event to an audience of over 600 attendees!
Youth in Power connects conditions youth see in their communities to a deeper analysis of gentrification and the broader economic structure it is part of. We engage youth leaders in movement building work that grows youth networks, sharpens political analysis and builds leadership. Dedicated to building youth power, we highlight the role of organizing in creating change and the need to build a movement for justice on all fronts.

Following the merger between POWER and CJJC, Youth In Power blazed through a year of strong membership retention, recruitment, and leadership development. Through our programmatic work in three school sites - Balboa, Thurgood Marshall and Mission High - our 2014-2015 school year brought rapid membership growth.

Holding our meetings in Ethnic Studies classes and at weekly lunch meetings, we grew our membership to 55 incredible young people who are active members, while reaching more than 1,200 students through classroom workshops and trainings.

Building off the victories of Free Muni for Youth and the expansion of Ethnic Studies classes, we engaged students across San Francisco Unified School District on issues relating to gentrification, police brutality and climate justice.

With our strong history of collaboration with organizations like PODER, YMAC, Filipino Community Center, Black Lives Matter SF, Last 3% of Black SF, Justice 4 Alex Nieto Coalition, Justice 4 Mario Woods Coalition, as well as ally organizations across the Bay Area our youth membership soared.
Throughout the year youth members played a significant role in campaigns related to these partnerships. We helped to advance fights to bring justice to the families and communities of Alex Nieto and Mario Woods (young men of color who were killed by SFPD officers), supported the Mission Moratorium on luxury housing development, opposed the expansion of the police budget, and opposed the expansion of the San Francisco county jail.

Youth in Power continued in the development and growth of our intergenerational model, creating opportunities for youth members throughout the organization. We held our first Education 4 Liberation Summer program, where 30 students ranging from middle school to transitional aged youth were trained as organizers. Participants developed their understanding of our organizational work through this program.

We finished a robust year, full of promise, exciting ideas and work towards building a world safe for young people, and a movement led by them.

“I don’t believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person...” —Eduardo Galeano

Member Voices

Violeta Vasquez, Youth in Power

—On hearing the police recording of Alex Nieto’s shooting.

“When you hear something like that, it almost seems hopeless, like, everybody’s pushing against our community, nobody wants us here, nobody cares about us, but then you look at the community, and you say, “hey, I want us here, I feel us. I’m the heartbeat, you know? That’s what matters and that’s what’s worth fighting for.”

Emmanuelle Hodgson, Youth in Power

‘We’re all fighting to keep our homes, to keep our friends’ homes, to keep our neighbors’ homes, our whole community alive, and to make a stand that we are here to stay. I want to walk through the Mission and see people I can identify with and my culture and not have outsiders appropriate it. People who are coming in, they have to respect that this is a community - it’s not for profit. Gentrification stops here.”
The Black Priorities Project provides a structure for grassroots Black community outreach, engagement, and organizing needed to win healthy, stable communities fight for racial justice, and build common cause with our Latino membership base.

Our Black Priorities Project negotiated a tumultuous, historic political moment in 2015. The continued violence in the communities of our members and staff impacted and grew the leadership and focus of this program. Members responded to specific incidents of racialized police violence such as the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson; the dismissal of accountability by the Justice Department in the killing of Trayvon Martin; the murder of Eric Garner, Yuvete Henderson, and too many more. At the end of the year, we mobilized in urgent, outraged response to the killing of Mario Woods in our own Bayview district of San Francisco.

Staff and members took on the Black Lives Matter movement locally and nationally. Our work remained flexible in order for members to address the challenges they faced in their communities, while using Black Lives Matter (BLM) as a platform to speak about their experiences in relation to gentrification, and violence that affected them directly, and to the criminalization of working-class Black communities in the Bay Area.

We participated in the Movement for Black Lives Convening in Cleveland in August. Leaders attended workshops that challenged transphobia in the Black community; shared cultural strategies for organizers to use; shared a history of Black organizing, Black migration; and an analysis of environmental racism and displacement.

Shortly afterwards, our leaders along with leaders from Black Lives Matter Bay Area held a report-back of the Convening with over 50 Bay Area Black residents and organizers. This served as...
Through this combination of member support, direct action and deepening connection to the Black Lives Matter movement and Black organizing rising up across the country, our members and staff grew the presence of the Black Priorities Project within Causa Justa and within Black communities on both sides of the Bay.

The Black Priorities Project organized a panel with participants of the Movement for Black Lives leaders from the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Transgender Gender-Variant Intersex Justice Project and student organizers and senior leaders. We held several Bike Builds to provide additional sources of transportation for Bayview-Hunter’s Point residents living in a community that is isolated from the rest of the city by inadequate and irregular public transportation. Bikes serve as a way for youth and adults to access health services, educational or employment opportunities, and helps build community.

We organized a powerful march and speakout in the Bayview — the last working-class Black neighborhood in San Francisco to highlight the displacement of Black residents and the remaining 3% of Black San Franciscans left due to gentrification. Over 200 Bayview residents, clergy, youth and housing activists participated, making this the largest direct action in the Bayview in many years!

Through this combination of member support, direct action and deepening connection to the Black Lives Matter movement and Black organizing rising up across the country, our members and staff grew the presence of the Black Priorities Project within Causa Justa and within Black communities on both sides of the Bay.

**Member Voices**

**Tatiana Bailey, Black Priorities Project, Youth in Power**

“I’m proud of the person I’m becoming – not being like what society wants me to be, or [letting them tell me] who I am as a Black female. I have a little sister and I always tell her, ‘You’re a queen. You know? Be happy with who you are, you don’t have to be what everybody wants you to be. As long as you’re happy with yourself...’ And she listens, and she looks up to me. And I’m inspired by that.”

**Mustafa Solomon, Housing Rights Committee, Merger Committee, Black Priorities Project**

“I’ve been an Oakland resident for the last 33 years. Gentrification is in effect in North Oakland. For real. I’m a fighter against gentrification. I don’t want this to ever happen to anyone the way it happened to me because even if you live in your dwelling for a number of years, it’s not guaranteed that you can stay. Unfortunately it’s all about money now.”
Our commitment to human development grounded us in 2015. Movements from across the world to right here at home propelled us further into the work to make this time in history a truly transformative moment. We joined with the movement for #BlackLivesMatter, the movement demanding #NotOneMore deportation, and the movement to #ReclaimFeminism at the grassroots. We linked our fights locally, regionally and internationally.

Intersectional, interconnected, and growing in power and influence, the movement for Black lives has transformed the political landscape. In our region, we have contributed our leadership -- communicating and organizing in the face of the crisis of Black displacement and linking it with broader racial justice.

Fueled by direct action, “#NiUnaMas” is the rallying cry of the movement to end deportation and forced migration. It took creative collective action against immigrant criminalization throughout the country. We blocked ICE offices in San Francisco, challenged detention holds, held candlelight vigils and used civil disobedience tactics to send a clear strong message that we are not afraid.

Internationalist in scope and vision, the World March of Women brought us back to Tunisia in March to continue relationship building with women-led organizations from around the world linking women’s rights and climate justice. A month later we helped anchor the 4th international action of the World March of Women in solidarity with the more than 1,000, mostly female workers killed in what is considered the deadliest factory fire, which took place at Rana Plaza in Bangladesh. In true movement building form, while women around
the world mobilized in solidarity with the workers of Rana Plaza, those workers took a world view, broadening the spotlight and proclaiming the connection between sweatshop labor, globalization, and women’s resistance with the slogan “Rana Plaza is Everywhere.”

The right to housing, to breathe clean air, to freedom from fear of state violence, to safe working conditions, the potential for human development drove and inspired our organization and our resolve to keep fighting for these rights. How could it not?

Pa’lante

“later that night
i held an atlas in my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?

it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere.”
—Warsan Shire

Volunteer Voices

Momi Palapaz, volunteer

“I’ve been volunteering 2 ½ years. I’ve met a lot of people here fighting for the same things. That keeps me coming back. I want to be of service — to help tenants. The Black and Brown community is being displaced. It’s criminal and the city and developers are doing this. That’s why I’m here. This is important work. Fighting for our rights not just as tenants but as human beings.”

Susan Bassein, volunteer

“I’ve been volunteering for Causa Justa for almost four years. In 2012, I participated in a direct action that was so incredibly well planned I said to myself, I need to get to know this organization. And so, I came in and started volunteering. What distinguishes this place from the other places I’ve volunteered is the Black and Brown leadership of this organization and the political vision.”
THANK YOU

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