

CENTRO LEGAL DE LA RAZA ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015



46 YEARS OF
1969-2015
COMMUNITY
INVESTMENT



DEAR FRIENDS,

In this past year, Centro Legal de la Raza has experienced exciting growth and expansion, which has allowed us to invest in our community at an unprecedented rate. 46 years ago, a group of UC Berkeley Latino law students came together to provide high quality and culturally sensitive legal services to the East Bay's low-income Latino community. They rented a small storefront space and relied on a steady stream of volunteers to make their work possible. They believed that a small investment in one's community can be a catalyst for change and the beginning of a better future.

We are so proud that all these years later, Centro Legal remains committed to its mission of protecting and advocating for the rights of vulnerable and low-income individuals and families. The coming year will bring additional opportunities for our community as we will grow to a 26-person staff and our offices will relocate to the Fruitvale Village Plaza.

Without you, none of this would be possible. All of us at Centro Legal are incredibly grateful to you for continuing to invest in our organization and the community we serve.


Bianca Sierra Wolff
Executive Director


Maria Sager
Board Chair



Strengthening our Community, Working for Justice



Community investment has always been at the heart of Centro Legal de la Raza’s mission. Our founders knew that taking the time to provide high quality, culturally sensitive legal services to low-income individuals and families would build a better tomorrow for all. For nearly 50 years, Centro Legal has provided meaningful and effective legal services to vulnerable individuals in their most desperate time of need. We are proud to continue our founders’ legacy of building a better world for future generations by defending the rights of low-income immigrants, workers, tenants, and youth.



46 YEARS OF
INVESTING IN FAMILIES

“ For six years, Centro Legal has been there to listen and help me find resources. When my landlord raised my rent and I had no idea what to do, [their] housing team helped me understand my rights. Centro Legal has also impacted my family’s life in other ways by helping all three of my sons prepare for college and assisting two of them to apply for and be granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Getting DACA doesn’t just help my sons, it helps the whole family”

—Amelia

When families come to Centro Legal, they are often facing multiple challenges at the same time. Fortunately, we have the unique capacity to help these families in the most critical areas of their lives—housing, employment, immigration, and education. We invest in the well-being of individuals and families by carefully crafting programs tailored to meet their most basic and pressing needs. This past year, we helped 5,000 individuals access stable housing, improve their economic opportunities, and maintain family unity. Take Amelia, who first came to Centro Legal when her sons enrolled in our Youth Law Academy (YLA) program. Through her interactions with YLA staff, she learned of Centro Legal’s legal service programs and today her family’s economic prospects have greatly improved.



While many of the families we serve have been here for generations, others—like the recent wave of Central American refugee children—have only recently arrived. Over the last 12 months, we saw record numbers of unaccompanied children and families arriving in our community—scared and often alone. Centro Legal immediately responded to meet the emergency legal needs of these refugee children and families. With your support, we expanded our immigration services to assist these young asylum seekers, who had no choice but to flee extreme violence in their home countries. We provided legal consultations to 2,000 unaccompanied children and migrant families and provided life-saving legal representation to over 500. In addition to legal services, we helped connect many of our young clients to food programs, emergency housing, and mental health services. To date, we have secured immigration relief for over 115 of these children and families, allowing them to finally heal from their trauma.



By helping members of our community obtain lawful immigration status we can provide a vital tool for long-term economic security. Lawful status is life-changing as it leads to higher pay, better working conditions, and new career opportunities. During the past year, we helped over 600 individuals improve their economic prospects by stabilizing their legal status through U visas, asylum, permanent residency, naturalization, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Promoting economic security is also a top priority for our Workers' Rights Program, which focuses on empowering low-income individuals to fight for their rights as workers. Many immigrant workers struggle to support their families due to discrimination, fear of speaking out against workplace violations, and lack of knowledge about their rights. Last year, we continued to serve the most vulnerable and marginalized workers, including day laborers, by providing know-your-rights education to over 900 low-wage workers and helping 80 individuals recover over \$1 million in owed wages.

“For the low-wage workers we serve employment problems are often entwined with immigration status and can also impact their housing situation. Immigration-related threats from employers and landlords are unfortunately very common. I am thrilled to work at an organization that can address the economic security and immigration challenges of our workers.”

—Derek Schoonmaker, Senior Staff Attorney



Centro Legal also invests in the economic security of families by helping them avoid homelessness and maintain healthy and affordable housing. An illegal rent increase or eviction poses a significant threat to the economic stability and well-being of any individual or family due to potential homelessness or displacement. During 2014, we helped over 600 low-income tenants address unhealthy housing conditions and defend against illegal evictions and rent increases. As the Bay Area housing crisis continues to make national news because so many low-income tenants and long-term residents are being displaced, Centro Legal's housing services remain in critical demand. A place to call home is a fundamental and basic human need and we will continue to ensure that all low-income individuals and families have essential safety-net housing services.



This summer, 13 college students joined the YLA's new Diversity Legal Pipeline Program, a series of pre-law workshops designed to help more students of color attend law school.

Centro Legal understands that our vision of a stronger, healthier community is only possible if we take the time to invest in and support our youth. We believe that every individual has the right to access higher education and a meaningful career. This core belief is at the heart of Youth Law Academy program, which focuses on helping Oakland youth of color prepare for college and a career in law. Accessing higher education is crucial for youth of color to gain the skills needed to thrive in today's society. Helping youth access professional careers benefits the entire community by creating opportunities for families to move out of poverty. Since its launch 10 years ago, the YLA program has achieved the following successes:

- Assisted 78 (100%) students to graduate from high school and enroll in college.
- 17 students have already graduated from college.
- 97% of our students are the first in their family to attend college.
- Since 2012, 14 YLA students have been granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).



I come from Oakland where most people don't know their legal rights. They don't know that if you're an immigrant you have rights. Through the YLA I have learned so much. Now I want to go to law school so I can help my community."

—Nori Dubon, Youth Law Academy student



Centro Legal’s commitment to low-income and immigrant individuals and families is an investment in the future of the entire Bay Area. As the face of California and the nation changes, we believe it is vital that everyone have a seat at the table. We believe all individuals should be recognized for their contribution to our economy and society. Our services create opportunities for all community members to participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Centro Legal will continue to invest in our community by helping low-income and immigrant families access stable and affordable housing, improve their economic opportunities, and maintain family unity.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

OVERVIEW - JUNE 30, 2014* [EXPAND](#)

ASSETS	\$1,134,395	
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$1,134,395	
REVENUE	\$2,056,427	
EXPENSES	\$1,688,233	
NET INCOME	\$368,193	

* Unaudited financials. Audited financial statements are available upon request.

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Centro Legal gratefully acknowledges the individuals, law firms, businesses, corporations, foundations, and community organizations who have contributed gifts to our work from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

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Centro Legal de la Raza's mission is to protect and to advance the rights of low-income, immigrant, and Latino communities through bilingual legal representation, education, and advocacy. By combining quality legal services with know-your-rights education and youth development, we promote access to justice for thousands of individuals and families throughout Northern California.

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