

CENTROLEGAL
DE LA RAZA



POWERFUL COMMUNITIES, THRIVING GENERATIONS

**CENTRO LEGAL DE LA RAZA'S
ANNUAL REPORT FY19-20**



MISSION

Founded in 1969, Centro Legal de la Raza is a legal services agency protecting and advancing the rights of low-income, immigrant, Black, and Latinx communities through bilingual legal representation, education, and advocacy. By combining quality legal services with know-your-rights education and youth development, Centro Legal de la Raza ensures access to justice for thousands of individuals throughout Northern and Central California.

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COVER Top Left: Nancy Martínez, Senior Intake Coordinator & Administrative Assistant; Middle Left: Diley Fontes Menendez, Senior Program Intake Administrator; Bottom Left: Jesus Chavez, Development and Communications Manager; Bottom Right: Abby Sullivan Engen, Immigrants' Rights Managing Attorney



Dear Beloved Community,

Unprecedented. Uncertain. Tumultuous. These are some words that have been chosen to describe the times we are experiencing. Our communities are being confronted with a once in a lifetime global pandemic, a public health crisis that has

disproportionately impacted Brown and Black communities and has had a large disparate impact on the communities we directly serve.

Through it all, Centro Legal has stood firm on our commitment to serve — providing critically needed free legal services to those most impacted by harsh policies and systemic racism. This year has pushed and challenged our team beyond the limitations of what we thought would be possible. Quickly transitioning to remote work, Centro Legal's staff did not allow the pandemic and political unrest stop us from serving the community when collective unity was needed most.

In this annual report, you will read about Centro's Immigrants' Rights team springing to action, fighting for the rights of immigrants in ICE detention centers. You will learn about the Tenants' Rights incredible work co-authoring several Bay Area eviction moratoria - and one of the strongest in the nation, for the City of Oakland. The Workers' Rights team also swiftly responded. As the shelter in place order was initiated, millions of undocumented workers were left without work and unemployment support. With the help of local and statewide partners, the Oakland Undocument Relief (OUR) Fund was created. Over three million dollars was raised, and thousands of undocumented workers given financial assistance. Our affirmative litigation team continued to score huge victories and the Youth Law Academy adapted its curriculum to ensure students of color still received leadership training they needed to shape their life pathways. Moreover, we continued to lead, alongside the community, to enact systems change.

None of this would be possible without our partners and community champions like you.

From hardship to hope and vision to victory we go!

Theresa Gonzales
Executive Director



IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS: #FreeThemAll

The Immigrants' Rights team has been working nonstop in serving our clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Immigration clinics have retained steady attendance throughout the team's transition to remote services, and clients continue to reach out telephonically. We pivoted to virtual education to strengthen our Know Your Rights strategy. Similarly, all Census 2020 education went virtual.

While immigration courts remained closed, the team's advocacy efforts doubled down. Centro Legal de la Raza, along with California Committee for Immigrant Liberation partners, have been incessant in assuring the release of community members detained by ICE.

In December 2019, the Immigrants' Rights team had the opportunity to manage a team of 15 UC Davis and UC Berkeley students to collect information from more than 400 community members in the Mesa Verde detention facility in Bakersfield. They collected over 120 stories from detained clients in the first quarter of 2020. This allowed Centro Legal and its partners to understand not just who our clients were, but increased our knowledge of how ICE actually operates and its deeply harmful impact on the community. When COVID-19 struck the nation, the information gathered by the team was used as an instructional tool to advocate for parole and bond requests for those made most vulnerable by the pandemic. To date, this critical information has allowed for more than one hundred immigrants to be released from detention.

The individuals in ICE detention facilities continue to face this deadly pandemic and are literally fighting for their lives. Their bravery has been met with vicious rhetoric from an agency that is systematically depriving them of their liberties, dignity, and humanity, while denying them the ability to protect themselves and their families during a relentless pandemic. This crisis remains uncertain, but during these times, the fight to #FreeThemAll continues. Centro Legal's Immigration Team fights alongside our clients, and are determined now, more than ever, to continue this struggle until all have access to justice.

985
CONSULTATIONS

850
PEOPLE REACHED BY KNOW-YOUR RIGHTS TRAININGS

200
DEPORTATION REPRESENTATIONS

30
KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS/PRESENTATIONS

410
CLIENTS



TENANTS' RIGHTS: Advocacy in a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges for our clients and pushed us to reassess how we provide legal services effectively.

Court closures provided some relief, but it was quickly evident that more protections were needed to provide meaningful relief to tenants. Centro joined community members, organizers, and other legal services organizations and pushed for stronger emergency eviction protections at the City and County level. Oakland was successful in establishing one of the strongest eviction moratoriums in the state, bringing much needed protections. After efforts at the city level we were able to achieve the strongest eviction moratorium for Alameda County as well.

However, understanding a patchwork of regulations and rapidly changing protections can be challenging. Centro Legal, among others, prepared FAQ

"JUST THREE MONTHS INTO COVID-19, THE VOLUME OF CALLS INCREASED AND WE WERE SEEING THE RACIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE HOUSING MARKET AFFECT COMMUNITIES OF COLOR. WHEN ALAMEDA COUNTY PASSED THE EVICTION MORATORIUM IN APRIL, IT BECAME ONE OF THE BEST EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE."

— Alexis Payne and Nareli Beri, Tenants' Rights Attorneys via KPFA

sheets in an effort to keep tenants informed of their rights. We utilized remote Know-Your-Rights workshops to quickly disseminate information, and utilized breakout rooms, maintaining our presence in the community while ensuring client and staff safety.

In preparation for the inevitable expiration of pandemic-related eviction protections, Centro developed a new approach to eviction defense that focuses on scaling pro per assistance and incorporating a participatory defense component, thereby exponentially increasing impact and prioritizing more complicated and intensive cases for full scope representation.

The Tenants' Rights team will continue in its leadership role in advocating for policies that push for systemic change while working to empower our most vulnerable community members as we transition into a post pandemic world.

\$846,747
**IN EMERGENCY RENTAL
ASSISTANCE**

180
**PEOPLE PROVIDED
WITH LEGAL
REPRESENTATION**

1,290
CLIENTS

1,338
CONSULTATIONS



WORKERS' RIGHTS: Justice for Workers

In one of Centro's bigger victories of the past year, the Workers' Rights team settled a wage-and-hour case for several local construction workers, recovering hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation. This marked the successful conclusion of a years' long legal fight.

The case began when workers approached Centro Legal after experiencing a life threatening workplace accident. Apart from the workplace health and safety issues, Centro Legal's investigation uncovered rampant wage theft, including failure to pay minimum and overtime wages and provide adequate rest and meal periods, despite workshifts of 15 hours or more. Centro Legal will continue to stand with workers like these in the pursuit of workplace justice.

542

WORKERS RECEIVED
LEGAL SERVICES

101

CLAIMS FILED TO CHALLENGE
WAGE THEFT, DISCRIMINATION
OR RETALIATION

133

WORKERS PROVIDED WITH LEGAL REPRESENTATION

\$2,029,806

WON IN SETTLEMENTS & JUDGMENTS FOR

64

WORKERS





OAKLAND UNDOCUMENTED RELIEF FUND

As local shelter in place orders took effect, Centro Legal immediately saw the need for financial support for undocumented workers. Excluded from social safety net programs like unemployment insurance, undocumented workers were among the hardest hit in the financial fallout of the pandemic. With support from several community partners, Centro Legal was able to launch the Oakland Undocumented Relief Fund (OUR Fund) just ten days after shelter in place began.



OUR Fund provides mini grants of \$500 to Oakland workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic and cannot receive unemployment benefits because of their immigration status. For many recipients, this relief has been one of

"NO TIENEN IDEA DE LA GRAN AYUDA QUE ME ESTÁN DANDO EN ESTOS MOMENTOS, NO TENIA NINGUN TIPO DE INGRESO Y ESTO ME AYUDÓ MUCHO AL MENOS A TENERLE EL INTERNET CONECTADO A MIS HIJOS Y PODER COMPRAR LO NECESARIO. GRACIAS POR AYUDAR A TANTA GENTE QUE DIOS LOS LLENE DE BENDICIONES."

— Recipiente de OUR Fund

"YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH THIS HELP MEANS TO ME. AT THAT MOMENT I DID NOT HAVE ANY TYPE OF INCOME AND THIS HELPED ME A LOT, AT LEAST TO HAVE THE INTERNET CONNECTED FOR MY CHILDREN AND TO BE ABLE TO BUY WHAT IS NECESSARY. THANK YOU FOR HELPING SO MANY PEOPLE MAY GOD BLESS YOU. THANK YOU!"

— OUR Fund Recipient

the only resources available to sustain their family's livelihood through the pandemic. We are deeply grateful for the thousands of donors, our partner organizations, and our volunteers, who have demonstrated their steadfast support for immigrant workers in Oakland.

\$611,500*

**DISTRIBUTED BY CENTRO
LEGAL DE LA RAZA TO**

1,223*

RECIPIENTS

20+

**VOLUNTEERS
RECRUITED AND
TRAINED**

**through June 30, 2020*





YOUTH LAW ACADEMY: An Investment in Justice

The Youth Law Academy (YLA) is a three-year program for Oakland high school students designed to build confidence and understanding of the path to college. Recognizing the need for more diversity in the legal profession, YLA is aimed to inspire our students to seek a career in the law for the betterment of our community.

Students meet at Centro Legal offices after school and learn about the legal system, participate in mock trial, gain an understanding about ethnic studies through law seminars, are introduced to critical issues and injustices in the legal system, and receive free SAT prep courses, and college financial aid advising. Due to COVID-19, classes were taught remotely for the remainder of the school year. For the first time ever, the Class of 2020 Graduation was celebrated virtually.

"THE ONGOING PANDEMIC FORCED US TO SHIFT ALL OF OUR PROGRAMMING TO A REMOTE FORMAT. DESPITE THIS CHALLENGE, YLA CLASSES, INTERNSHIPS, AND EVEN THE MOCK TRIAL AND DLP WERE SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONED TO ZOOM. ALTHOUGH OUR IN-PERSON OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT WAS INTERRUPTED WE STILL MANAGED TO RECRUIT A FULL COHORT FOR OUR INCOMING CLASS."

— Raymundo Jacquez, Director of Youth Law Academy

At the start of summer, the YLA's Diversity Legal Pipeline faced a new virtual reality. This week-long intensive pre-law program is designed to demystify the law school application process and support students of color on their path to a legal education. Participants were provided with the information and counsel necessary to navigate various steps in this process, such as sitting for the LSAT and writing personal statements. They were given the opportunity to hear from and virtually network with admissions officers, current law students, practicing attorneys, and judges.

It is through these diversity pipeline efforts that we hope to systematically change a justice system that often harms communities of color. Diversifying courts with attorneys and justice who are aware of the many gaps in the justice system can positively impact marginalized communities for decades to come.

36

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

15

DLP STUDENTS

40

COLLEGE STUDENTS

16

STUDENTS HELPED WITH LSAT TEST PREP



LITIGATION

Centro Legal de la Raza's Litigation Director works with staff across our legal programs to represent low-income, Latinx, Black and immigrant workers, tenants, and other clients and communities in affirmative and impact lawsuits.

Centro Legal also co-counsels these cases with other highly respected nonprofit organizations, local government, and law firm partners. From 2019-2020, Centro Legal collected over \$2.5 million for our clients through court judgments and settlements.

In March 2020, Centro Legal, together with co-counsel Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus and Legal Aid at Work, obtained a \$1.3 million settlement for workers at the popular Burma Superstar restaurant chain.

The settlement is for a class of about 350 current and former kitchen workers at the Burma Superstar, Burma Love, and B star restaurants in San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda. The workers alleged that the chain failed to pay minimum and overtime wages, split shift premiums, and sick leave, did not provide adequate meal and rest breaks, and unlawfully retaliated against employees.

"NOW, MORE THAN EVER, COLLECTIVE ACTION IS CRITICAL TO IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR IMMIGRANT WORKERS AND WORKERS OF COLOR. THESE ARE THE FRONTLINE WORKERS WHO RISK THEIR OWN HEALTH AND SAFETY TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR ALL OF US, AND TODAY THEY CAME TOGETHER AND PROUDLY STOOD UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS EVERYWHERE."

— Jesse Newmark, Litigation Director, Centro Legal de la Raza

"I'M REALLY PROUD THAT WE SPOKE UP FOR OURSELVES AND THE OTHER KITCHEN WORKERS AND MADE REAL CHANGES."

— W.N., Client and Class Representative

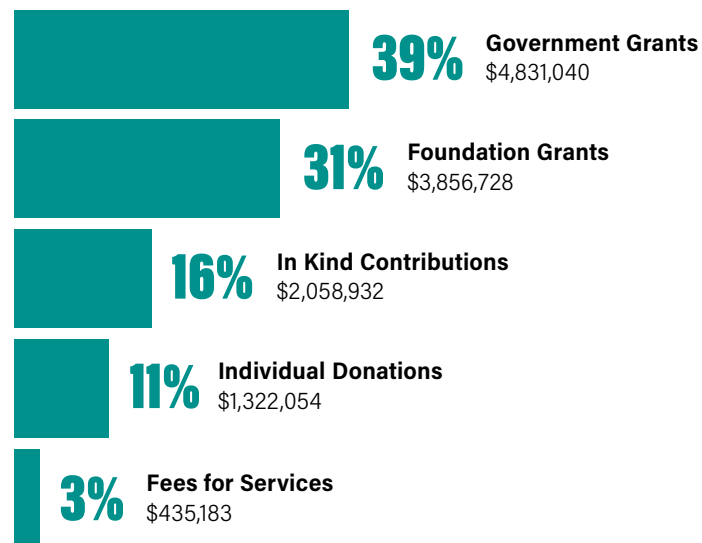
6
CASES RESOLVED FOR
30
INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS AND
285
CLASS MEMBERS

In addition to paying the settlement and addressing the alleged violations, the restaurants also agreed to restore tips to all kitchen staff; restore holiday and time off benefits; translate employee handbooks and workplace rules into Burmese, Spanish, and Chinese; provide workers' rights training during paid time to staff and management; revise language regarding meal period waivers; and establish designated rest areas in each restaurant.

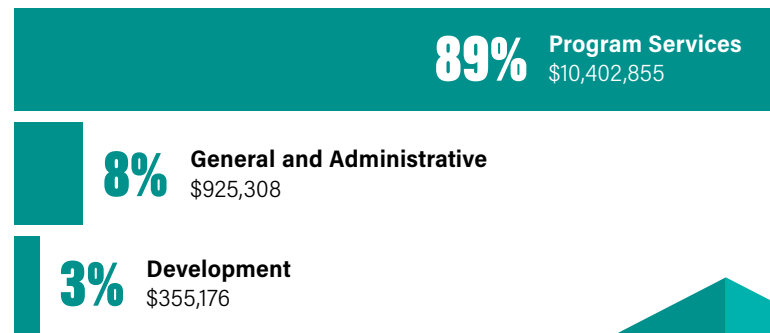
\$2,589,750
AWARDED TO CLIENTS

FINANCIALS*

SOURCE OF FUNDS



USE OF FUNDS



* Unaudited

THANK YOU!

Centro Legal de la Raza is grateful to our supporters and community partners for helping execute our goal of protecting and advancing the rights of low-income, immigrant, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities through bilingual representation, education, and advocacy. During these tumultuous times, we are able to provide culturally humble, quality services for some of the most impacted members of our community. Your kindness and generosity helps meet emerging needs and challenges, while assisting our clients in accessing the justice they deserve.

In fiscal year 2019-2020, more than 2,700 donors gave Centro Legal de la Raza a financial contribution. In a year with so much turmoil, we cannot thank each and every one of you enough for your support. Our work is not possible without you.

TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Centro Legal's work is not done in a vacuum. This transformative work requires collaboration with local partners and support from committed funders. We thank every partner organization and funder for your collaboration in executing our mission. The movement for liberation for all is only done in partnership with one another. We humbly thank you for your support.



SHOUT OUTS FROM CENTRO LEGAL SUPPORTERS

"I read an article in The Guardian via a Facebook friend in Canada about the eviction of Musiy Rishi, right down the street from me in Alameda — and that [a Centro Legal lawyer] is representing him. I want to help with this case — and all of your ongoing efforts."

— J.U.

"I am sending you the full amount of the federal relief check to assist Oakland immigrants who did not benefit from the assistance. Thank you for your work and setting up OUR Fund."

— M.F.

"I appreciate your important legal work in fighting for justice in immigration and tenants' rights."

— R.M.

"¡Gracias mil por todo lo que hacen para apoyar y defender nuestra gente!"

— A.M.

"I am donating my economic support payment to a good cause. Yours is one of them. I hope this helps."

— J.H.

"I was recently referred to Centro Legal when I was in need of assistance, as a tenant — I am so grateful for your help, and I wanted to say thank you and make a contribution toward helping support your work."

— J.L.

"It is people like you that make California a wonderful place."

— N.F.

"Thank you for all the good work you're doing to support immigrants at the southern border."

— K.S.

SCAN THE QR CODE AND SUPPORT OUR WORK TODAY!





CENTROLEGAL DE LA RAZA

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