



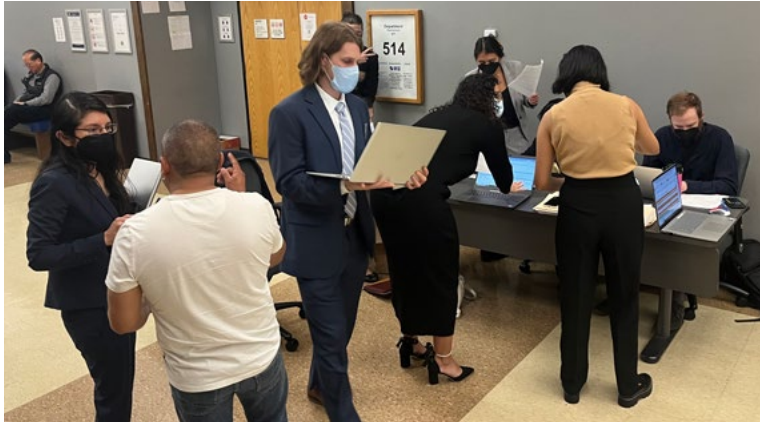
Beyond Justice:

The Power of Impact

*Centro Legal de la Raza's
Annual Report 2022-2023*



**CENTRO
LEGAL** DE LA
RAZA



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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Message from the Executive Director

Dear Community,

I am thrilled to present our annual report, focused on the impact of our services. It is with immense pride that we share the stories and data that reflect the profound influence we've had in the past year.

Through our dedicated efforts, we have touched countless lives, creating positive change in our communities. As we delve into the pages of this report, you will witness how our services have transformed individuals, empowered communities, and contributed to a brighter, more just future.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our team, partners, and supporters for making this impact possible. Together, we will continue to drive innovation, foster collaboration, and amplify our influence in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Monique Berlanga
Executive Director



Immigrants' Rights

Services

Centro Legal's Immigrants' Rights practice is committed to serving underserved immigrant community members, including individuals in removal proceedings, asylum seekers, families living in poverty, unaccompanied minors, long-term undocumented residents, LGBTQ immigrants, indigenous language speakers and survivors of violent crimes. This year we continued our partnerships with local school districts in order to represent unaccompanied minor students as well as recently-arrived families with children. Our services provide holistic support to our young clients with case management. Centro Legal's Immigrants' Rights practice includes comprehensive, full-service direct representation before the USCIS and the immigration courts, impact litigation, legal rights education and consultations, as well as advocacy. Through continued legal advocacy and support we are able to transform the lives of vulnerable immigrants, ensuring justice, and helping to keep families whole.

1,905

PEOPLE SERVED

658

PEOPLE GRANTED
LEGAL STATUS

193

DEPORTATIONS
PREVENTED

Highlight

Centro launched a new and innovative pilot project which implemented new pro se asylum workshops and clinics in partnership with pro bono partners. During the pro se workshops we are providing asylum seekers the tools, education, and knowledge to be empowered and represent themselves in court. Asylum seekers have a fighting chance to defend their case and win protection from deportation.

Because of these workshops, participants have been granted asylum in immigration court while others have been scheduled for future court hearings.

Centro Legal is dedicated to serving our immigrant community members. It's about empowerment, equity, and removing barriers to justice.

"Sin duda me siento contento y especial por haber participado en el primero de las muchísimas reuniones como lo fue hoy este taller de preparación."

"Without a doubt, I feel happy to have participated in the first of many workshops, in order to be prepared for my case."

— Pro se participant



Tenants' Rights

Services

Our Tenants' Rights practice grapples with a pressing challenge: an unprecedented eviction wave sweeping Alameda County and Contra Costa County. This crisis stems from the COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate impact on low-income and marginalized communities, exacerbated by soaring inflation. While initial support, such as rental assistance and eviction moratoria, helped, these lifelines have mostly vanished, and many marginalized community members now face eviction.

To address this, we employ a multifaceted approach, offering direct representation, legal consultations, community clinics, workshops, and advocacy. During the pandemic, we prioritized educating both communities and organizations about tenants' rights, empowering tenants to assert their rights. This approach prevented many illegal evictions and equipped tenants with accessible resources.

Our efforts have kept numerous families stably housed amid this unprecedented crisis, while also pioneering a more impactful approach to legal services in times of overwhelming demand.

1,371

PEOPLE SERVED

760

DISPLACEMENTS PREVENTED

514

PEOPLE'S HOUSING CONDITIONS IMPROVED

Highlight

Centro Legal is a recipient of pilot project funding from the Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act, a prestigious grant through the California Judicial Council that funds projects working towards a right to counsel in eviction cases.

Centro Legal's Shriver Courthouse Intervention Project (SCIP), in partnership with Eviction Defense Center and East Bay Community Law Center, creates robust courthouse-based services and increases full-scope representation to form an essential "safety net" for low-income litigants and increase court efficiencies. Project services include consultation clinics outside of the courthouse, representation at settlement conferences and trials, and improved training in landlord/tenant law for volunteer mediators. Low-income residents of Alameda County face both a justice gap and an intensifying regional housing crisis, which has only increased as we face an eviction wave post-moratorium following the lifting of local COVID-19 eviction moratoria. The need for legal services to address landlord/tenant issues is at an all-time high, and it is critical that Centro continues to provide court-based, same-day representation services.

During its first three years, SCIP has reached 847 tenants. This project is an important and meaningful way to reach and serve our communities.



Workers' Rights

Services

Centro Legal's Workers' Rights practice is committed to empowering workers for safe, dignified working conditions. Our client-centered approach prioritizes individuals' unique needs, especially marginalized groups like day laborers, undocumented individuals, indigenous language speakers, monolingual Spanish speakers, and other low-income workers who often go unheard even though they make up a large part of our workforce.

Our multifaceted approach involves hearing directly from the community through outreach events, surveys, and representation, to equip individuals to stand against exploitative employers and non-compliant workplaces. We seek compensation and improved workplace practices as remedies, but we also strive for broader change through policy advocacy. Our journey towards a more just economy impacts not only individual clients but entire communities, as group cases prompt industry-wide changes and media attention. By supporting courageous individuals in speaking up, we help them secure deserved compensation for their hard work and a sense of wholeness.

Our journey towards a more just economy impacts not only individual clients but entire communities, as group cases prompt industry-wide changes and media attention.

383

PEOPLE SERVED

93

CLINICS

\$1,729,455

IN SETTLEMENTS & JUDGEMENTS

Highlight

Centro Legal played a pivotal role in the establishment of Oakland's Department of Workplace and Employment Standards, which is tasked with enforcing local wage theft protections and worker protection laws. Our goal is to help strengthen the Department so that it can address cases that would typically be held up at the state level. Nearly every client we meet has faced some form of wage theft. Low-wage workers in California endure wage theft approximately 372,000 times each week, resulting in an annual loss of approximately \$9.27 billion.

To ensure this department is accountable to the needs of low-wage and historically marginalized workers, Centro Legal partners with local community organizations. Together, we engage in meetings with key officials, providing education and advocacy to drive systemic change.



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*As of September 2023

Staff Highlight

We want to celebrate the incredible individuals who make it all possible – our dedicated staff.

As we showcase the impact of our services, let us not forget the people behind the scenes – our staff members, who day in and day out, embody our mission and values. It is their dedication that truly amplifies our reach and transforms our vision into reality.

Their unwavering commitment, passion, and hard work are the driving forces behind our success. They go above and beyond, tirelessly striving to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Their dedication is the reason we've achieved such remarkable outcomes and touched so many hearts.

115

STAFF

77%

PEOPLE OF COLOR

76%

WOMEN



Youth Law Academy

Services

The Youth Law Academy (YLA) is focused on Oakland's Young People of Color, aiming to empower first-generation, low-income students of color and diversify the legal field. Through mentorship, college readiness, and experiential learning, we foster a collaborative and culturally centered community, nurturing resilience and ethical leadership.

In a legal landscape where less than 7% of attorneys represent a community comprising nearly 40% of the population, we bridge the gap by exposing students to professionals who share their backgrounds. Weekly seminars, law school visits, and mentorship with attorneys promote critical thinking and social justice awareness. We offer immediate 1-on-1 support to students and connect parents with vital resources.

YLA's impact extends beyond meeting immediate needs; we are shaping the future of diverse legal scholars and advocates for justice, creating informed communities and ambassadors of our mission.

100%

**OF 2023 YLA SENIOR
CLASS ENROLLED IN
COLLEGE**

38

**YLA ALUMNI AT
UNIVERSITY**

3

**YLA ALUMNI AT
LAW SCHOOL**

Highlight

The Diversity Legal Pipeline (DLP) is a crucial program and support network for aspiring law school students, with a particular focus on People of Color (POC) run by our YLA staff. DLP aims to demystify the law school application process and provide a direct pathway, especially for non-traditional applicants who may have encountered barriers to legal education.

Many of our participants are first-generation, undocumented immigrants, returning students, or come from historically marginalized backgrounds. DLP empowers them through various activities, including guest speaker sessions, panels on criminal law, insights from admissions professionals, personal stories from DLP alumni, courtroom visits, and mental health discussions. Intimate interactions with professors enhance their learning and give them first hand insight into imagining a possibility for their future.

DLP's impact is significant, with the goal of guiding all participants successfully through the law school journey. These participants can later become mentors for future students, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive legal profession that reflects society's richness.



Litigation

Services

Thousands of clients come to Centro Legal each year facing unlawful conditions in their homes, their workplaces, or the immigration system. Too often, these violations reflect systemic oppression impacting the community. While litigation alone can't end these injustices, it can have a profound impact as one tool for our clients to assert their rights and improve conditions more broadly.

Recognizing this need, Centro Legal started an affirmative litigation practice a decade ago. Since then, we have represented thousands of clients and class members in over 50 lawsuits, from state courts to the U.S. Supreme Court, fighting against abusive immigration detention and bond practices, tenant harassment and substandard housing, and wage theft and sexual assault at work. Through this litigation, our clients and communities have recovered over \$16 million in judgments and settlements, and brought about direct policy changes, requiring landlords, employers, and governments to eliminate systemic barriers to justice.

Highlight

Rosa worked for years at a food processing factory. Like so many other immigrant, indigenous, and Black workers historically and today, Rosa and her hundreds of coworkers faced dangerously unsafe conditions and wage theft at their workplace. When Rosa made the courageous decision to stand up for their rights by reporting those conditions, the employer fired Rosa and even filed a lawsuit against her in retaliation. Rosa was terrified but committed to justice, so Centro Legal worked with Rosa to get the lawsuit against her thrown out, and instead file a class action lawsuit against the employer for all of the workers.

Following years of litigation, the employer made important changes to its policies and paid over a million dollars to the workers. And Rosa has been so inspired by the process that she is pursuing her own dream to become a social justice attorney, so she can continue fighting for others.

IN THE ALMOST 10 YEARS SINCE WE STARTED OUR LITIGATION PRACTICE, CENTRO LEGAL HAS:

50,000+

**CLIENTS & CLASS MEMBERS
REPRESENTED**

56

**LAWSUITS FILED IN
STATE & FEDERAL
COURTS**

Over \$16M

OBTAINED IN JUDGEMENTS & SETTLEMENTS

Financial Overview

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

**Unaudited*

Source of Funds: \$44,985,130 TOTAL

\$517,777

ATTORNEY FEES
& OTHER INCOME

\$3,108,619

FOUNDATION GRANTS

\$774,085

CONTRIBUTIONS
& DONATIONS

\$40,584,648

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Use of Funds: \$46,524,934 TOTAL

\$11,857,263

PROGRAM EXPENSES

\$2,454,461

ADMINISTRATIVE &
DEVELOPMENT EXPENSES

\$32,213,211

EMERGENCY RENTAL
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



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 our communities.

Your generosity helps meet critical needs and challenges, while assisting our clients in accessing the justice they deserve.

In fiscal year 2022-2023, we received 982 gifts from supporters and funders like you. We cannot thank each and every one of you enough for your support. We extend our heartfelt appreciation for entrusting us with the important mission and responsibility of this work. The movement for liberation for all is not done alone — it requires all of us working together.

Government & Contracts

Acacia Center for Justice
 Bay Area Legal Aid
 California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
 Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
 Causa Justa :: Just Cause
 City of Dublin
 City of Hayward
 City of Livermore
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 Family Violence Law Center
 Immigrant Legal Resource Center
 Immigration Institute of the Bay Area
 Judicial Council of California
 The State Bar of California

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