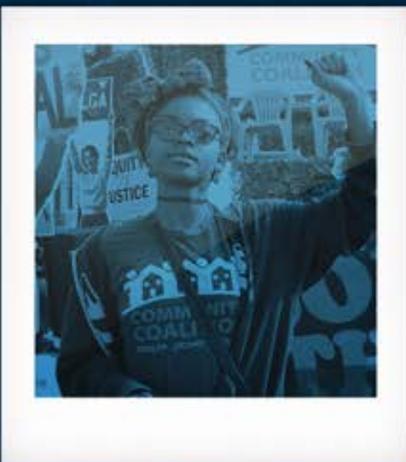
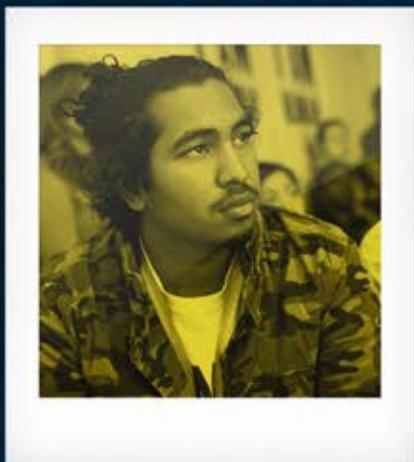
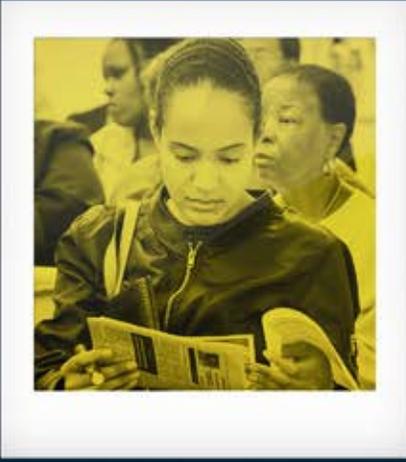
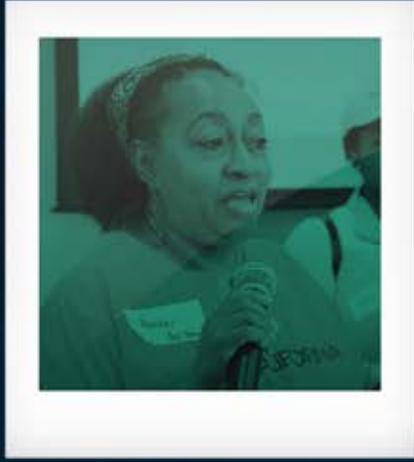


THE PEOPLE FIRST PLATFORM



FOR **EQUITY** AND **OPPORTUNITY** IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES



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| OUR BELIEFS

We believe that people create change and our communities are more powerful when united. Community Coalition brings community members together to develop leadership, launch action campaigns, and articulate the needs of South Los Angeles with an undivided voice. Together we transform our schools, strengthen families, and build a thriving community.

| OUR MISSION

To help transform the social and economic conditions in South Los Angeles that foster addiction, crime, violence and poverty by building a community institution that involves thousands in creating, influencing, and changing public policy.



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“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

- LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL
REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

| INTRODUCTION

The **People First Platform** is our call for justice—a justice long overdue for the people of South Los Angeles.

The time is now.

Our country faces the long standing struggle to decide who we want to be while reckoning with the continued destruction from its past. All across the nation, courageous people speak their truths and fight to build a more inclusive America through #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #StandingRock, Dreamer movements, and countless others. These movements energize our determination in solving the long-standing issues facing South Los Angeles (South LA). The people of South LA are the heart and soul of this resolve. The people are the future of California and the nation.





For nearly 30 years, Community Coalition (CoCo) has helped turn a flicker of hope—arising from a small gathering of people in a living room convened by founder Congresswoman Karen Bass—into a vibrant reality for thousands of Black and Latino residents and youth. It is the birthplace of significant strategic alliances that have been successful at winning fights for justice and equity. A progressive renaissance is underway, as once thought taboo policy reforms are now becoming possible. The vigilance of our members, racial justice partners, and philanthropic supporters is increasingly compelling these reforms to bend toward Angelenos of color.

After nearly three decades of building power through community organizing, voter mobilizations, election of community leaders, and mass civic actions, Los Angeles is finally achieving public policies that serve its constituents. These accomplishments include the passage of government bonds like Measure H and Proposition HHH¹, which have created new opportunities to generate housing and services for the homeless; increase pay toward living wages in the City and County of Los Angeles, and State of California; implement ban-the-box ordinances that add protections for our formerly incarcerated residents for the first time; and augment pre-trial diversion from incarceration.



And now, a people driven progressive renaissance is underway.



Last year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, a key historical moment in Angeleno history. In commemoration, CoCo conducted a series of listening sessions and public events to honor the Uprising. Central to this period of reflection was the introduction of the 2017 South Los Angeles People’s Poll, which provided residents the opportunity to identify key challenges facing their households, schools, and neighborhoods, as well as a chance to offer solutions to these problems.

Additionally, close to 3,000 people attended Re-Imagine Justice, which unveiled an innovative justice-inspired living art and education exhibit, an array of panels and speakers, and installation artwork to remember and reflect upon the evolution of South LA. Re-Imagine Justice gave us a chance to promote the people’s successes across various social indicators: education, public safety, and the economy. Furthermore, this celebration allowed us the honor of recognizing the vibrant social justice movements that call this area home, giving voice to the voiceless.

While much has changed since 1992, even with decades of hard-fought victories, South LA residents believe conditions are getting worse.²

People must be the drivers of change.

The lesson presented here is crucial:

Without mass public participation, policy change is only reflected on paper and not in the hearts and minds of the community. Ai-jen Poo, Executive Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, says it best, “In the work of organizing, we always say that a victory isn’t a victory if no one feels it’s theirs.” Without this, the bureaucracy then bends back toward the status quo.

New development projects, such as the 2028 Olympics, the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Inglewood’s NFL stadium, and the Crenshaw rail expansion, can be leveraged to immediately elevate the South LA community. These opportunities, if unchecked, can just as easily harm our most vulnerable communities.

The 1984 Olympics is a clear example of an opportunity for economic growth for communities of color that instead had devastating consequences. The Olympic games of 1984 led to a dramatic increase in police presence, removing homeless residents in the area. This wholesale criminalization of homeless residents was the direct premise for LAPD's 1987 Operation Hammer, which rounded up thousands of South LA residents under the guise of "gang sweeps."³ The Olympics, a global symbol of aspiration, was a local disaster for Angelenos of color.

With this in mind, we unveil the **People First Platform**. Over the next three years, our members will wage organizing campaigns around three main political priorities. Shaped by thousands of residents, this platform is a renewed continuation of our deep commitment to equity, opportunity, and justice for South LA.

This is our invitation to elected officials, policymakers, and allies to support our vision and fight alongside us.

The **People First Platform** set the foundation for achieving the equitable transformation residents need and deserve. The pillars include: **Demand our Dollars**, **Generate Justice**, and **Build Thriving Communities**.

1 Demand Our Dollars

After decades of poor and working-class families paying their fair share of the tax burden, we demand an end to corporate tax breaks, the systemic eradication of our social safety net, and the dearth of public resources committed to rebuilding and preserving our homes, schools, and neighborhoods.

2 Generate Justice

We demand an end to the mass criminalization of Black and Latino communities, thereby redefining the meaning of justice. Only then can we begin to restore the hundreds of thousands of families who have been torn apart by decades of destructive policies and policing.



[1986] Photo by Jack Gaunt/ Copyright © 1996. Los Angeles Times, Reprint with permission.

3 Build Thriving Communities

As major cities across the world become places for only a wealthy few to enjoy, we will take back our land for young people and families who reflect the fabric of South LA. As gentrification pushes some residents out, it is our duty to revitalize what has been neglected and deprived, and transform it into a flourishing place where we can live, learn, own, work, innovate, play, eat, shop, and inspire future generations.

In so doing, we will shape this new world where everyday people will look back and share stories about how they made South LA a place where all people **actually** matter.





PART 1

The 2017 South Los Angeles People's Poll

Residents Give the City and County Failing Grades a Quarter Century after the Civil Unrest

In partnership with the Psychology Applied Research Center at Loyola Marymount University, CoCo polled over 4,200 South LA adult residents from 15 zip codes and high school students from six campuses from March to May 2017. Nine focus groups were conducted with 79 “key community informants” who analyzed the poll findings. The following categories of informants participated: youth, senior citizens, residents, high school parents, interventionists, service providers, LGBTQ, and formerly-incarcerated individuals. We also conducted house meetings with CoCo residents. Fifty-two percent identified as African American, 40% identified as Latino/a, 55% identified as female, and 44% identified as male. Over 56% were between the ages of 26 and 54.

And nearly two-thirds of those polled lived in South LA for more than 11 years. Renters comprised 63% of those polled.⁴

Each participant was given the chance to evaluate the City and the County of Los Angeles on issues including employment, the community’s overabundance of vacant lots, police conduct, education, public spending, safety, and how neighborhoods were being transformed. Along with identifying their top priorities, residents also proposed key solutions for policymakers, elected officials, and government agencies. Taken collectively, **the poll demonstrated alarming rates of inequality** across various social and economic



indicators and illustrated the cumulative and disparate impacts of these inequalities on the people of South LA.⁵

While the South LA of 1992 is distinct from that of 2018, the majority of those polled detailed troubling continuities with the past, issuing low (D) and failing (F) grades for the City and County’s handling of many issues. The following received ratings of D or lower:

- **Police Misconduct**
- **Liquor Stores**
- **Vacant Lots**
- **Neighborhood Safety**
- **Unemployment⁶**

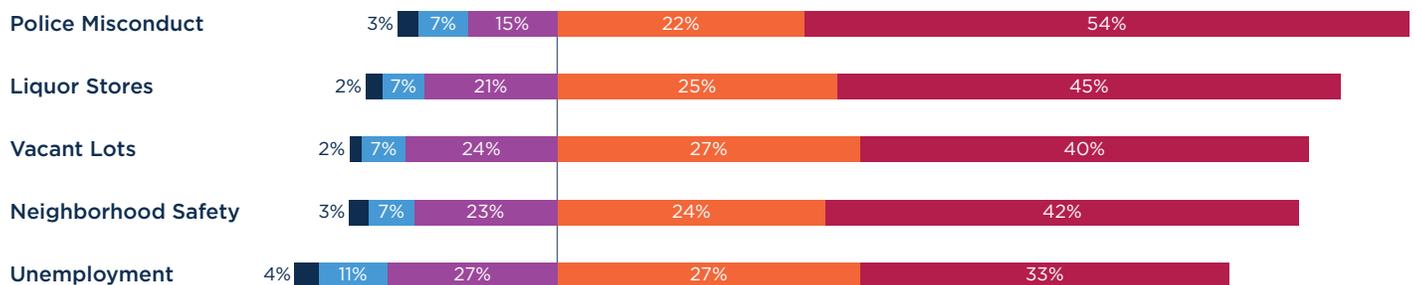
Across these issues, common threads emerged that clearly demand a radical disruption in business-as-usual. Historic and chronic private and public disinvestment, ongoing mass criminalization, and the persistent political neglect of South LA has produced and sustained:

- An unequal distribution of public investments;
- Discriminatory planning practices and policies that preserve underdevelopment;
- The targeted criminalization of Black and Latino communities and the harassment and deportation of immigrants;
- Abusive policing and an unequal justice system that enables a school-to-prison pipeline;
- An economy that locks residents out of long-term economic opportunity;
- A standard of living out of reach for the everyday working Angeleno;
- Homelessness and a number of people on the brink of homelessness;
- The precarious struggle to maintain home ownership; and
- The stark inadequacy of a social services infrastructure required to mitigate poverty and racism.⁷

Despite these persistent social and economic challenges, residents vividly imagined and specifically identified a wide array of potential solutions. In the next three years, the **People First Platform** represents this renewed hope, as it encapsulates the focus groups and resident polling recommendations for a transformed South LA.

City and County of Los Angeles Report Card 25 Years After the Civil Unrest

% of residents who gave the City and County of LA **A** **B** **C** **D** **F** on their promise to fix...





PART 2

The People First Platform for South Los Angeles

In the face of emerging opportunities, the **People First Platform** is comprised of three parts:

1. Demand Our Dollars
2. Generate Justice
3. Build Thriving Communities

These three pillars lay the groundwork for the future of South LA.

IMAGINE

A robust, community-centered social safety net is intact

The safety net secures comprehensive mental health care, drug treatment, re-entry, and other anti-poverty services for South LA residents, improves the quality of their lives, affirms their dignity, and supports families caught in webs of scarcity, trauma, and addiction.

The concept of justice itself is redefined

Those returning from jail and prison are welcomed and offered career prospects. The indexing of poverty and race with criminalization thus diminishes, and the severe financial burdens that follow incarceration are no longer levied. In this South LA, police officers—re-envisioned as *peace officers*—are finally integrated into the



communities they are meant to *actually* protect and serve.

Families are reunited and restored

Families that have been shattered by foster care, the justice system, and unpredictable and militarized immigration enforcement, are finally restored.

Our parks become safe havens

Community spaces are packed with locals engaged in recreational activities and health programs. Development projects, such as Destination Crenshaw and River to Rail, enhance the quality of residents' lives without displacing them from their neighborhoods.

Students are cultivated for success

Students are equipped with resources and opportunities as families re-enroll their children in a reinvigorated public education system.

Black and Latino residents continue to commit to South LA

Black and Latino residents buy homes, enroll their children in public schools, open small businesses, and retire in their own community. Affordable housing developments materialize for those at risk of being priced out of the area, and the homeless are humanely offered safe, clean places to reside in lieu of outdoor encampments.

The community is further established as a vital cultural core

The area's rich cultural history is amplified through youth arts programs and support for longstanding indigenous talent that results in an even more vibrant Black and Latino arts district that is organically coupled with movements for social justice.

New partnerships emerge that connect residents to economic openings

Labor unions and other allies continue to work with community organizations to link people to job opportunities in the public and private sectors.

We are an electoral power base

Throughout the region, Black and Latino residents cooperate to develop the community power necessary to advance a People First vision. This vision serves as a basis to recruit 15,000 dues-paying members to CoCo—establishing the electoral strength required to ensure progressive representation in government.

A Los Angeles Center for Community Organizing (LACCO) offers services that benefits the community's residents

LACCO becomes a space that offers job training, cultural work, activist empowerment, and entrepreneurial vigor at a 30,000-square-foot development that replaces one of our numerous vacant lots.

This isn't an idle dream; it's a viable tomorrow.



PILLAR 1

Demand Our Dollars

“Demand our Dollars is about having our tax dollars work in our community. We live here. We cannot move to another state. Our main goal is to make our community a better place to live.”

- PAMELA RILEY
COMMUNITY COALITION MEMBER

Demand Our Dollars Requires:

Closing California’s corporate loopholes and making the tax burden fair.

Reinvesting punishment dollars into prevention, treatment, and re-entry.

Implementing the Student Equity Need Index 2.0 for LAUSD’s highest-need schools.

Leveling the playing field for cannabis opportunity.

Funding youth education and development.



On one hand, California is the richest state in the wealthiest country in the world—whose economy is the sixth largest globally. On the other hand, California is the poorest state in the nation and encompasses around eight million people living below the poverty line—one in five of which are children.⁸ This two-sided California, once home to the best public education system in the nation, is now consistently ranked in the bottom tenth.⁹ The current social safety net, needed to strengthen the poorer side of California, is plainly unable to counter poverty and adequately offer services for housing, re-entry, and healthcare. Further, our existing service providers are on the verge of closing their doors as traditional funding options evaporate.

South LA is the “other” California, suffering from chronic disinvestment by state and local governments. The current social and economic conditions derive from a barely existent transit infrastructure, the departure of over 70,000 manufacturing jobs between 1978-1982, and the deliberate indifference of local politicians that has allowed the region’s development and services to slow to the snail’s pace of the 1970s.¹⁰

The activism of the community’s everyday people has almost solely stimulated social and economic recovery in South LA over the past several decades. In the last ten years, South LA voters have become a vital bloc for California’s economic recovery from the recession by overwhelmingly supporting revenue-generating initiatives such as Proposition 30’s “Temporary Taxes to Fund Education.” This proposition alone generated an estimated \$6.8 billion in revenue for public education and community

services to undo the devastation caused by Proposition 13 in 1978.¹¹

At the same time, South LA residents have electorally rallied to support smart justice initiatives that reduce state spending on incarceration practices in favor of greater investments in public education, youth development, and health and human services. These reforms include California’s Proposition 47 (The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act) and Proposition 57 (California Parole for Non-Violent Criminals and Juvenile Court Trial Requirements Initiative).

Meanwhile, Governor Jerry Brown and the state legislature continue to shift billions of tax dollars into a reserve fund and shield wealthy corporations from paying their fair share in taxes.¹² Despite the fact that the poorest families actively contribute to the state’s public resources, South LA residents have not experienced the impact of their equal share of these public dollars. Wealthy corporations in California, on the other hand, avoid many of the tax burdens that would generate crucial revenue required for a strong social safety net of employment, education, affordable housing, and other essential services.

Quality full-time jobs with benefits remain unavailable to residents, and resources for local schools and neighborhoods continue to elude the region. South LA has one of the fastest growing numbers of working poor families, foster youth, and young adults.¹³

The first pillar of the People First Platform, “Demand Our Dollars” is a rallying cry to fundamentally transform the quality of life of poor and working-class communities in South LA and across California.



In the next three years, we will level the playing field by equalizing the tax burden, reclaiming a fair share of public resources, redirecting these resources to revitalize communities, and ensuring that corporations don't evade basic social responsibilities.

Close California's Corporate Loopholes and Make the Tax Burden Fair

Since its passage in 1978, Proposition 13 has cost California nearly \$9 billion annually by freezing corporate property taxes to that year's rate.¹⁴ Although sold to voters as a way to shield struggling homeowners from exorbitant property taxes, the proposition instead created loopholes for corporations and the wealthy to avoid paying their fair share of the tax burden. California's economic barriers to growth and its ever-widening inequality are, in part, an unambiguous result of Proposition 13.¹⁵

South LA remains one of the regions hardest hit by Proposition 13. As a member of the California Calls Alliance, CoCo helped put Proposition 30 on the ballot to offset four decades of its effects: it won in 2012. This proposition temporarily raised taxes for California's wealthiest residents and generated \$6.8 billion in new revenue for education and Medi-Cal.¹⁶ The initiative's victory was achieved by a grassroots voter mobilization strategy that focused on reaching and engaging voters usually neglected by mainstream campaigns: the young, the recently naturalized, people of color, and low-income residents.

Along with our partner organizations, such as Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), InnerCity Struggle, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Oakland Rising, Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, and Communities for a New California, we collectively talked to more than 400,000 voters in 13 counties. More than 80% of California Calls' supporters turned out to vote, and these supporters made up more than 6% of the "yes" vote to Proposition 30. Proposition 30 won with 55% of the vote—a margin of victory few political analysts imagined.¹⁷

In November 2020, CoCo will have another opportunity to undo the damaging provisions of Proposition 13. If successful, CoCo, the Million Voters Project, Move the Immigrant Vote, and California Calls could level the playing field by protecting homeowners, farmers, renters, and small businesses, while making sure wealthy corporations pay their fair share of the tax burden. The "California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act of 2020" could generate \$11.4 billion annually, the majority of which would go to schools and community colleges, and toward the expansion of California's infrastructure and safety net through parks, libraries, health clinics, home-building, homeless services, roads, and bridges.¹⁸

In addition to gathering the 585,407 signatures needed to qualify for the November 2020 ballot, CoCo is working with state officials and Gov. Brown to create new laws and policies to serve poor and working-class communities.¹⁹



Reinvest Punishment Dollars into Prevention, Treatment, and Re-Entry

More than 75% of residents polled indicated that public spending must be prioritized for re-entry and treatment services.²⁰

Since its inception, CoCo has worked tirelessly to build the social safety net long neglected by our governing systems. Created at the height of the crack crisis, CoCo built the Prevention Network, an alliance of South LA social service agencies providing drug treatment, transitional housing, mental health, youth development and other services in the community. During the last 28 years, CoCo's Prevention Network has been at the forefront of winning campaigns and resources for foster youth, relative caregivers, service providers, and formerly-incarcerated people coming back home to their communities.

Chief among these victories is the passage of historic criminal justice reforms, including California's Proposition 47 (The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act) and 57 (California Parole for Non-Violent Criminals and Juvenile Court Trial Requirements Initiative).

As California finally takes important steps from a punishment/incarceration model toward an effective rehabilitation model, we demand that the implementation of these reforms serve the neediest communities. These new laws generate savings at the county and state levels because resources would be directed toward programs and prevention rather than toward arrests, jail time, and punishment. However, the aforementioned savings have not yet made it

to local neighborhoods to support strategies that address the drivers of criminalized activity, including over-policing, poverty, addiction, and trauma. It is imperative for the state and local governments to actively work toward reinvesting those savings into the recovery of communities destabilized by tough-on-crime policies of the past.

The dollars generated from these reforms should go to effective drug diversion and mental health programs, re-entry services, and resources that provide a pathway to "live again," as one resident put it, rather than re-enter the prison cell. This includes but is not limited to housing, identification, education, family reunification, and healthcare.



Ensure Implementation of the Student Equity Need Index 2.0 for LAUSD’s Highest-Need Schools

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) annually receives over \$1 billion to support its highest-need students under the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).²¹ CoCo, in close collaboration with Advancement Project California and InnerCity Struggle, produced the Student Equity Need Index 2.0 (SENI 2.0), a rigorous, research-based ranking of the highest-need schools within LAUSD that best meet the criteria for this additional funding. This equity index not only measures how students are doing in the classroom, but it also takes into account the impact of neighborhood conditions, such as exposure to gun violence, that can negatively affect a student’s academic success.²²

On April 10, 2018 students and parents won a unanimous vote by the LAUSD Board of Education to adopt the SENI 2.0 new funding formula. To achieve real equity, LAUSD must:

1. Apply the SENI 2.0 to an ever-growing portion of its budget.
2. Implement a menu of educational practices that support high-needs students.
3. Build out capacity focused on ensuring transparency, accountability, and follow-through.

Across the high schools polled, students demanded a wide range of programming and services:

46%

Desired more investment from their schools for support groups to help them deal with emotional hurt and pain from witnessing or experiencing traumatic events

55%

Wanted college preparation support

50%

Asked for tutoring programs

46%

Requested after school arts and cultural programs.²³





This valuable data will help ensure youth get the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive. Local and state governments are on notice and can no longer ignore the needs of the poorest among us.

Level the Playing Field for Cannabis Opportunity and Fund Youth Education and Development

Los Angeles voters supported the legalization of marijuana and explicitly voted to end policies that have arrested 15 million African-Americans nationally.²⁴ In December 2017, Los Angeles City adopted one of the most progressive social equity programs in the country to make sure that the communities most impacted by prior punitive laws are not edged out of this newly decriminalized industry.²⁵

As the City begins building an equitable regulatory system, CoCo will join allies across the city to call for a firm commitment to a Social Equity Community Reinvestment Fund.

THE FUND WILL:

- 1 Answer the level of need in areas hard hit by the disproportionate and harmful impact of prior cannabis policies on Black and Latino residents.
- 2 Demand that the City target a greater share of resources for drug treatment, mental health, and re-entry services to neighborhoods with higher rates of cannabis-related incarceration, as well as areas with higher levels of poverty.
- 3 Dedicate 20% of resources to support youth development and education to help address the deep impacts of having parents and residents in their community incarcerated in disproportionate numbers.

We are ready to ensure that these reforms are carried out and benefit the most marginalized.



PILLAR 2

Generate Justice

“Generate Justice means to me more than just reform. It means bringing justice on the grassroots level to the common day Black and Brown person that is out here trying to live life in a meaningful way, without having to be impacted by a corrupt justice system. Generating justice is something that has to be done... reaffirmation.”

- CHRIS WHITE
COMMUNITY COALITION MEMBER

Generate Justice Requires:

Ending California's failed cash bail system, and the war on poor people.

Preventing youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

Delivering full amnesty for traffic fines and fees, as well as decriminalizing traffic tickets.

Stopping the building of new jails and investing in prevention, treatment, and re-entry.



The mass criminalization of everyday life and the militarized over-policing of communities has destroyed families and made communities less safe. The “War on Drugs” and the “War on Gangs” continue to guarantee that the U.S. imprisons more people—over 2 million—than any other country, and people go to jail over 11 million times.²⁶

For Black and Latino residents, the twin catastrophes of the crack crisis of the 1980s and the “War on Drugs” that broke up hundreds of thousands of families continue unabated. During the 1980s, over 50,000 children were taken from their homes and put into the foster care system—and 40% were from South LA.²⁷ Our community is located in a county that operates one of the largest adult jail systems in the nation and about 51% of those jail beds are filled with people who await trial because they cannot afford bail. It also houses the largest juvenile system in the nation: roughly 1,000 youth are held in juvenile facilities and 9,000 are being monitored within the community.²⁸

CoCo and the Prevention Network have been an integral part of passing a series of groundbreaking propositions (36, 47, and 57) that have shifted the definition of public safety by centering rehabilitation and reintegration while eliminating wasteful spending incurred from imprisonment. While 58% of residents polled want reforms that reduce government spending on incarceration, South LA has not enjoyed the full benefits of these reforms.²⁹ For Black and Latino residents, the justice system is a revolving door, generating revenue on the backs of children and families, keeping them in poverty.

“Generate Justice” demands a fundamental transformation of our social and economic ecosystem that prevents violence and raises the value of life, as well as the potential to heal. We demand a new justice, a reimagined justice, that generates true safety, restoration, and resources for addiction and mental health, one in which the replication of violence is absent.

End California’s Failed Cash Bail System, and the War on Poor People

Due to high bail amounts, half of South LA residents polled have taken a plea deal or know someone who has, instead of going to trial.³⁰ Fifty-eight percent of residents strongly agree that the county should immediately stop jailing people who have not been convicted solely because they cannot pay bail.³¹

Those awaiting trial fill over 50% of beds in LA’s county jail system. People frequently accept convictions to get out immediately and return to their families or jobs. The human cost of this broken system is profound and we are paying for it financially. The county spends \$177 a day incarcerating one person, while the current cost of pre-trial services ranges from \$2.50 to \$5 per person per day.³²

According to a UCLA-Bunche bail report, \$19.4 billion of bail was set between 2012 and 2016 and 62,118 people bailed out of custody by paying cash or contracting with a bail bond agent. Collectively, they delivered \$17,561,473 in cash to the court and paid an estimated \$193,786,349 in nonrefundable



TOP 5 ZIP CODES BY TOTAL BAIL LEVIED AND NON-REFUNDABLE BOND PAID (2012 - 2016)

Zip Code	SOUTH CENTRAL				ARLETA
	90044	90003	90037	90011	91331
Total Bail	\$506,280,304	\$475,136,066	\$415,821,902	\$411,301,117	\$294,164,928
Non-Refundable Bond Paid	\$3,769,368	\$4,225,251	\$4,013,070	\$4,870,101	\$3,106,637

bail bond deposits to bail bond agents.³³ Of the \$193.8 million paid to bail bond agents, Latinos paid \$92.1 million, African-Americans paid \$40.7 million, and Whites paid \$37.9 million.³⁴ The above breakdown of key zip codes shows the staggering amounts of money South LA residents have paid.

This year, CoCo and its partners will work to win comprehensive bail reform at the state and local levels. These reforms must expand pre-trial eligibility for people and not result in more power for prosecutors and the courts to limit such an opportunity. We also must not rely on risk assessment algorithms that are based on deeply racialized data (i.e. zip code, housing status, educational attainment). Rather, true bail reform includes a comprehensive needs assessment and improved state and county pre-trial services. The goal is to prevent further harm, not exacerbate it.

Prevent Youth from Entering the Juvenile Justice System

After years of lawsuits and monitoring by the Department of Justice, the County has at last undertaken a series of monumental reforms of the juvenile justice system—the majority of whose victims have also been touched by the county’s child welfare department.³⁵ The county has halved its

youth incarceration population, ended the practice of youth solitary confinement, and appointed the first-ever Chief Deputy Probation Officer for the juvenile system, Sheila Mitchell, who managed similar innovative reforms in Santa Clara county.³⁶

In January 2017, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed an ambitious plan to divert thousands of youth—an estimated 80% of arrests—away from juvenile halls and camps.³⁷ The County spends \$247,000 per year to incarcerate one young person—a sharp contrast to just \$7,000 a year for providing community programming for one young person.³⁸ Eighty-one percent of South LA residents polled want police to steer youth into diversion programs and support services, so these reforms are headed in the right direction.³⁹

During this crucial period, in which the County is moving away from an incarceration model to a treatment and trauma-informed approach, grassroots organizations and engaged youth must be involved in the planning process. This must include decriminalizing status offenses—like truancy and technical violations—that unnecessarily mire youth in the world of policing and incarceration, making their chances of remaining in the criminal



justice system more likely.⁴⁰ Additionally, the County Board of Supervisors must guarantee that our public dollars saved from the youth diversion plan are redirected toward South LA youth and those most impacted by this flawed system.

For youth emerging from juvenile halls and camps, public investments must be made in South LA schools, parks, public transportation, housing, internships, and a strong safety net. Restorative justice programs must be culturally-responsive, offer trauma counseling and therapy, address the ways in which young people are arrested and criminalized, and begin to develop stable, long-term relationships with community members that incorporate gang intervention, violence prevention, and education around gender equity.

Deliver Full Amnesty for Traffic Fines and Fees, and Decriminalize Traffic Tickets

Half of the adult residents polled have either personally received jail time because they could not afford to pay their traffic fines or know someone who has.⁴¹ Residents are clear on this point: over 68% demand that the practice of jailing people for traffic fines they cannot pay must cease.

There are severe consequences for these tickets and traffic fines. They sinkhole futures through the suspension of licenses, impounded vehicles, exorbitant and multilayered fees, lost job opportunities, predatory collection agencies, greatly diminished credit scores, and the difficult experience of unnecessary time in the County's notorious jail system.⁴² These consequences can become insurmountable as they continue to pile up.

Both the County and the State have adopted new programs and practices to address this preventable crisis, however both must go further. Unfortunately, a two-year statewide Traffic Amnesty Program ended in April 2017.⁴³ CoCo demands an amnesty for South LA residents, who continue to bear the brunt of the over-criminalization of traffic and non-traffic infractions. Los Angeles County and the City Attorney's Office must dramatically reduce the remaining caseload of fines and fees for those residents who do not qualify for amnesty.

Stop Building New Jails and Invest in Prevention, Treatment, and Re-Entry

A vast majority of South LA residents polled (80%) believe in treatment rather than incarceration, and that police should steer people away from incarceration when they suffer from challenges of mental illness and disability.⁴⁴ Seventy-six percent reported that public spending should support services for incarcerated people returning home, and 72% believe it should support treatment and services housed in one location.⁴⁵

Los Angeles County could become a leader in the implementation of historic changes to the ways in which adult jail populations are managed. Yet, in 2015, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a massive \$3.5 billion jail expansion plan.

Roughly 20% of the LA County jail population has been diagnosed with a mental health disability; indeed, the County's Men's Central Jail, located near South LA, is the nation's largest mental health care facility.⁴⁶ The savings generated from diversion alone would decrease the capacity

gap between community need and social service providers. Incarcerating someone who suffers from mental health disabilities costs taxpayers approximately \$65,000 a year, while the price tag of diverting them into permanent supportive housing is only \$20,000-25,000.⁴⁷

The construction of new jails is plainly unjustified as the number of those held in custody while awaiting trial is reduced, and alternatives such as diversion and prevention programs are developed. The human devastation and wasteful public spending that follows from unnecessarily high levels of mass incarceration must end.





PILLAR 3

Build Thriving Communities

“Build Thriving Communities means to me that on Saturday mornings we will go to the park and see kids play a tournament. The community will gather at the park to root for the home team. We don't see community pride today. We want to see more youth involvement. We want to see more youth centers and programs. Instead of them hanging out in the streets, there should be things for them to do in our own community. We shouldn't be driving 30 minutes away. We should actually have it in our community.”

- SYLVIA ALONSO
COMMUNITY COALITION MEMBER

Build Thriving Communities Requires:

Removing nuisance sites in our communities.

Seizing and rebuilding vacant lots so that our families and youth can thrive.

Revitalizing our parks.



Throughout major cities across the U.S., the process of gentrification displaces poor and working-class families. South LA residents are waging campaigns to fight being pushed out. As families build economic and political power, they are transforming their neighborhoods from rundown buildings and vacant lots to vibrant, community-owned spaces.

South LA can serve as a model for community-centered development, and CoCo's community center is an example of how people can take back ownership over their neighborhoods. Since its inception, CoCo has pioneered leadership development and community organizing strategies to mobilize residents as active participants in decision-making over the use and misuse of their neighborhoods. As a result, we have won zoning and nuisance regulations we can now leverage to further benefit our children and families.⁴⁸ As the local economic market recovers, community involvement in land use decisions is critical to accomplishing development without displacement.

The People's Poll demonstrated the persistence of these problems as well as the progress residents envisioned:

63%

Expressed concerns about the number of vacant and abandoned lots that dot their community.⁴⁹

80%

Reported that it should be a high priority of the city to develop city-owned lots into community-friendly spaces.⁵⁰

76%

Added that the safety and cleanliness of public spaces, such as parks, should be a principal focus.⁵¹

76%

Said that public spending should be directed toward efforts to build more recreational spaces.⁵²

"Build Thriving Communities" demands an end to the city's chronic neglect of commercial corridors and failure to enforce basic planning principles that create further barriers to the region's economic development. As the pressure of gentrification intensifies, we will launch a series of local campaigns to reclaim our neighborhoods today and for future generations.

Remove Nuisance Sites in Our Communities

By the early 1990s, South LA's concentration of alcohol outlets had swelled to more than 700. The community itself had more alcohol retail spaces than the total number in 13 states. These stores served as low-quality replacements for the grocery stores that abandoned the community after the manufacturing sector collapsed, emphasizing the extent to which the region had been impacted by a food apartheid. These stores became epicenters of crime in the community by fostering illegal activities such as drug trafficking and prostitution. The sense of communal resentment around these nuisance businesses culminated in the destruction of over 200 liquor stores during the 1992 Uprising.



CoCo launched the “Rebuild South Central Without Liquor Stores” campaign in response, which mobilized tens of thousands of residents to participate in hundreds of hearings, rallies, and actions to prevent their re-openings. The multiyear campaign eventually resulted in the permanent closure of over 150 liquor stores, and the conversion of forty others into community-friendly businesses, such as laundromats, markets without alcohol, affordable housing, and nonprofit organizations.



Policies of systemic racism, reinforced through unequal land use, have allowed for an over-concentration of grandfathered and unregulated nuisance sites in South LA. CoCo has been a leading force in developing a national model of fair and effective regulations that are in place today and have been replicated in other parts of the country.

Underfunded and unattended enforcement practices, however, have stymied efforts to more effectively regulate nuisance sites and are glaring reminders of what follows from the wealth disparities encountered by the community.⁵³ Additionally, 73% of residents polled supported limiting the number of new liquor stores in South LA for the same reasons.⁵⁴

With the passage of Proposition 64, the legalization of marijuana has created new opportunities for South LA residents by way of both potential economic entrepreneurship and the decriminalization of marijuana. However, the over-concentration of medical marijuana dispensaries in the region demands greater community involvement in the regulation of marijuana outlets in terms of how they are present in neighborhoods. Sixty-four percent of residents polled expressed concern about the proximity of dispensaries to schools.⁵⁵ Like liquor stores, marijuana dispensaries must be subjected to responsible regulation, and CoCo leaders trained in land use and nuisance abatement policies are uniquely poised to play an active role in shaping local regulation of dispensaries.



Seize and Rebuild Vacant Lots So Our Families and Youth Can Thrive

Green spaces, libraries, parks, community gardens, places for urban farms, walking trails, in-fill housing and retail, cultural art spaces, and centers where communities can gather and connect are indispensable.

The City and County alike must cease the land speculation that has left acres of land both undeveloped and unsafe for residents in South LA. 40% of residents polled graded the city's efforts to address the cleaning and repurposing of vacant lots as an "F."⁵⁶

One of the community's most notorious absentee landowners is Beverly Hills real estate developer Eli Sasson, who owns three acres of land on a prime commercial corridor that has sat vacant and blighted since 1992.⁵⁷ In December 2017, the County Board of Supervisors voted to initiate the process of eminent domain to create a community development that would include affordable housing, a transit training center, and "community-serving" retail.⁵⁸ In April 2018, the Los Angeles Superior Court ruled in favor of eminent domain resulting in a tremendous win for the community. CoCo will organize residents to help inform the new development and to liberate other vacant lots still held hostage by landowners who are unconcerned with the viability of the communities in which they invest.

Revitalize Our Parks

Residents are disappointed with their community's paucity of well-maintained parks. The People's Poll reported that adult residents insisted that public investments need to be made in recreational spaces, libraries, and community centers to improve the quality of life for residents.⁵⁹ Adults and youth alike ranked the cleanliness and safety of local parks as one of their top three community concerns.

The successful transformation of Martin Luther King Jr. Park in the King Estates community and the implementation of *Summer of Success*, *Summer Night Lights*, and *Reshape South LA* programs plainly demonstrates how the infusion of family-friendly activities in public parks can transform a neighborhood and improve its overall safety and health.⁶⁰

The passage of Los Angeles County Measure A will generate approximately \$94 million in resources for the revitalization and maintenance of public parks and provide an opportunity to realize residents' vision for redevelopment in their neighborhoods.⁶¹ CoCo will work to move this funding towards fully realizing the ideal of transforming parks not only into recreational spaces, but also centers for community engagement, cultural arts, and spaces for the practice of healthy living.



Moving Forward

In today's political climate, where the lives of people of color are devalued in extreme ways, it is vital for us to be even more resolute in our commitment to put people first—before corporations, before bail bond industries, before absentee landowners, or before any other special interests.

The **People First Platform** boldly demands what every Angeleno wants for their children and communities: The opportunity to not just survive, but to thrive; to realize dreams and aspirations; and to be happy, healthy, and whole. Throughout our nearly 30-year history, and the rich history of social movements before us, we know what works and we know how to win.

Over the next three years, CoCo members will wage people-driven policy campaigns grounded in community organizing, voter engagement, cultural activism, and strategic alliance strategies to win the **People First Platform**. Since 2009, CoCo has engaged over 290,000 South LA voters in various campaigns to advance tax reform, re-imagine public safety, and increase revenues for public education, housing, and homelessness. We plan to go back to our voters and enlist them in the

People First Platform. We will deploy culture and communications as a means to reach new people, change the public debate, and win hearts *and* minds for the solutions to South LA's greatest challenges. This includes producing art exhibits, concerts, digital media campaigns, videos, and other cultural and communications strategies to reach more and more people.

With our ally organizations, we will advance innovative strategies that result in game-changing policy victories and a more equitable distribution of our public dollars. By successfully advancing the **People First Platform**, and supporting the robust organizing led by other organizations and alliances, South LA will flourish. The organizing and strategic alliances in South LA will radically disrupt the dismal social and economic conditions outlined in the People's Poll and begin to advance progress that the city will celebrate in years to come.

When we fight, we win!

For more information on how to join our efforts, please visit CoCoSouthLA.org



APPENDIX

A Timeline of CoCo's Victories & Accomplishments

CoCo's History

Nearly Three Decades
of Moving Forward

South LA is the epicenter of activism in the City of Los Angeles. For decades, community-based organizations in South LA have pioneered anti-racist and anti-poverty efforts that have benefited communities across California. The impact of CoCo's work is evidenced by its groundbreaking approaches to address the needs of the community. It has resulted in changing the landscape on public safety and crime prevention, foster care/relative care, educational justice, and health.

Community organizing remains CoCo's central strategy to achieve social change. For nearly 30 years, we have trained thousands of South LA residents, including young people, to lead and win bold policy campaigns that have transformed and revitalized our community.

1997

Proposition Better Buildings (“Prop BB”)

A 1997 survey of over 1,500 South LA youth revealed deep concerns around the deteriorating physical conditions of their schools. It appeared that the new voter-approved Proposition Better Buildings (BB) would address this concern by allocating \$2.4 billion to repair, modernize, and build new school facilities throughout the district. However, South Central Youth Empowered thru Action’s (SCYEA) research team discovered that the majority of the new bond money was headed for schools in wealthier neighborhoods to fund items like pool filters.

Armed with disposable cameras, SCYEA teens documented and exposed the hazardous and dilapidated conditions of their schools and used the evidence to hold school administrators accountable. As a result of their public pressure campaign, the tax bond oversight committee reopened the repair contracts and allocated an additional \$153 million to address priority repairs in overcrowded schools in South LA and other parts of the City. An estimated 6,000 parents, students, teachers and community residents contributed to the campaign.



2000

Family Care, Not Foster Care

In 2000, CoCo service providers initiated a survey and identified the lack of services for family care as a major need. Shortly thereafter, the organization launched a campaign to raise awareness of the issues facing kinship families, where relatives take in their family member's children to prevent them from being placed with strangers. CoCo organized Relative Caregivers into a powerful, vocal constituency to demand the same resources and supports given to private foster care providers.

Since the original campaign, hundreds of relative caregivers have learned how to engage decision-makers, provide testimonies at hearings, speak to the media, and recruit other relative caregivers into their efforts. Relative caregivers have won more than \$38 million in funding for kinship services; launched the first Kinship Support Center in South LA with Casey Family Programs to combine services, advocacy and direct action; won changes in local child welfare policies to meet the unique needs of kinship families; and designed a wellness model recognized by the federal government that combines resource navigation, education, and leadership development.



2003

Summer of Success

To combat crime and violence without increasing police presence, 2003's *Summer of Success* (S.O.S.) brought late-night programs and recreational activities to the residents of Jim Gilliam Park in the Baldwin Village area of South LA. CoCo recruited newly-elected Councilmember Martin Ludlow to leverage city resources for S.O.S. and a diverse array of partners, from local gang intervention organizations to the Conservation Corps, to roll out the program. The combination of community involvement, recreational programming and gang intervention proved to be a resounding success. By summer's end, the Jim Gilliam Park neighborhood experienced a dramatic decline in violence—zero homicides and a 20% reduction in assaults.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa formed the City's Gang Reduction and Youth Development Department and established the Summer Night Lights (SNL) program, modeled after the Summer of Success. Since its inception, SNL has expanded to 32 parks city-wide, significantly reduced violent crimes and homicides in surrounding neighborhoods, and become a national model for gang violence reduction.



2005

Equal Access to College Prep ("A-G for All")

Through its organizing efforts, CoCo learned that South LA students often fell short of college eligibility, even though they had graduated from high school. Research revealed a lack of college prep courses in South LA schools, in addition to low expectations of students.

In 2000, CoCo's youth leaders launched an effort to make A-G classes, the courses necessary to apply to California's public universities, the default curriculum throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District. However, many people, including public officials, had already determined that some youth were just not meant for college. CoCo soon realized that a broader coalition was needed to win the desired reform.

In 2004, CoCo and the Alliance For Better Communities launched Communities for Educational Equity, a citywide coalition of community groups, education advocates, and other stakeholders. In 2005, after years of hard organizing work by students and parents, the historic A-G Resolution was passed. It mandated that A-G college preparatory curriculum be made available in all schools, and that graduation requirements aligned with the curriculum.



2013

“School Climate Bill of Rights”

In California, between 2011 and 2012, nearly 50% of the 710,000 school suspensions were for “willful defiance,” a general catchall category for penalizing students for any nonviolent, non-drug-related offense such as refusing to change seats, not wearing a uniform, or insubordination. Studies have widely shown that harsh “zero tolerance” policies such as willful defiance are ineffective in correcting misbehavior, increase the risk of students dropping out and becoming involved in the criminal justice system, and are disproportionately applied to students of color. Under these policies, African-American students in the LAUSD made up 26% of those suspended but only 9% of the student body.

In 2013, student leaders from CoCo and partner organizations within the Brother, Sons, Selves (BSS) Coalition fought for and won the passage of the 2013 School Discipline Policy and School Climate Bill of Rights, establishing new guidelines in LAUSD that require schools to use proven and effective discipline approaches to address student misbehavior, such as Restorative Justice.



2012– 2014

Propositions 30 & 47

In 2012, as a member of the California Calls Alliance, CoCo played an instrumental role in educating and mobilizing voters around Proposition 30, which generated \$6.8 billion in new revenue for education and Medi-Cal. Key to the initiative's victory was a grassroots strategy that focused on reaching and engaging voters usually neglected by mainstream campaigns—the young, the recently naturalized, people of color, and low-income residents.

When Proposition 47 was put on the ballot in 2014, our members, organizers, and partners led the charge to educate and mobilize voters, resulting in the successful passage of the measure. Prop 47 reclassified six low-level crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, empowering an estimated 690,000 people in Los Angeles County alone to expunge or reduce felony convictions. The law provides second chances to many African-Americans and Latinos targeted by the “War on Drugs” and also produced a cost savings for the State to invest in prevention programs.



2014– 2018

“Equity is Justice”

After the passage of Proposition 30, the next campaign was to ensure the resulting tax dollars would meet the needs of our schools. Gov. Brown’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) allocated \$1.1 billion annually to the LAUSD in support of English Language Learners, low-income youth, and foster youth. To build upon the LCFF, CoCo partnered with Inner City Struggle and the Advancement Project to create the “Student Need Index,” a data-driven tool designed to identify the highest need schools using comprehensive social, environmental, and academic factors that affect student achievement, including suspension rates and exposure to gun violence and trauma. The index found that the highest need schools are overwhelmingly concentrated in South LA.

In June 2014, youth leaders successfully urged the LAUSD to adopt the Student Need Index. However, the next year, CoCo learned that LAUSD had been misallocating funds intended for schools with high need as defined by LCFF. In 2015, CoCo joined LAUSD parent Reyna Frias and the ACLU in suing the school district. In September 2017, the lawsuit was successfully settled, guaranteeing an additional \$150 million in funding to 50 schools throughout the district over three years.

In April 2018, students and parents won another victory with the unanimous passage of the Student Equity Need Index 2.0, which will identify the highest-needs students to invest \$25 million dollars from Gov. Brown’s 2018-2019 California budget and about \$263 million annually in upcoming years.





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