

# THE MOVEMENT

PEOPLE. POWER. PROGRESS.



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Anniversary Issue**

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## *30 Years Ago, Community Coalition Was Born For This Moment*

There were 27 years between the Watts Riots and the L.A. Uprising. There were 28 years between L.A.'s civil unrest and the global demand for justice sparked by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. If we stick to the status quo and numerical pattern, we have to ask ourselves, "what American city will be burning 29 years from now?"

We have not seen pandemics of the scale, swiftness, and severity of COVID-19 in over a century and criminal justice in two decades. While the current public health crisis is the result of a naturally occurring virus, the current crisis of public trust in law enforcement is entirely man-made. It is a result of broken promises and the failure of our institutions and leaders to fundamentally address the problem of police violence and racial inequity in our public policies. The virus of police violence against Black people is nothing new and has been with us for far too long.

In 1990, a group of community activists huddled together in a living room in South LA. Gathered by CoCo founder and current Congressmember Karen Bass, the group was haunted by the raging health crisis that had enveloped their community. The daily impacts of crack cocaine were devastating and the city's only response was a law enforcement strategy that criminalized our community and traumatized its residents with militarized personnel, weaponry, and battering rams. It was particularly cruel given that in the previous decade, corporations had moved over 300 manufacturing plants out of South LA for cheaper labor costs overseas and the Reagan Administration had dismantled the social safety net, severely undercutting economic stability.

As we celebrate our 30th Anniversary, we face another epidemic and uprising. CoCo was born out of the crack epidemic and thrust into uprising, and the activists knew then what we know now—criminalizing poverty and addiction only makes matters worse. We have tested and proven that residents most impacted by the crisis should be included in creating real solutions, if change is to be sustained. It was through this foundational principle that CoCo has become a permanent institution.

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# We Do Not Want to "Recover" Inequity

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"We will not go back to 'normal.' Normal never was. Our pre-Corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity."

— Sonya Renee Taylor, Artist

These beautiful words get to the heart of what's at stake in this global, anti-racist justice movement we are witnessing. We do not want to recover the inequities of the past. We want to dismantle systemic racism and re-construct a new path forward. Evoking the spirit of the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era, we want a country and world that doesn't systematically oppress Black people. The millions of activists taking to the streets around the world are honoring our ancestors as they call out politicians and governmental officials to implement true, transformative change and social justice.

As the #DefundThePolice hashtag has become a rallying cry of protestors and concerned citizens, it has been co-opted by different people to mean different things. But everyone can agree that the way resources, namely our tax dollars, are being allocated isn't benefiting our communities. For decades, those tax dollars have been used to increase exorbitant budgets and buying militarized equipment rather than funding much-needed housing, school resources, job creation, mental health services, and youth programs.

One of the three pillars of Community Coalition's People First Platform, our policy agenda informed by over 4,000 surveys from South LA residents, is Demand Our Dollars. This year, we have two important opportunities to Demand Our Dollars and assist in reconstructing a new future for South LA: the 2020 Census and Schools & Communities (SCF) First, a ballot initiative that we will vote on in November.

## 2020 Census

The Census is a powerful survey taken every 10 years. It determines the amount of federal funding and political representation that communities across the nation receive. As we participate in the Census count, millions of dollars will be made available for schools, healthcare (like Medicaid), meal programs, and housing vouchers in South LA..

Historically, Black and Latinx communities have not been properly counted. But we can't afford to be undercounted in 2020 because we cannot afford to be underfunded for a generation. You can help reconstruct South LA just by spending 10 minutes of your time at [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov).



June 6th protest on La Cienega Blvd. in Los Angeles. The protest stretched a mile long—running from the corner of Santa Monica Blvd. to the Beverly Center.

*Let's inform how hundreds of millions of dollars each year for 10 years will be spent by filling out the Census form.*

## Schools & Communities First

Covid-19 has exposed the devastating impacts of decisions by elected officials to starve public health budgets. Schools & Communities First can directly counteract that trend. It's a decades-in-the-making ballot initiative which would close a corporate property tax loophole and generate \$12 billion annually for our schools, community colleges, and local services, including much needed public health funding.

SCF isn't an ordinary ballot initiative. It represents an epic opportunity to generate billions—three billion of which would come directly to Los Angeles County each year. In April, the Schools & Communities First campaign submitted more than 1.7 million signatures of support to qualify for the November 2020 ballot. This was historic because it was the most signatures ever submitted in California for a ballot initiative. The corporate opposition has spent hundreds of millions to defeat this measure. But as the present movements are proving, the power of the people is on our side.

You can learn more about SCF by going to [schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org](http://schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org). Tell your friends and family about the benefits of this initiative and encourage them to vote "YES" in November. It will go a long way in winning the dollars our community so desperately needs. #VoteYES #SCF

**For info on Community Coalition's campaigns and events, please visit [www.cocosouthla.org](http://www.cocosouthla.org).**

"WE ARE DEMANDING AN END TO RACIST POLICING PRACTICES THAT OPPRESS BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND OTHER COMMUNITIES OF COLOR. OUR CITY OFFICIALS MUST INVEST DEEPLY IN AREAS OF THE CITY THAT HAVE BEEN LONG NEGLECTED."

—ALBERTO RETANA  
COCO PRESIDENT & CEO



—PHOTO BY MICHAEL KELLEY

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

**OUR DEMANDS**

- **Launch investigations on LAPD use of force on peaceful protests.**
- **Reject the proposed \$123 million increase to the LAPD budget and reduce spending on policing by \$500 million #Divest2Invest**
- **Announce a \$500 million investment for over policed, high needs communities—prioritizing Black communities first.**
- **Create and fully fund a new Youth Development Department—aligning existing programs and funding while allocating at least \$50 million in new annual funding.**
- **Establish a fully-funded task force, led by Black community leaders and youth who have been directly impacted by police violence, to strengthen accountability and propose alternatives to policing.**

As an organization, we have been here before. CoCo knows where poor decisions on the part of decision makers can lead. The response to the uprising of 1992 is an indelible scourge on our city and our psyches. We also know what it takes to forge the path forward. Our 3,000+ resident members have stepped up for 30 years to win college prep classes, critical funding (Prop 30); tools that inform equity (the Student Equity Needs Index, SENI); by launching the PUSH LA coalition that forced LAPD’s Metro Division to significantly scale back on racial profiling stops, and fighting to establish an Office of Racial Equity (ORE) in Los Angeles that will proactively address structural racism.

It is time the Mayor and city leaders address L.A.’s long history of police misconduct, over-policing, and disinvestment in South Los Angeles. Presently, half the budget for the city goes to the police department. This tells us where the Mayor’s priorities lie. The City of Los Angeles must implement a vision for change that addresses anti-Black racism. We are ready to re-imagine what care and justice can look like in Los Angeles. We are ready to reconstruct a new path for our city rather than “recover” systemic racist policies and infrastructures that do not honor our humanity or our lives.

# 30 Years of Leadership in South LA

## CoCo Members Speak the Same Language: Black & Brown Solidarity

When Community Coalition (CoCo) was founded 30 years ago, the complexion of South Los Angeles was undergoing a change. Congressmember Karen Bass recognized the importance of building multi-racial solidarity and founded CoCo as an organization that could be the vehicle for that work. Today, community members are more likely to have roots in Mexico and Central America than in Louisiana, Texas, or other bible-belt states that residents hailed from just two generations ago.

On historic corridors that once boasted “jazz greats played here,” one is most likely to find *carnicerías* and *botánicas* today. And in places where black urban slang was heard, you are now apt to hear Spanglish. But that doesn’t mean Black and Brown folks in South Central aren’t speaking the same language. We are. It’s a language of solidarity.

South Central is 61% Latino but is still home to 10 of the 11 neighborhoods in Los Angeles where the population is more than 50% Black. The same economic, social, racial, and political conditions have created both Black and Brown leaders who seek positive change for their community. Many have matriculated through CoCo’s leadership pipeline as passionate youth, committed to making their schools and neighborhoods better. For more than 29 years, Community Coalition’s South Central Youth Empowered thru Action (SCYEA) has developed leadership skills in scores of empowered teens who have used community organizing to improve public education, close the achievement gap, and dismantle the “School-to-Prison Pipeline.”



**MARLO JENKINS**  
SCYEA Class of 1994 // Founding Member  
CoCo Public Relations Coordinator

Being politicized at an early age, Marlo Jenkins was one of the founding members of SCYEA, Community Coalition’s youth membership component. “Coming into SCYEA, I developed true friendships that I have to this day with people from other ethnicities and backgrounds. I hadn’t had many Latinx or non-Black friends. Hearing the struggles and challenges that they were going through as youth, I learned a lot. SCYEA help me to be sensitive and empathetic to others’ challenges.”

Developed professionally by mentors like Congressmember Karen Bass and Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Marlo spent a number of years honing her strategic marketing skills in New York City. She has since returned home to South LA and continues to use her social capital to make real change in her community as part of Community Coalition’s Arts+Culture Department.

“In its early years, Community Coalition had three programs for youth. One was a partnership between CoCo and the Koreatown Youth & Community Center (KYCC), which sought to bring Black, Brown, and Korean youth together to heal racial tensions post 1992 civil unrest,” says Elmer Roldan, who joined SCYEA when he was 13-years-old.

“CoCo was a haven for me. It opened my mind to learning about Black and Brown world leaders and heroes in the fight for global, social, and economic liberation,” Roldan continues. “They challenged me to understand anti-Blackness in America and the importance of true solidarity in the fight for freedom, justice, and self-determination. SCYEA also gave us a \$25.00 weekly stipend to participate—the \$100.00 monthly check exposed me to earning money, professionalism, and gave me some financial freedom to buy things my mom could not afford for my sisters and me.”

Since joining CoCo as a youth organizer more than 20 years ago, Elmer has become a city leader in his own right. He is the Executive Director of Communities in Schools in Los Angeles (CISLA), an educational support organization with a mission to help students stay in school and achieve in life. Organizations like CISLA have not traditionally tackled systemic issues like racism.

Those foundational solidarity lessons learned at CoCo are the guiding principles Elmer uses when implementing his vision for CISLA. “It is with a deep commitment to being even better partners with the students, families, and the schools we work with, that we approach our efforts to engage in systems-change initiatives and stand in solidarity with Black and Brown families—especially in this period of our country’s history where our communities are needing a stronger safety-net politically, economically, and environmentally.”



**ELMER ROLDAN**  
SCYEA Class of 1997  
Communities in Schools / Executive Director

## CoCo Joins Lawsuit to Protect Voters Rights During COVID-19 Pandemic

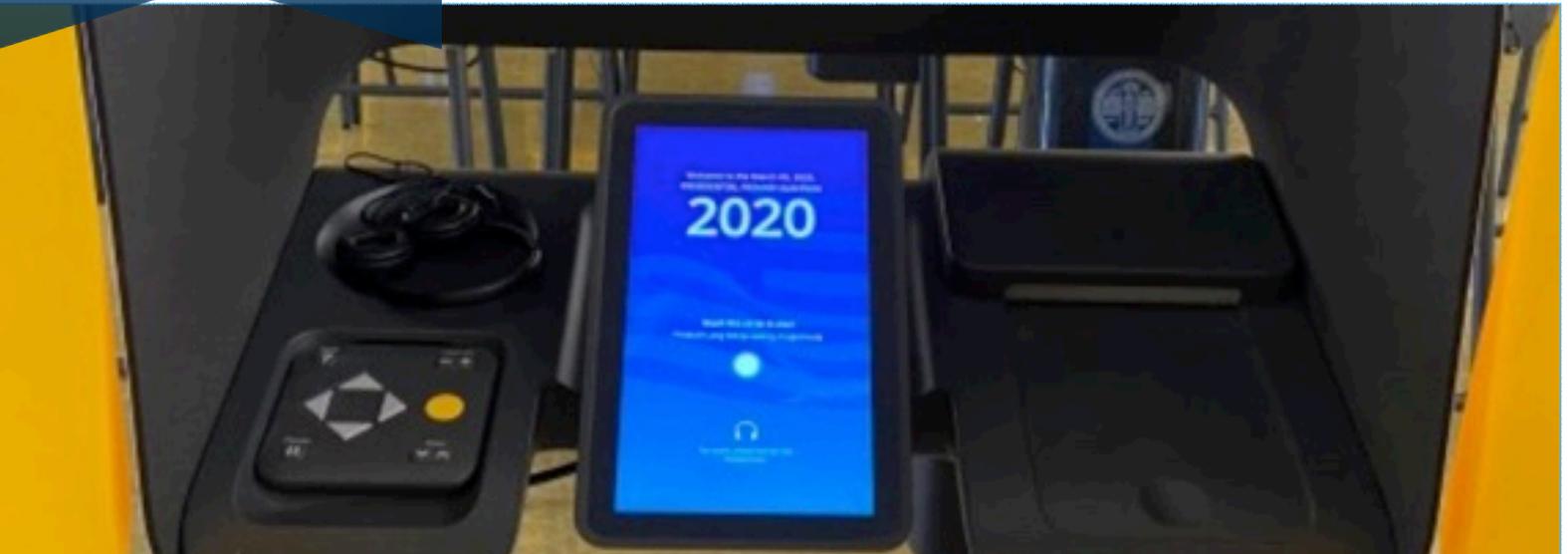
WE'VE ALREADY  
DIED FOR THE  
RIGHT TO VOTE, WE  
SHOULD NOT HAVE  
TO RISK OUR LIVES  
DUE TO THE  
CORONA VIRUS!

Community Coalition, the League of Women Voters of California, and California Common Cause filed a motion to intervene in **“Republican National Committee (RNC) v. Newsom.”** This lawsuit was brought in response to Governor Gavin Newsom's executive order requiring mail-in ballots be automatically sent to registered voters for the November general election. Due to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, California voters are seeking to cast their ballots by mail at highly increased rates. Seniors, voters with disabilities, immunocompromised, chronically ill, Black, and Latinx voters are **all** at higher risk of serious illness due to COVID-19. These groups could be especially harmed without access to a safe, reliable mail-in voting option in November.

On July 10th, the RNC dropped the lawsuit. “Defeating this lawsuit was important to CoCo because ensuring everyone has the opportunity to exercise their right to vote is of the utmost importance, especially at this moment we are currently living in. We saw what happened in Kentucky,” says Hector Sanchez, CoCo's Deputy Political Director. “Sending a vote-by-mail ballot to every voter shows Black and Brown people that California is committed to protecting our health and our ability to participate in our democracy.”

### **2020 brought drastic changes as it relates to how and where we vote in LA County**

In LA County, there is roughly a 78% drop in the total number of polling places voters can access during this election year cycle—going from 4,500 to 960. Some voting centers are open for 11-days and others for just four. Unfortunately, many of the 960 centers are not in South LA at the churches, schools, and libraries community members



**In March, new voting kiosks replaced decades-old voting booths at 960 Voting Centers. Despite the upgrade, voters experienced malfunctions and long wait times when casting their ballots in the primary election.**

With so much on the line locally and nationally for communities of color, Community Coalition looked into the lack of voting center locations given the enormity of the change and the roll-out of this new system during a major election year. Specifically, we mapped areas with more 11-day voting center options than others because those centers provide the maximum allotted time for early voting and play a critical role in overall voter turnout.

CoCo found multiple cases where there were notable discrepancies in the number of 11-day voting centers in communities of color compared to more affluent areas of LA County. For example, in the Florence-Firestone area, which includes zip codes 90001 and 90002 and encompasses nine square miles, there was not one 11-day voting center. This is particularly disturbing because access to individual transportation is much lower in South LA compared to white, affluent areas. Compounding the problems that voters of color regularly experience in the ballot application process will be the issue of proper social distancing when it comes to long lines and in-person voting.

"Mail-in voting is the sensible way to maximize voter turnout and protect public health in the time of COVID-19. It's how President Trump votes," said Jesselyn Friley, attorney at Public Counsel representing CoCo and the other advocacy groups suing the RNC. "The RNC lawsuit is all about reducing access to the ballot box by making [voting] a life-threatening risk. As with so many consequences of the pandemic, this risk will fall disproportionately on communities of color."

## *Congressmember Karen Bass Placed on Joe Biden's Short List for Vice President*

Thirty years after founding Community Coalition, Congressmember Karen Bass (37th District), current chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, has been placed on former Vice President Joe Biden's list of potential running mates. In 1990, Bass convened community activists in the living room of a friend. The group was haunted by the raging crack-cocaine epidemic that had South Central LA in its grips. They knew criminalizing addiction would make matters worse, and they believed those impacted most by this public health crisis should lead the charge in creating sustainable solutions. It was from this vision that Community Coalition was established.

Under Bass' leadership (1990-2004), Community Coalition stepped up and prevented over 150 liquor stores from being rebuilt after the 1992 Civil Unrest. Mix-use businesses that are an asset to the community (i.e., affordable homes, grocery stores, and laundromats) replaced the liquor stores. The South Los Angeles Kinship in Action Center was established, and Assembly Bill 863 secured resources for relative caregivers helping children stay with their families rather than being forced into foster care. CoCo moved into its current building, establishing a permanent institution for community organizing in South Los Angeles. It also implemented the Summer of Success (SOS), which served as the model for the City's Summer Night Lights program.

In 2004, she represented the 47th district in the California State Assembly. At the time, there were no African American women serving in the state legislature. Assemblymember Bass was re-elected in 2006 and 2008. During her tenure, she served as the 67th Speaker of the California Assembly (2008–2010), when the Assembly elected her to be its 67th Speaker, catapulting her to become the first African American woman in U.S. history to serve in this powerful state legislative role.

Congressmember Bass served as Speaker during California's greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. For her leadership, she—along with the three other legislative leaders—was awarded the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award in 2010. In addition to helping navigate the state through a very difficult time, she also championed efforts to improve foster care and quality healthcare for all Californians.

On February 18, 2010, then Assemblymember Bass confirmed her candidacy to succeed retiring Congressmember Diane Watson in California's 33rd Congressional District. Congressmember Bass was re-elected to her fifth term representing the 37th Congressional District in November 2018. She serves on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs as Chair of the Subcommittee on Africa; Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations and the House Judiciary Committee as Chair of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. Congressmember Bass also serves as the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Most recently, Congressmember Bass skillfully led the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, a justice reform bill, through the House by putting her community organizing skills to good use by “phone banking” and lobbying her Republican colleagues for support. She held lengthy calls with various House factions, and met with police reform critics, including the Fraternal Order of Police. In a show of solidarity, all 233 Democrats voted for the bill, as well as three Republicans. The proposed justice bill would ban police chokeholds, as well as no-knock warrants for federal law enforcement officials; create a national registry of police abuses; and make it easier for citizens to sue officers accused of misconduct.



**CONGRESSMEMBER KAREN BASS**

## #SteppingUpForSouthLA

# Community Coalition's Organizing Timeline

### 1990

- Congressmember Karen Bass, who at that time was an emergency-room physician assistant, gathered a group of South L.A. activists together to find viable solutions to the public health crises that enveloped their community as a result of the crack-cocaine epidemic.

### 1991

- Community Coalition pioneers its youth program, South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (SCYEA, pronounced "say yeah!"), now a nationally recognized model for youth organizing and leadership development.
- CoCo conducts its first Community Survey through which residents identified liquor stores as the main culprits in fostering crime and violence in their neighborhoods.

### 1992

- CoCo starts the "Rebuild South LA Without Liquor Stores" Campaign.

### 1997

- Community Coalition moves into its headquarters at 8101 S. Vermont from its original location on Broadway and 83rd Street.
- SCYEA enacts its first direct-action campaign to ensure South Los Angeles schools received an equitable share of funds from Proposition B.B. This school bond measure authorized \$2.4 billion in bonds for the construction of new schools and the repair and modernization of existing schools. As a result, the Tax Bond Oversight Committee reopened the repair contracts and allocated an additional \$153 million for repairs in overcrowded South L.A. schools.
- SCYEA youth protest Prop 21 which sought to incarcerate minors with adults.

### 1999

- CoCo's Prevention Network, made up of service providers who focus on strengthening the social safety net, conducts a significant study and review of the needs and gaps in human services in South Los Angeles.
- Community Coalition introduces its "Family Care Not Foster Care" campaign to stop the breakup of South L.A. families and challenge the inequity in the foster care system.

### 2001

- Fremont 911/Godinez vs. Davis lawsuit challenges the state's allocation of the 1998 Proposition 1A school bond funds by showing the disparities in the system that allocates school construction funds. The campaign won \$1 billion for new school construction.

### 2003

- CoCo pilots the "Summer of Success" (SOS) Program, violence-reduction effort that brought late-night recreational activities to Jim Gilliam Park. During SOS, there was not one homicide in the community surrounding the park. SOS was the model for LA.'s city-wide "Summer Night Lights" program.

### 2004

- CoCo organizes the "Alliance For Better Communities" and establishes Communities for Educational Equity (CEE)
- South L.A.'s relative caregivers help CoCo establish the Kinship In Action Center, the first of its kind to combine services, advocacy and organizing/direct action.
- CoCo forms the "Communities for Educational Equity" alliance to fight for college prep courses for all students throughout LAUSD.
- CoCo organizes service providers to end barriers to employment for individuals returning home from prison by creating the Ex-Offender Task Force.
- Residents win the 10-year struggle with the notorious Oakwood Inn Motel, replacing it with affordable homes.

### 2005

- Student activists win A-G college prep classes for ALL students and schools in the LAUSD.

### 2006

- Relative caregiver leaders work with then California Assemblymember, Karen Bass to win \$82 million in the state budget to strengthen and improve foster care, including \$36 million for kinship care. They organize kinship rallies in Sacramento and meet with lawmakers to urge them to expand programs that support kinship-care families.

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# Views from the Corner of 81st & Vermont

## 2020: The Great Social Reveal

BY ALBERTO RETANA  
PRESIDENT & CEO, COMMUNITY COALITION

I've lived through many crises and dealt with day-to-day emergencies while working with people of color and oppressed communities across the United States. But this is my first crisis of this magnitude while I've been in leadership. The enormity of it feels new to me. CoCo, however, was born for this moment. In fact, as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary, we are actually reliving our origin story.

In 1992, South Los Angeles was facing the LA Uprising and the crack cocaine epidemic. Today, our resident members are organizing the community to find solutions to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and a global demand for justice sparked by the murder of George Floyd. This moment is a social reveal with similar components of crises that erupted due to the same structural inequalities across race, class, gender, and all other determinants that shape our society.

This moment shows us, yet again, that ultimately the system is set up to protect private property and profits over people. It is insane that the national conversation has centered around a willingness to let people die in order to get our economy off the ground as it relates to COVID-19 or to continue letting African American men be murdered by police rather than divest from law enforcement agencies that only serve to protect the status quo.

At what point is no life good enough to risk contracting coronavirus for the sake of a corporation's bottom line? Why is asking police to stop killing black people even a debate? I think, ultimately, we are witnessing the reveal of an assessment of power—a national reckoning of who has power, and who doesn't as citizens, local governments, and as national leaders.

Periods of crisis have shown us time and again, there are no shortcuts to solving inequity. There are no shortcuts to solving the brutal, divisive, and dehumanizing impacts of capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and all the other issues that we as community organizers face. Frequently, in moments of crisis and disaster, many leaders get “executive-like” and make decisions that protect self-interests and party agendas. The path forward becomes an exercise in circling the wagons to preserve the power dynamic. But, the clock of the world that ticks is asking how do we move from a liberal place to a more progressive place?

That's a very different question depending on where you live. But there's a contribution we can make here in Los Angeles that will hopefully contribute to the rest of the country and the rest of the world. And that contribution means moving away from “recovery” and forging a path of reconstruction. We cannot go back to “normal.” Normal is not okay. It has never been okay. We can't just recover. We have to reconstruct something new, something better which honors our humanity and dismantles racist and oppressive systems.

We have to continue to generate justice by divesting from law enforcement in order to save black lives and invest in our communities. We have to continue to demand our dollars in order to build the thriving communities we have envisioned for ourselves for decades. We have to continue working in multiracial solidarity that centers Black lives and the most marginalized voices at the front. We have to continue to fight because when we fight, we win!

In Solidarity,  
Alberto

## Coco Youth Talk About Police Brutality with Gov. Newsom



**COCO YOUTH LEADERSHIP** — Kawika Smith (left) and Brooklyn Porter shared their past experiences regarding Los Angeles law enforcement with Governor Newsom.

On June 3, Governor Gavin Newsom was in Los Angeles meeting with leaders and community members following the murder of George Floyd and the demonstrations against racism. His meetings included conversations with community leaders, youth, and elected officials. Among them were South Central Youth Empowered thru Action (SCYEA) members Brooklyn Porter and Kawika Smith. Porter is a student at Crenshaw High School and Smith is a recent graduate of Verbum Dei in Watts.

Both shared their personal experiences with law enforcement as well as their participation in the recent protests ignited by the killing of Minneapolis resident George Floyd.

“We asked the Governor to support defunding law enforcement and reallocate much needed funds to youth centers,” said Kawika.

CoCo has joined labor, education, youth and community based groups in demanding that Mayor Eric Garcetti and the City Council create, and fully fund, a new Youth Development Department. The group, known as the LA Coalition, is comprised of more than 40 groups that want existing programs and funding to be aligned and at least \$50 million in new funding allocated annually.

# Community Coalition's Organizing Timeline

## Continued from page 7

### 2007

- SCYEA youth win \$350M in Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) funds to reduce class sizes and improve academic performance in South Los Angeles schools.

### 2008

- CoCo helps to establish ACE Academy at Locke High School to prepare youth for both college and high wage union jobs with benefits.
- The Los Angeles City Council passes the citywide Nuisance Abatement Ordinance. Coalition members helped author the ordinance to increase accountability for nuisance businesses.

### 2009

- "Summer Night Lights" program is created at Martin Luther King Jr. Park. The organizing effort created new basketball and tennis courts, a soccer field, and removed toxic mold from the rec center.

### 2010

- CoCo purchases its building, creating a permanent institution in South LA.

### 2011

- Community Coalition partners with the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools to begin a program in South L.A. The national program's goal is to end the school-to-prison pipeline by diminishing summer learning loss.

### 2012

- CoCo members engage with the Blue Ribbon Commission in support of the unprecedented overhaul of L.A. County's child welfare system with kinship as a priority.
- Community Coalition's "Families Helping Families" campaign wins one of seven federal demonstration grants to operate a kinship navigator program.
- CoCo organizes community support for Prop 30—bringing \$6.8B in new

state revenue for education and Medi-Cal.

### 2013

- SCYEA's involvement leads to the passage of the School Climate Bill of Rights which requires LAUSD schools to use proven and effective discipline approaches to address student misbehavior, such as restorative justice.

### 2014

- CoCo, as an anchor of the Equity Alliance for LA's Kids, forms the "Equity Is Justice: Student Equity Needs Index (SENI)" campaign. The alliance wins unanimous support from Los Angeles Unified School Districts Board members on a new formula for allocating funds based on highest needs schools.

- CoCo members canvass and rally around the passage of Prop 47. CA. becomes the first state to end felony sentencing for simple drug possession and low-level, non-violent offenses.

### 2015

- Equity on A-G resolution is passed by LAUSD to recommit to college prep for ALL students.
- CoCo hosts its first People Power Convention. The mass organizing event is meant to build neighborhood unity and civic power.

### 2016

- CoCo partners with the city to organize embRACE L.A.'s inaugural dinner series—successfully mobilizing over 1200 Angelenos to discuss race and equity in Los Angeles.

### 2017

- "Re-Imagine Justice" debuts as a living art exhibit which marked the 25th anniversary of L.A.'s 1992 civil unrest.

### 2018

- Groundbreaking \$150 million settlement reached with LAUSD,

delivering new programs and supports to 50 of the highest need schools in Los Angeles over three years.

- CoCo's People First Platform unveiled.

- Reform LA Jails coalition submitted more than 246,000 signatures to the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk calling for criminal justice reform legislation to be placed on California's March 2020 Presidential Primary ballot.

### 2019

- South Central by South Central Tour debuts.
- CoCo holds its first People First Assembly.
- PUSH LA successfully demands LAPD to "Stop the Stops" culminating in major shifts in law enforcement policies.
- embRACE L.A. dialogues lead to the L.A. City Council voting to create an Office of Racial Equity (ORE).

### 2020

- CoCo is successful in revoking Monarch Liquor Store's liquor license.
- Measure R passes, significantly strengthening civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Department and increasing and improving psychiatric care, drug treatment and other services to individuals impacted by incarceration.
- Community Coalition wins one of four \$500K LA City Great Streets Challenge grants to build the People's Plaza on Manchester and Vermont.
- The LA County Board of Supervisors vote to end the collection of criminal administrative fees. \$1.8 billion in previously assessed fees were discharged.
- University of California regents vote to suspend SAT and ACT testing requirements through 2024 and eliminate them for California students by 2025.
- CoCo founder Congressmember Karen Bass vetted to be the Vice President of the United States.



# CoCo's Economic Impact Timeline

## Nearly \$10 Billion and Counting!

The activism of Community Coalition's members and community residents has stimulated economic recovery in South LA for decades. In the last 10 years, South LA voters have become a vital bloc for economic recovery by overwhelmingly supporting revenue-generating initiatives such as Proposition 30's "Temporary Taxes to Fund Education." At the same time, residents have rallied to support justice initiatives (Prop 47 & 57) that have reduced state spending on incarceration practices in favor of greater investments in public education, youth development, and health and human services.

### 1997

South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (SCYEA) launched its first direct-action campaign to ensure South Los Angeles schools received an equitable share of funds from Proposition BB. This school bond measure authorized \$2.4 billion in bonds for the construction of new schools and the repair/modernization of existing schools. As a result, the Tax Bond Oversight Committee reopened the repair contracts and allocated an additional \$153 million for South L.A. schools.

### 2001

Fremont 911/Godinez vs. Davis lawsuit challenged the state's allocation of the 1998 Proposition 1A school bond funds by showing the disparities in the system that allocates school

construction funds. The campaign won \$1 billion for new school construction.

### 2006

Relative Caregivers and Community Coalition leaders worked with then California Assemblymember Karen Bass to win \$82 million in the state budget to strengthen and improve foster care, including \$36 million for kinship care.

### 2007

Won \$350M in Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) funds to reduce class sizes and improve academic performance

### 2012

Prop 30 is passed, allocating \$6.8B in new state revenue for education and Medi-Cal.

### 2017

Groundbreaking \$150 million settlement reached with LAUSD, delivering new services to 50 of the highest need schools in Los Angeles over three years.

### 2018/19

LAUSD budgeted \$25 million in 2018 to distribute funding to schools based on their rank in L.A. Unified's Student Equity Needs Index (SENI 2.0). \$262 million was allotted in 2019-20.

# YOUTH EMPOWERED

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## ***Kawika Smith Has Definitely Been Empowered Thru Action***

For more than 29 years, South Central Youth Empowered thru Action's (SCYEA's) purpose has been to develop the next generation of empowered youth leaders and their parents to improve public education, close the achievement gap, and dismantle the "School-to-Prison Pipeline. One such leader is Kawika Smith, a recent grad at Verbum Dei High School in Watts. Not only is he very involved in SCYEA, but he is also the youth representative for his Neighborhood Council, an advisory body that advocates for communities throughout Los Angeles. Established in 1999, Neighborhood Council board members are city officials who are elected by members of their local communities —making Kawika one of the youngest officials in L.A.

Kawika is no stranger to sounding the alarm on important social issues. When his school's administration instituted a policy regarding the length at which African American students had to keep their hair, Kawika filed a formal complaint with the school and enlisted the help of California Senator Holly Mitchell. Senator Mitchell is the author of Senate Bill 188 which is also known as The CROWN Act. The legislation was signed into law on July 3, 2019 by California Governor Gavin Newsom and ensures protection against discrimination based on hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles in the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) and state Education Codes.

In December 2019, Kawika became one of three lead plaintiffs in a coalition of students and advocacy groups that filed suit against the University of California system. The lawsuit sought to stop the UC System from using standardized test scores in its admissions. The plaintiffs called out the fact that college entrance tests, like the SAT and ACT, are biased against poor black and brown students. Smith, an accomplished student leader carried a 3.56 GPA, and three associate degrees from LA Southwest College. Despite his grades, degrees, a stellar resume of leadership posts and his dedicated community service, Smith said that the testing requirements all but decimated his dreams of getting into his dream college—UC Berkeley.



**KAWIKA SMITH**

"I knew my scores would not be competitive, but the SAT doesn't give a true account of my potential," said the 2020 graduating senior.

On Thursday, May 21, 2020, the University of California regents voted to suspend SAT and ACT testing requirements through 2024 and eliminate them for all California students by 2025. When asked about the Regents' decision, Smith answered, "We don't win by accepting the circumstances and holding our heads down, hoping to find a way to come out on top. Gone are the days of 'that's just how it is.' We demand equity."

Kawika aspires to study the social sciences next Fall at Morehouse College where he was recently accepted and given a full scholarship by the Jordan Brand Wings Scholars Program, which is in its sixth year in providing full-ride scholarships to high-performing students in the United States and China.

Community Coalition continues focus on the development of leaders who advocate on their own behalf and shape the policies of tomorrow. As we celebrate our 30th Anniversary, CoCo is so very proud of Kawika and all of our youth leaders who have participated in SCYEA through the years—making life in the communities in which they reside better.

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## LAUSD to Invest \$25 Million in Its Black Students

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On June 30, 2020, the L.A. Board of Education voted to reduce \$25 million from its Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD)—its independent law enforcement agency. It has also ordered all 460 LASPD officers off campuses and out of uniform until a task force can be convened to conduct a detailed assessment of the largest school policing department in the country. The decision comes one week after L.A. Unified School Board Members' refused to act on the demands of students, parents and community activists to defund school police. At the June 23rd board meeting, thousands called for LASPD to be completely eliminated so that funding could be reallocated to mental health professionals, smaller class sizes, and college prep counselors.

Over 15,000 people sent emails to each of the seven board members demanding divestment from the school police department. Approximately 70 organizations signed letters in support of Board Member Monica Garcia's resolution that reduced the school police budget by 90% over three years and reallocated those funds to the highest need schools in support of Black students. Despite all the protests and public outcry from communities of color, the members of L.A.'s Board of Education took no action.

"The Board's inability to stand up for Black students was a complete and utter waste of time, and extremely disrespectful to both the students and parents who trusted and believed that the Board would hear their voices and concerns," says Corey Matthews, Chief Operating Officer, Community Coalition.

According to a study by the UCLA Black Male Institute, LAUSD has increased its spending in law enforcement by 48% since the 2005-2006 school year, despite seeing a decrease in the student population across the district. Black youth are less than nine percent of the LAUSD population, yet they account for 25 percent of all school arrests (Million Dollar Hoods Project at UCLA, 2018). Other studies from community organizers found:

- Over 43 percent of surveyed LAUSD youth (out of 1,840 District students and 3,378 overall L.A. County youth) have experienced random police stops and interactions in their schools. (Brothers Sons Selves Coalition's Safety and Youth Justice Survey, 2019.)
- 86% of Students Deserve's survey respondents (out of 5,433) called for the defunding of LAUSD school police, including 88% of Black students who called for the defunding of school police. (Students Deserve survey, 2020)
- 79.4% of survey respondents want full-time psychiatric social workers.



—PHOTO BY GLAUZ DIEGO

**DEFUND SCHOOL POLICE RALLY**—On Tuesday, June 23, 2020, thousands of parents and students demanded that LA Board of Education members vote to defund the Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD).

- 74.2% of respondents want full-time college counselors.
- 65.2% want parent, family, and community centers. 58.4% want grief counselors.

"Community Coalition commends the fast and direct mobilizing efforts by the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition, Students Deserve and Black Lives Matters—LA. The quick strategic pivots that were made got us moving in the right direction," said Matthews referring to the organizing strategy that led to the June 30th 4-to-3 vote which took place after 10 p.m. following hours of public testimony by student and parent activists.

"The big questions centered on what constitutes safety, the vision community activists have for Black children, the purpose of education, and our children being looked at as the entire future. And while we are disappointed that Board Member Jackie Goldberg did not support defunding LASPD by the proposed 50% on Board Member Garcia's resolution, the adoption of Goldberg's friendly amendment (resulting in nearly 40%) is the significant first step that was much-needed," Matthews concluded.