

THE MOVEMENT

PEOPLE. POWER. PROGRESS.



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Community Coalition Families Sue the State of California and Win \$2B

The power of the people was the driving force behind this settlement, the largest ever in California and one of the largest in the nation. Brought by parents concerned about the quality of education their children received during the COVID-19 pandemic, Community Coalition's and The Oakland REACH families came together with Public Counsel and Morrison & Foerster LLP.

"The urgent vision of this historic settlement is not just to recoup the academic losses suffered by California's most disadvantaged students but to erase the opportunity gaps altogether exacerbated by the pandemic. The \$2 billion-plus that will be committed exclusively to the implementation of evidence-based solutions for students in greatest need of learning recovery supports is the largest we are aware of dedicated at one time to the most pressing crisis in America today," states Mark Rosenbaum, Senior Special Counsel for Strategic Litigation for Public Counsel. "This is a victory of partnership of students, caregivers, and community organizations with California's leadership that recognizes that educational opportunity is the State's greatest resource."

Courageous parents and students filed the class action lawsuit in December 2020 to hold California's education leaders responsible for failing to provide adequate instruction to our most vulnerable students, including children of essential workers and parents who lost their jobs during the pandemic. Their efforts on behalf of California's most vulnerable demonstrate what we in movement work already know ... when we fight, we win!

"This is such a huge victory and much-deserved investment in California's Black and Brown students who are still feeling the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic," says Community Coalition's President and CEO, Alberto Retana. "Community Coalition (CoCo) devised a summer program targeting academics, technology, and wellness when LAUSD failed to provide for our students' educational needs. Our approach considered English language and technological proficiency and other nuances that characterize the curriculum and educational inequities of South L.A. schools."

When the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) announced school closures through the end of the 2020 school year, Brotherhood Crusade, Community Coalition, and InnerCity Struggle joined forces to raise **\$400,000** to support **5,000** at-risk South and East LA students with technology and emergency needs. Parents and families in under-served communities' primary concern was continuing their students' education and accessing technology.

"Parents were deeply concerned about student learning loss in addition to students' socio-emotional health due to increased isolation. Parents also expressed frustration with their students'

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The 2024 MLK Festival Was An Invite To Organize



CoCo was proud to be a presenting partner of the annual Freedom Festival, celebrating the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.! This year, the Freedom Festival will focus on the impact of nonviolent action as we are called to better our communities. The Festival takes place in Historic Leimert Park Village, the end point of the Kingdom Day Parade at Leimert Park. The post-parade festival featured music, dancing, food and more. As part of the event, Community Coalition presented the “Invitation to Organize–Empowerment Tent,” which invited festival participants to learn about CoCo, discuss the issues they are most concerned about take a deep dive into how Black and Brown communities, families, and students can find solutions.



Support from the Katie McGrath and JJ Abrams Foundation and a much-needed \$100,000 grant from the Weingart Foundation allowed Community Coalition to purchase laptops and hotspots for our kids so they could access their classrooms.

CoCo Families Win \$2B Educational Equity Lawsuit (con't from page 1)

schools due to a lack of communication and transparency about the upcoming school year based on what they had seen in 2020,” explains Miguel Dominguez, Director of Education & Youth Policy.

While affluent and many middle-class families could use technological hardware and high-speed internet to provide their children with online classes and other learning and enrichment resources, too many of our youth did not have those opportunities. The ongoing support from the Katie McGrath and JJ Abrams Foundation and a much-needed \$100,000 grant from the Weingart Foundation that allowed Community Coalition to purchase laptops and hotspots for our kids so they could access their classrooms.

“We had a major responsibility to create a learning experience to curb learning loss. Given the impacts of the pandemic, mental health and wellness were at our program’s core,” Aurea Montes-Rodriguez, Executive Vice President of Community Coalition, remembers.

CoCo created the Summer Academic Program (SAP), which engaged hundreds of students and families, ages 8-18, from across South L.A. five days a week for seven weeks. Three of the five days were in person, while the other two were virtual learning days. Community Coalition hired a culturally knowledgeable and sensitive academic team of six instructors and seven student engagement

facilitators to create a project-based curriculum focused on communication, wellness, and technology.

Additionally, CoCo provided one-on-one tutoring, transition assistance for students and parents returning to the regular school year, an IT Help Desk with bilingual technology training for platforms utilized by LAUSD (i.e. Schoology and Google Classrooms), and resource fairs that provided help for mental health, housing, and substance abuse prevention. All academic instructors were South LA educators with experience working with Black and Brown families.

“We cannot make up for the negative impact and losses that high-need students and families experienced over the last four years, but this settlement can make a real difference in helping target much-needed support and services to families continuing to overcome deep inequities in our education system,” Dominguez continues. Leaders across the state need to ensure we develop, strengthen, and maintain equitable investments. Community Coalition will continue working with the LAUSD to keep their commitment to community-centered equitable policies, like the Student Equity Need Index (SENI) and the Black Student Achievement Plan (BSAP), to ensure this settlement is fully realized.

CoCo's Statement Regarding the Appointment of Los Angeles' Next Police Chief



Angelenos of color have experienced decades of harassment, trauma, economic extraction, physical harm, and death at the hands of the Los Angeles Police Department. This all starts at the top. Police chief after police chief has failed to sufficiently address—and too often condoned or spearheaded—the Department's racist policies and practices. As a ripple effect, we have seen worse safety outcomes in communities of color while whiter, more affluent areas have thrived. In light of the Mayor's forthcoming appointment of a new LAPD Chief, a network of organizations rooted in advancing racial and economic equity in the City of Los Angeles—including Community Coalition, Catalyst California, LA Voice, the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Los Angeles (CAIRLA), and the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Equity Alliance—call for a shift from criminalization to a commitment to care and equity through the prioritization of the following values:

1. A Commitment to Racial Equity and Social Justice: Under past LAPD chiefs, Black, Indigenous, Immigrant, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have been criminalized, racially profiled, and subjected to uses of force, intimidation, and

harassment. These inequities erode community trust in LAPD and

undermine safety. The next police chief must deeply understand social justice issues and be committed to promoting equity. This includes addressing systemic biases, implementing unbiased policing practices, and actively working towards eliminating disparities in law enforcement. In addition, this means full inclusion of immigrants regardless of status in advancing community safety.

2. End Pretextual Stops: The department's pretextual stop strategy 1) disproportionately targets drivers of color despite finding contraband more often among white drivers, 2) focuses on low-income neighborhoods, placing a crippling financial burden on residents, and 3) wastes taxpayer resources through hours spent on frivolous stops and searches—only 2% of which resulted in arrests. Most appalling of all—these pretextual stops have led to the harassment, abuse, and murder of Black and Brown Angelenos.

3. Accountability & Transparency: Officers who harm community members should be held accountable for their actions to help ensure fair and unbiased policing practices and rebuild public trust.

4. A Commitment to Care-Centered Safety: Health-related emergencies should be handled through health practitioners, not programs involving the LAPD or the criminal legal system. There should be an emphasis on diversion, de-escalation, and care-centered treatment rather than incarceration and punishment.

5. Improve Transportation Infrastructure: Punishment-centered responses—such as ticket fees and fines—only serve to extract economic resources from low-income communities rather than improve roadway safety. Research shows that infrastructure design upgrades addressing the root causes of traffic safety risks produce better long-term outcomes than policing. This should occur without reliance on surveillance technologies—such as ticketing cameras and license plate readers—that replicate racially and economically biased harms produced by law enforcement.

6. Consult with Racial Justice Movement Organizations: Because of the devastating impact of LAPD on communities of color, racial justice movement organizations have been at the forefront of LAPD reform for decades and should be meaningfully consulted—through a mayoral meeting—to determine the next LAPD Chief. Their close nexus to key issues the LAPD chief will undoubtedly be forced to manage—including racial profiling, police violence, and community safety—makes them apt for developing effective long-term solutions that not only redress harms done but also chart a path toward true safety for all Angelenos.

There is a need for systemic change in the LAPD. The harm and disparities experienced by BIPOC communities under past LAPD chiefs are deeply rooted in issues that require urgent attention and reform. It is essential for the next police chief to prioritize accountability and equitable policing practices to begin addressing these historical injustices. By acknowledging and rectifying these disparities, Los Angeles can move towards a more just and inclusive future for all its residents.

Say WHAT??!! – SCYEA!! CoCo's Transformative Youth Program

South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (SCYEA, pronounced Say Yeah) is a dynamic youth program that aims to empower and uplift young individuals in the South Central region. This program provides a platform for youth to develop leadership skills, engage in community service, and advocate for positive change. The primary goal of SCYEA is to equip young people with the necessary tools and resources to become active participants in their communities. By fostering a sense of empowerment and agency, SCYEA helps youth realize their potential and make a meaningful impact on the issues that matter to them.

This year, these youth activist are continuing to push the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to *increase* funding towards community-based safety programs and *away* from school police. SCYEA youth organized to pass a *Community-Based Safety Analysis and Expansion* resolution that called for a landscape analysis of community based safety work across the district, city and county. It further called for addressing internal barriers to implementation and the development of a comprehensive report on ways to strengthen community based safety approaches and resources as a primary



CoCo's Monthly distributes food at our monthly Wellness Wednesdays

means of cultivating positive school climates and keeping school communities safe by May 2024.

Additionally, this year marks the 10 year anniversary of the Student Equity Needs Index (SENI). Accordingly, SCYEA youth will be organizing to pass policy that ensures LAUSD not only *protects*, but *further increases* its investment in SENI beyond the \$700 million that youth have already secured. With this increased funding, highest and high need schools in communities like South Central will have expanded access to critical supports including psychiatric social workers, intervention coordinators, attendance counselors, and other vital resources. This policy win will help address the achievement gap and historic divestment in schools that has led to under-resourced and constrained schools which perpetuate inequity for Black and Brown students.

By investing in our youth, SCYEA aims to create a brighter future for the South Central and beyond. SCYEA continues to be a transformative CoCo program that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to become leaders who engage in community service, and advocate for positive change.

Views from the Corner of 81st & Vermont

BY ALBERTO RETANA
PRESIDENT & CEO
Community Coalition



Community Coalition's youth activists, adult organizers and staff came into the new year with a continued resolve to change the conditions of our community for the better. **Our students and families have been part of a historic lawsuit in California addressing learning recovery, which was settled in February.** In what has been called one of the largest education equity-related settlements in U.S. history, California has agreed to **dedicate at least \$2 billion** to help students catch up from COVID-19-related learning loss.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems worldwide. However, it is crucial to recognize that the impact of learning loss was not evenly distributed. Black and Brown students, who have historically faced systemic inequities, were disproportionately affected by this crisis.

Generations of discriminatory policies and practices have created educational inequities that persist today. These disparities are a result of underfunded schools with inadequate resources, including technology, textbooks, and extracurricular activities. The sudden shift to remote learning

during the pandemic further highlighted the digital divide, leaving many of our students without reliable internet access or suitable devices. This lack of resources widened the learning gap, making it crucial to address these disparities to mitigate the impact of learning loss.

Black and Brown students are more likely to come from low-income households. The pandemic made those socioeconomic disparities worse because our kids couldn't access tutoring, enrichment programs, or even a quiet study environment—which took its toll on their mental health and well-being.

The \$2B is deserved, needed and necessary. But to effectively address the impact of learning loss on Black and Brown students, educators must also adopt culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities, creating an inclusive learning environment.

It is our collective responsibility to continue to advocate for equity in education and empower Black and Brown students to thrive academically and beyond. Much respect and love goes out to our courageous students and families involved in the lawsuit. They recognized the impact of learning loss on our community and fought for essential funds to create equitable educational opportunities for all of our kids. By addressing these inequities, we can begin to bridge the learning gap left in the wake of the pandemic and ensure that our students have a chance to succeed.

In Solidarity,
Alberto

This Is How CoCo Practices Self-Care



Community organizers play a vital role in driving positive change and fostering social cohesion. They are deeply invested, often dealing with sensitive issues and supporting individuals facing challenging circumstances. Constant exposure to emotional stressors, such as witnessing injustice or hearing distressing stories, can lead to emotional exhaustion. This emotional toll can accumulate over time, contributing to burnout. Yoga builds and strengthens our resilience, compassion and mental space.

And in an effort to provide self-care experiences and team-building time together, CoCo recently engaged in a collective yoga session and sound bath at Tree Yoga