Community Action

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Executive Director Advocates for Stricter Rail Policies

Toxic Tour with Rep. Adam Schiff

Showing Rep. Adam Schiff the face of pollution

Welcoming Our New Summer Ambassadors

Building our Strength Through Education
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By Ana Gonzalez, Executive Director CCAEJ

As we bid farewell to an eventful quarter, we at the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) find ourselves overwhelmed with gratitude. Over the past few months, our dedicated team has been tirelessly working towards mobilizing community action teams in Rialto, Fontana, Bloomington, and Colton. We are humbled to share that we successfully activated over 500 individuals who enthusiastically participated in raising their voices and working towards improving their communities. Let's take a moment to reflect on the incredible achievements and milestones we reached together.

Empowering Communities:

At CCAEJ, our mission is to empower communities by providing them with the resources, support, and guidance needed to address environmental and social justice issues. Through our community action teams and ambassador program, we aim to cultivate a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among residents, fostering a sustainable future for all.

Mobilizing the Voices:

Throughout the quarter, our team worked diligently to mobilize individuals in Rialto, Fontana, Bloomington, and Colton. We organized community meetings, conducted workshops, educated folks about what referendums are and how to take power back when elected officials vote against the wishes of the community, and actively engaged with residents to raise awareness about the challenges faced by their neighborhoods. By fostering a sense of unity and purpose, we encouraged individuals to join our community action teams.

A Force to be Reckoned With:

The response from the community was overwhelming, and we are proud to announce the activation of over 500 individuals who stepped up to be the change they wished to see. These passionate individuals dedicated their time and energy to actively participate in community initiatives, further solidifying the impact CCAEJ has on the lives of local residents.

Together, we tackled a wide range of issues, including air pollution, protection of green spaces, access to clean water, affordable housing, and transportation. By organizing rallies, workshops, community events advocating for policy changes, and working closely with local authorities, we made significant strides towards a healthier and more equitable future.

Celebrating Milestones:

As we reflect on the achievements of this quarter, it is important to acknowledge the milestones we reached together. Through CCAEJ’s efforts and the unwavering commitment of our community action teams, we successfully influenced policy changes that will benefit our neighborhoods for years to come. By raising our voices collectively, we were able to secure increased funding for environmental justice initiatives, improve public transportation options, and advocate for affordable housing policies.

Looking Ahead:

As we enter a new quarter, CCAEJ remains steadfast in our commitment to empowering communities and driving positive change. We are determined to expand our reach, engaging even more individuals in our mission to create a sustainable and just future. We invite residents from neighboring communities to join us, as together, we can amplify our impact and make a difference on a larger scale.

Conclusion:

In wrapping up an extraordinary quarter, we express our deepest gratitude to the 500 individuals who joined our community action teams and became advocates for change. Your unwavering dedication and passionate voices have made a tangible difference in our communities. Moving forward, CCAEJ remains committed to empowering residents, fostering unity, and creating a brighter future for all. Together, we can continue making remarkable strides towards environmental and social justice.
By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator CCAEJ

In July 2023, Ana Gonzalez from CCAEJ embarked on a journey to the nation’s capital, Washington DC. The purpose? To meet with key stakeholders and urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to expedite the completion of the locomotive portion of the Phase 3 Rule by the end of October 2023.

Our team was determined, to represent not only the residents of the Inland Empire but also countless communities across the country grappling with the detrimental impacts of rail yard pollution. With the EPA’s Phase 3 Rule, we have an opportunity to make a significant difference in addressing this pressing issue.

The EPA has the capacity to move faster on the locomotive piece of the Phase 3 Rule compared to the truck portion. This distinction allowed us to emphasize the importance of timely action.

We firmly believe that this separation in the rule making process allows for more focused attention on the unique challenges posed by locomotives. By completing this section promptly, we can begin implementing necessary measures to mitigate the pollution emanating from rail yards across the nation.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for our plea to the EPA is the real urgency surrounding the public health crisis linked to rail yard pollution. The witnesses who accompanied us on this journey, Ivette Torres, Carl Rosen, and Ian Jefferies, provided powerful testimonies that underscored the urgency of our cause. Rail yard pollution is not an abstract issue; it affects the lives and health of real people. Ivette Torres, a resident of the Inland Empire, shared her personal experiences of living in close proximity to a rail yard and the health challenges her family faces as a result. Carl Rosen, a dedicated advocate, discussed the widespread implications of rail yard pollution on communities nationwide. Ian Jefferies, representing the Association of American Railroads, acknowledged the need for industry collaboration to find effective solutions.

What’s Next?

Our trip to Washington D.C. was just the beginning. We have made our case, and now we must continue to press for action. CCAEJ remains committed to working with partners, advocating for policy changes, and raising awareness to address the public health crisis caused by rail yard pollution.
By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator CCAEJ

In a resounding display of environmental advocacy, our dedicated community from the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) joined forces with the Regenerate Coalition for a momentous event—the scorching Hot Day of Action—in Sacramento. This event served as a platform for us to engage with legislators and passionately advocate for change, shedding light on the tangible consequences of toxic gas plants that were under scrutiny at the State Water Resources Board’s public hearing.

Amidst the blistering heat of our advocacy efforts, we came face-to-face with the decision makers, raising our voices and presenting compelling testimonies that underscored the real-life impacts of three noxious gas plants. These plants, previously on the brink of closure by the end of this year, received an unexpected lifeline through a 5-0 board decision. This decision effectively grants a three-year extension to the Ormond Beach, Huntington Beach, and AES Alamitos gas plants—an outcome that comes at an enormous cost.

The Hot Day of Action garnered remarkable support from influential figures, including representatives such as Henry Stern, Asm. Luz Rivas, Asm. Monique Limón, and Senator Josh Becker. Moreover, organizations like CAUSE, Sierra Club, CBE California, and, of course, CCAEJ, lent their collective voice to our cause. This powerful convergence of voices signifies a determination to speak truth to power, igniting a drive to bring about meaningful change.

As the embers of the Hot Day of Action continue to glow in our hearts, we remain steadfast in our mission. We will persist in our endeavors to hold decision-makers accountable, to advocate for the well-being of our communities, and to propel California towards a future defined by clean air, equity, and justice. Together, we have proven that when communities unite, they have the power to reshape the course of their environment and their future.
Toxic Tour with Rep. Adam Schiff
Showing Rep. Adam Schiff the face of pollution
By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator  CCAEJ

Gratitude resounds as we extend our appreciation to Representative Adam Schiff for gracing us with his presence here in the heart of the Inland Empire. It was an honor to host him on a revealing journey, the Toxic Tour, which peeled back the layers to expose the daily realities faced by our community members.

As we embarked on this eye-opening tour, we sought to impart a profound understanding of the collective challenges borne by the Inland Empire's residents. The logistics industry, while integral to our economy, has cast a shadow that extends beyond its operations. With Representative Schiff by our side, we ventured into the heart of these cumulative impacts, unearthing a narrative that often goes untold.

The Toxic Tour served as a window into the lives of those who call the Inland Empire home. It wasn't merely a sight-seeing endeavor, but rather an immersive experience aimed at fostering empathy and awareness. We showcased the intricate web of challenges that result from the logistics industry's presence, challenges that our community confronts day in and day out.

Representative Schiff's participation underscored his dedication to comprehending the intricate nuances of our region's struggles. By walking in the shoes of our community members, he gained firsthand insight into the profound ways in which industries can shape lives. His presence demonstrated a commitment to dialogue, understanding, and change—a commitment that resonates deeply with our mission.

As we extend our gratitude to Representative Schiff for his willingness to engage with our community, we look forward to the ripple effects of this experience. Our hope is that this Toxic Tour serves as a catalyst for informed conversations and informed actions. Through collaboration and shared understanding, we have the power to address the cumulative impacts of the logistics industry and pave the way for a future that prioritizes the well-being of our community.

Thank you, Representative Schiff, for joining us on this journey. Your presence has illuminated a path forward, one where the challenges we face are met with empathy, determination, and the unwavering belief in the positive change we can bring to the Inland Empire.
By Melissa May, Organizing Coordinator CCAEJ

In the heart of Southern California, a transformative movement is taking shape. The vibrant communities of Bloomington, Rialto, San Bernardino, and Riverside are on a journey towards understanding and advocating for environmental justice. This inspiring story of unity and education began with a deep dive into the science and history behind environmental justice, facilitated by the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ).

CCAEJ provided an enlightening introduction to the historical context of environmental justice, focusing on the 17 Principles of EJ. These principles, born out of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, have been instrumental in shaping the grassroots movement for environmental justice. Principle #3, emphasizing the right to ethical, balanced, and responsible uses of land and renewable resources, stands out in shaping a sustainable future for all living beings.

The community members were taken on a journey back in time to understand the genesis of the environmental justice movement. They learned about pivotal events like the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968, where African Americans came together on a national scale to combat environmental injustices. This strike, which was championed by the revered activist Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., marked a significant milestone in the fight for fair pay, better working conditions, and environmental justice.
Through this educational journey, the community members also grasped the grim reality of the health impacts associated with living in polluted environments. They explored how exposure to water, air, and land pollution leads to higher rates of diseases such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, autism, and even contributes to higher premature birth rates.

The learning experience culminated in a hands-on demonstration with an enviroscape model. This visually compelling model depicted various landscapes and showed how pollutants moved from one area to another, illustrating the devastating effects of environmental pollution on communities, particularly those in poverty-stricken areas.

This enlightening journey has sparked a transformation among the community members. They are now understanding the crucial difference between active and passive involvement in their communities. They are stepping up as Ambassadors, ready to educate and advocate for the health and well-being of their friends and families.

The awakening of these communities serves as an inspiration, a testament to the impact of education and unity in driving positive change. The journey towards environmental justice is not a solitary one, but a collective effort that requires every individual's commitment. As these communities continue to grow and learn, they are sowing the seeds of a healthier, and more equitable future.
The City of Fontana has long been the favorite target of developers to build massive warehouses. However, the open land which once existed in abundance has dwindled to the point the City is now facing a housing crisis. To try and mitigate this problem of their own creation the Fontana City Council has decided to disrupt and forever alter the open space land by Southridge Park. The proposed plan would put in a mid-high income housing that many residents of Fontana could not afford to live in. To do this the developer has to get rid of a rock quarry and block access to well used hiking trails.

On August 1st the Fontana City Council voted to approve the project, ignoring the calls from the community asking for them to not approve this project. Southridge Community members, who were once promised a dog park at the entrance of the hiking trails, are now rightfully upset. South Fontana Concerned Coalitions Founder Elizabeth (Liz) Sena decided enough was enough and filed a referendum on August 4th. The referendum would send the decision of this specific project to the voters in 2024.

To pass a referendum you need 20% of the registered voters in the city to sign the petition within 30 days of the City acknowledging receipt of the referendum letter. In this case the signature goal was a staggering 12,500 to approve the referendum. The city of Fontana has the highest percentage of registered voters in San Bernardino County which makes it difficult with the current rules to challenge the decisions of the council.
The difficulty in achieving this goal was great but community members: Liz Sena (SFCC, CCAEJ), Jen Cardenas (Community Resident), and Bobbi Jo Chaverria (Community Resident, Fontana Forward) organized the South Fontana Community to sign petitions, to have their neighbors and friends sign petitions. Each weekend and week day evening they were at the Southridge Park collecting signatures. Community members came together regardless of their backgrounds, ideologies, and nationality to fight against the actions of the Fontana City Council. Support to save the open spaces came from all over San Bernardino County in an awe inspiring show of unity.

After 30 days of collecting signatures the community came up short on their goal. However the bonds which were built will last far beyond this referendum as a whole community was awakened to the actions of the Fontana City Council and a theme of “they/city council members” have got to go. Fontana City Mayor Aquanetta Warren sarcastically thanked the community members who did not sign the petitions in what can only be described as harsh and mocking the hard work of the community members.

But the community was not willing to give up the fight! CCAEJ along with community members have filed a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lawsuit against the City of Fontana to block the construction of the project. The fight continues to protect our open spaces/hiking trails in Fontana!!
By Ana Gonzalez and Luis Carretero

As we wrap up quarter 3, we are thrilled to share the tremendous news that our executive director, Ana Gonzalez, has been appointed to serve on the California Transportation Commission’s Interagency Equity Advisory Committee. This appointment is a significant milestone for both CCAEJ and the Inland Valley Region of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

The Interagency Equity Advisory Committee plays a crucial role in promoting transportation equity and ensuring that the needs of disadvantaged communities are given the attention they deserve. With Ana representing our organization and the Inland Valley Region, we can now actively contribute to the decision-making process and advocate for the transportation needs of our community.

The committee’s official swearing-in ceremony took place on September 26, in the City of Stockton. During this event, representatives from various transportation agencies, including CalSTA, Caltrans, and the Department of Transportation, provided updates on recent legislation and the progress made. It was heartening to hear that many of these updates emphasized community involvement and the requirement for regional agencies to provide transparent reports and informational documents to the public.

With Ana’s appointment, we now have a strong voice and representation from the Inland Valley. This means that our region will no longer be overlooked when it comes to improving public transit opportunities and securing necessary funding for road infrastructure. It is a grateful moment for us, as we recognize the importance of having a BIPOC voice at the table to advocate for transportation equity and uplift disadvantaged communities. We are confident that Ana will bring her expertise, passion, and dedication to this role, and we look forward to the positive impact she will have on the transportation landscape of our region.
By Ana Gonzalez, Executive Director CCAEJ

The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) has its origins deeply rooted in the fight to protect water quality in the Glen Avon community. Stemming from the infamous Stringfellow Acid Pits, CCAEJ has grown into a formidable environmental justice base building organization.

The Stringfellow Acid Pits, located in Riverside County, California, were once a hazardous waste disposal site that posed a significant threat to the local water supply. For years, toxic chemicals and pollutants were irresponsibly dumped into the pits, contaminating the groundwater and endangering the health and well-being of the surrounding communities.

Recognizing the urgent need for action, a group of concerned moms, community activists, and environmental advocates came together to form Concerned Neighbors in Action which in 1994 transitioned into CCAEJ. The mission was clear: to protect the water quality and advocate for environmental justice in the Glen Avon community.

Through relentless advocacy, CCAEJ successfully raised awareness about the dangers posed by the Stringfellow Acid Pits. They fought for proper cleanup and remediation of the site, holding both the responsible parties and government agencies accountable for their actions. Their efforts led to the eventual closure and cleanup of the pits, ensuring the protection of the local water supply.

However, CCAEJ did not stop there. They recognized that the fight for environmental justice extended far beyond the Stringfellow Acid Pits. They understood that marginalized communities often bear the brunt of environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. This realization propelled CCAEJ to broaden its scope and become a base building organization dedicated to addressing environmental injustices in all their forms.
Today, CCAEJ continues to empower and educate communities on environmental issues, advocating for policies that prioritize the health and well-being of all residents. They work tirelessly to ensure that the voices of marginalized communities are heard and that their concerns are taken seriously.

In line with their commitment to building resilience in the face of climate change, CCAEJ was invited at the end of September to a Water and Climate Resiliency Forum hosted by San Bernardo-Municipal Water District's board director Susan Longville. This forum aimed to bring together experts, community leaders, and residents to discuss strategies for adapting to the challenges posed by a changing climate. CCAEJ had the opportunity to share our history and what we are doing to continue the EJ movement.

The Water and Climate Resiliency Forum provided a platform for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and action. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about best practices in water management, explore innovative solutions for climate resiliency, and engage in meaningful discussions about the intersection of water quality and environmental justice.

CCAEJ’s roots may lie in the fight to protect water and air quality, but their branches have grown to encompass a wide range of environmental justice issues. With the opportunity to share our roots and where we are now at the Water and Climate Resiliency Forum, we are returning to their origins while embracing the future. By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives, CCAEJ aims to build a more resilient and just community for all.

Join CCAEJ and be a part of the movement towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

Together, we can make a difference!
In a world filled with busy schedules and bustling people, the power of a strong conversation over some Cafe and Conchas can be very transformative. With CCAEJ the Inland Empire is where this concept resides. Known as “Cafecito with the Executive Director” it was an idea brought to us by our very own Ana Gonzalez, Executive Director of The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice with the goal of brewing up not just Coffee but also community empowerment, civil engagement, environmental justice, and social change.

Through every sip of coffee and bite of concha sat an opportunity to engage, connect, and collaborate with. Our executive director understood that having these conversations about pressing community issues was one of the most effective ways in gaining valuable insight for the community on learning about issues, environmental conversation, and how to participate in making a difference. It’s through these more intimate conversations that growth can flourish. Quite frankly I am proud to have been able to not only witness but also be responsible for assisting in the creation of each and every episode. In the end Cafecito with the ED was more than just a project, it was a movement one that inspires not only me but others as well and if you were ever interested in diving more into depth about community issues with community and our Executive Director then I suggest you follow CCAEj on Instagram and stay tuned for our next episode.
By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator  CCAEJ

The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) extends its deepest gratitude to California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), and all the generous sponsors who made the LEAD (Latino Education and Advocacy Days) Summit an extraordinary event. This quarter, the summit emerged as a beacon of influence, gathering influential figures such as California Majority Leader Emeritus Eloise Gomez Reyes and California Representative James Ramos.

A standout moment was the privilege of hearing from the iconic Dolores Huerta, who served as the summit’s honorary chair. Alongside her, esteemed actor Emilio Rivera, also an honorary chair, added further depth to the event. Their impactful performances and personal narratives have kindled inspiration in countless individuals.

The summit’s two keynote speakers, along with a lineup of thought-provoking panels and transformative presentations, left an indelible mark on attendees. The discussions centered around ending violence in our schools and communities, prompting profound contemplation.

Musical performances woven throughout the event further underscored the urgency of this narrative. Each note struck resonated with the collective mission to foster safer environments for our children and communities.
The atmosphere surrounding the summit, from the engaging exhibitors to the committed sponsors, exuded an electric energy that was truly palpable. The conference was not merely an event; it was a dynamic convergence of passionate advocates dedicated to a common cause.

CCAEJ once again extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who played a role in bringing this conference to fruition. It is the shared stories and lived experiences of individuals that continue to fuel the momentum of this critical movement.

In commemorating the LEAD Summit 2023, we are reminded that it is through collective effort, unwavering commitment, and the power of storytelling that we pave the way towards a brighter, safer future for all.
In the heart of Southern California, a powerful alliance is reshaping the fabric of community life. The Ontario Future Alliance, an inspiring coalition of nonprofits, civil rights organizations, and community partners, is creating waves of transformation that are being felt far and wide. Through their aspirational vision and impactful initiatives, they are driving growth, fostering unity, and inspiring change.
In June 2023, the Ontario Future Alliance Co-hosted the Inaugural Rising Voices Community Engagement Conference. This visionary event provided a platform for individuals, communities, and organizations to engage in meaningful dialogues, share innovative ideas, and collaborate on solutions for pressing societal challenges.
The strength of the Ontario Future Alliance lies in its diverse composition. It brings together power-houses such as the NAACP, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ), M.A.L.O. – a pillar in the Tongan community, Rochelle's Open Arms, Art and Science Cultural Center (ASCC), Pitzer College's Community Engagement Center (CEC), and The Poor People's Campaign. This dynamic coalition embodies the spirit of collaboration, diversity, and unity, each contributing their unique strengths and perspectives to amplify the impact of their collective efforts.

Beyond hosting conferences, the Alliance is actively engaged in enhancing the health and well-being of the community. They host health fairs, providing essential health screenings and information to the public. They organize food pantries and school supply giveaways, ensuring no child goes hungry or lacks the necessary tools for learning.

Environmental justice is at the heart of the Ontario Future Alliance. They advocate passionately for clean air, fighting against environmental disparities and championing sustainable practices. Their educational campaigns raise awareness about the critical importance of a healthy environment, inspiring citizens to become advocates for where they live and work.
Recognizing the transformative power of art, the Alliance has created art programs specifically tailored for Veterans dealing with PTSD. These programs provide a safe space for Veterans to express their experiences, process their emotions, and embark on a healing journey.

The Ontario Future Alliance is a beacon of hope, a testament to what can be achieved when diverse organizations come together with a shared vision. Their work is a vivid illustration of the power of community engagement, demonstrating how collective action can drive significant change. As we look towards the future, the Ontario Future Alliance stands as a shining example of the potential that lies within our communities, inspiring us all to strive for a more inclusive, and equitable tomorrow.

Education and civic engagement form the backbone of the Alliance’s community work. They illuminate current issues, providing the public with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions. Through their efforts, they encourage active participation in civic life, fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment among community members.
The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) is a progressive equity-based organization that embodies hope, unites people y pueblos, to create intersectional solutions that transform communities “to bring people together to improve their social and natural environment.” Utilizing the lens of environmental health, we achieve regenerative change by developing resilient BIPOC intergenerational leadership, through the power of community base-building. Through strategic campaigns, we cultivate inclusive self-sustaining neighborhoods, where everyone can live, work, play, and thrive.

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