

Community Action

Issue 7, Summer 2024

Regional Rail Convening

Reimagining the
Future of Regional Rail

Mayday: Community Action

What Community Power
Really Looks Like

CCAIEJ's Journey to the Grantmakers for Effective Organizations Conference 2024

Connecting Global Communities and Redefining Philanthropy for Social Justice



03

From the Executive Director

Reflecting on a Remarkable Quarter
Page 3

10

Rialto GPU

Brown Act Violation and Deception
Page 10

14

GEO Conference 2024

CCAIEJ's Journey to the GEO Conference 2024
Page 14

04

Regional Rail Convening

Reimagining the Future of Regional Rail
Page 4

11

American Lung Association Grades IE Air an "F"

Addressing Transportation Pollution
Page 11

18

Community Partners Highlights:

Community Orgs Take on the March JPA
Page 18

08

Rising Voices 2024

Making Community Voices Heard
Page 8

12

Mayday

What community power really looks like
Page 12

This magazine uses the following framework as a core pillar of understanding:

Vital Conditions for Well-Being and Justice



From the Executive Director



Ana Gonzalez
Executive Director

The Center For Community Action
and Environmental Justice

Greetings, CCAEJ Community,

As Executive Director of the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ), I am thrilled to share with you the progress and milestones we achieved during a busy and transformative second quarter. Our collective efforts have strengthened our mission to create inter-sectional solutions that transform our communities, ensuring everyone can live, work, play, and thrive.

We kicked off the quarter with our 2nd Annual Rising Voices Conference, where we celebrated a monumental 45 years of advocacy and community empowerment. This event was

particularly special as we honored our founder and previous executive director, Penny Newman, with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Penny's visionary leadership laid the foundation for our ongoing work, and her legacy continues to inspire our journey toward equity and justice.

Our commitment to community base-building was evident as we organized and mobilized over 100 community members across San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Our dedicated staff had the privilege of participating in a retreat in Idyllwild, where we fine-tuned our strategic plan for the remainder of the year and initiated the planning process for our next two-year strategic plan, which will commence in 2025.

We are excited to announce a significant shift in our approach, embracing a transformational theory of change mindset. This new focus on healing, belonging, and systemic changes aims to foster a sense of community and drive impactful, long-lasting transformations. The insights we gained from facing multiple transitions since the pandemic have been invaluable, and with the community's support guiding us, we have elevated our leadership training and activated our policy action teams.

As we move forward, we look with anticipation toward continued policy changes across our region, the state of California, and beyond. Our commitment to developing resilient BIPOC intergenerational leadership and cultivating inclusive, self-sustaining neighborhoods remains unwavering. Together, we are advancing regenerative change and creating a brighter future for all.

Si se puede!

In solidarity,
Executive Director, CCAEJ

The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ) 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.

Regional Rail Convening

Re-imagining the Future of Regional Rail

By Steven Carratero, Media Specialist CCAEJ

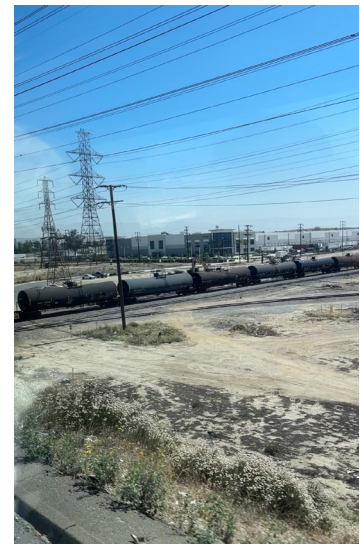
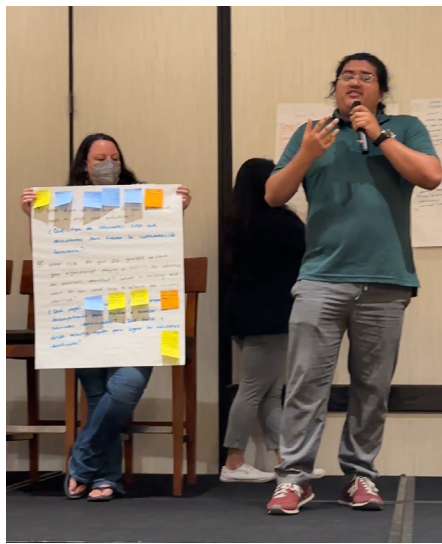
In an inspiring event held from June 21st to 23rd at the Ontario Convention Center and Ontario Double Tree Hotel, visionaries and community leaders from across the nation gathered for The Regional Rail Convening. Hosted by the Moving Forward Network and supported by partners like CCAEJ, UE Union, People's Collective For Environmental Justice, EYCEJ, Earth Justice, NRDC, USC's Environmental Health Center, and Harambee House, the conference highlighted both the problems and potential solutions within the current rail system. This gathering emphasized the need to transition away from fossil fuels, hold railroads accountable for pollution, and empower local leaders to develop tailored plans for their regions.

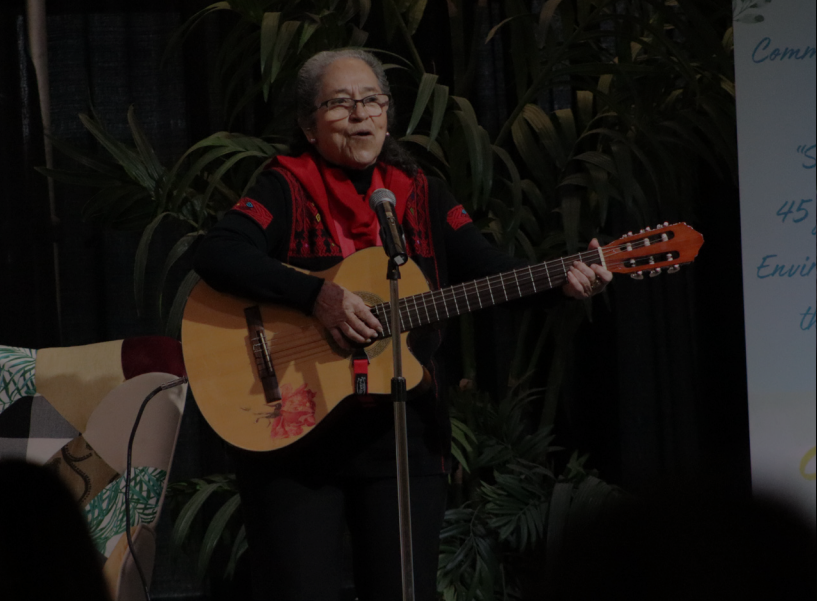


The event featured diverse topics, including the history of rail, California Railyard Indirect Source Rule (ISR), rail electrification, and a profound Toxic Tour of the Inland Region railyard. Panels, synergy, and an impactful Toxic Tour underscored the urgent need for change. Many attendees, including residents living near railways, experienced the direct impact of pollution. Micah Rosa, a participant, shared, "The toxic tour was so informative. I feel like my brain is jam-packed with facts now!" This sentiment was echoed by many, highlighting the educational impact of the event and fostering a strong sense of community and understanding regarding public transit issues.

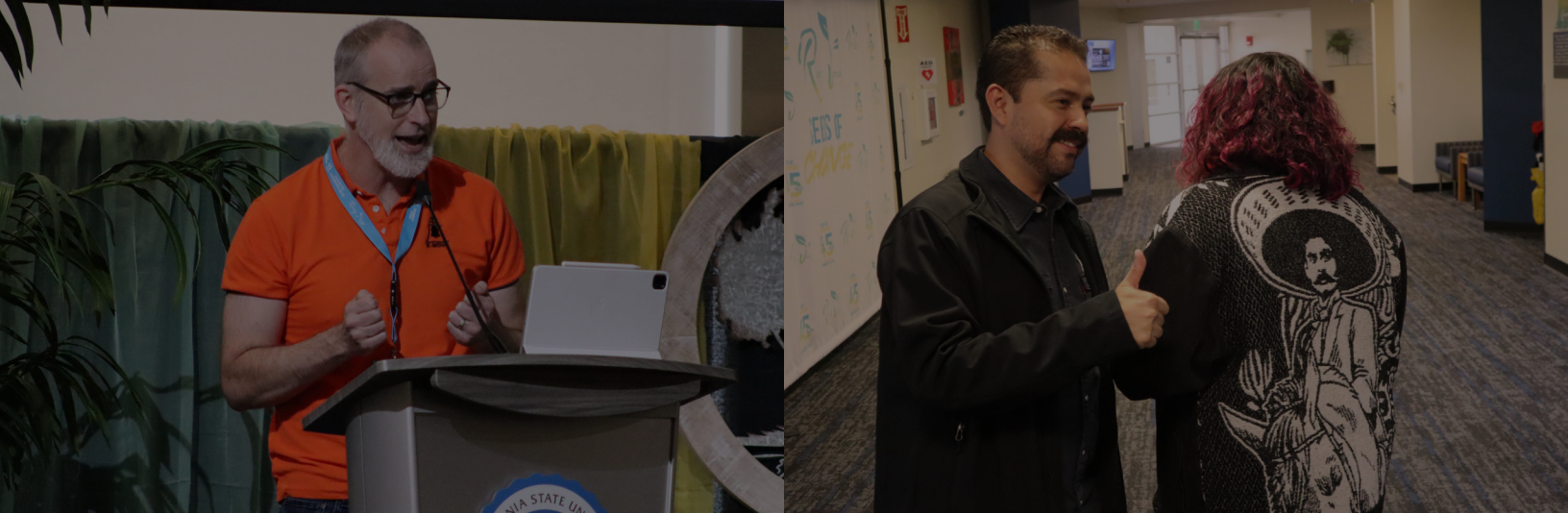
A key short-term outcome from the convening is mobilizing community members for the South Coast Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) ISR vote on August 2nd, seen as a vital step in addressing railyard pollution. Long-term goals include developing a fully electric rail system powered by renewable energy. The event also emphasized creating easily digestible educational materials to increase awareness and foster further mobilization for sustainable rail development that prioritizes environmental and public health. This collaboration offered a unique opportunity for participants to empathize, learn from each other's experiences, and hold meaningful conversations about the future of their communities.

Despite significant challenges from major railroad companies and political opposition, the determination of the organizations and community members involved fuels the ongoing fight for better rail practices. Emerging technologies in rail electrification and green solutions offer viable options for reducing pollution and transitioning towards sustainability. The work done at The Regional Rail Convening sets a strong foundation for a cleaner, greener future, showcasing the power of collective action and community-driven change. The synergy and collaboration seen at this year's conference have laid the groundwork for transformative solutions in regional rail.





Rising Voices 2024





Rising Voices 2024

Making Community Voices Heard

By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator CCAEJ

The recent Rising Voices Conference, hosted by the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ), was a testament to the power of community and the urgent need for collective action in the realm of environmental justice. Throughout the conference, we delved into a myriad of topics crucial to our community's well-being, including labor rights, immigration, infrastructure, and housing justice.

One of the highlights of the conference was the insightful presentation on air quality by USC experts, shedding light on the pressing environmental challenges faced by our communities. Additionally, panels such as "California versus Big" and our "Region in Crisis" panel sparked vital conversations on current issues.

A huge thank all our panelist and workshop partners, without you none of this would have been possible. It really set the tone for how transformative the conference set out to be.

The conference wasn't just about discussions; it was a vibrant showcase of community talent and resilience. Local vendors, artists, and activists came together to share their work and experiences. The art show, Our Common Foe, featuring pieces from our very





own community members, provided a powerful visual representation of our shared struggles and aspirations.

A particularly touching moment was when Eloise Gomez Reyes presented Penny Newman with the Lifetime Achievement Award from CCAEJ, honoring her 45 years of dedicated activism. CCAEJ also honored three other awardees from the local community for their outstanding service to community. It was a reminder of the long and arduous journey we've undertaken and the incredible individuals who've paved the way for change.

As we celebrated our achievements, we were reminded by Edgar Zapata, great-grandson of Emiliano Zapata, that the fight is far from over. Despite our progress, the landscape of injustice remains, and our voices are needed now more than ever. We must continue to advocate for our rights to thrive and survive in a world that oft en marginalizes our communities.

The Rising Voices Conference was not just a gathering; it was a call to action—a reaffirmation of our commitment to environmental justice and community empowerment. As we reflect on the transformative experiences shared, let us carry forward the spirit of solidarity and resilience, knowing that together, our voices can create lasting change.

Rialto Exposed

Brown Act Violation and Deception



The City Council has been caught committing a serious violation of the Brown Act. This breach of transparency has been brought to light after Councilmember Rafael Trujillo attended a working group meeting and discovered an opportunity for comments on Assembly Bill 1000. Shockingly, an emergency agenda item was added without being listed on the posted agenda for the regular Council meeting on January 9, 2024. This is a blatant violation of the Brown Act, which mandates that all items discussed or transacted at a meeting must be listed on the agenda at least 72 hours beforehand.

What does this mean for the community? It means that you were denied the chance to know, provide input, or participate in a discussion that could significantly impact our city. This lack of transparency and accountability undermines the very foundation of democracy. Despite warnings from active community leaders, including Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes's office, the Council proceeded with their actions. Consequently, the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ) filed a Demand to Cure and Correct Violation of the Brown Act regarding Assembly Bill 1000.

We demand that the City of Rialto takes full responsibility for this violation and implements measures to ensure it never happens again. The Brown Act exists to safeguard the rights of citizens, and we refuse to tolerate any further disregard of it.

Our mission at CCA EJ goes beyond raising awareness; we are actively working to empower individuals to make their voices heard. By bridging the gap between young voters and the electoral process, we pave the way for a more equitable and sustainable future. To our youth: your participation matters. Your vote is not just a mark on a ballot; it's a stand for environmental justice, equity, and a brighter tomorrow. As we continue toward a healthier, fairer community, let us amplify our voices through voting. Together, we can create an inclusive democracy that serves the needs of all.



American Lung Association Grades IE Air an “F”

Addressing Transportation Pollution and Upcoming Environmental Decisions to Protect Our Communities



2024

As residents of the San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, we know firsthand the severe air quality issues plaguing our region. Despite California’s strong clean-air laws, the inland valley, including our counties, remains the smoggiest area in the nation, consistently earning F grades in American Lung Association reports.

While Southern California has reduced air pollution since the early 2000s, transportation, particularly from heavy-duty trucks and logistics industries, continues to be the largest source of smog. Our community experiences nearly six months of unhealthy smog days annually due to the dense concentration of warehouses and trucks.

California counties have the highest ozone pollution in the U.S.

Average number of days that exceeded federal ozone standards between 2020-2022

1	San Bernardino County <i>Calif.</i>	175.2
2	Riverside County <i>Calif.</i>	128

Upcoming decisions on environmental regulations in 2024, federal approval for phasing out fossil fuel-burning trucks and trains, and a ballot measure on oil drilling near homes are crucial for our air quality. We are especially concerned for the 3 million children in Southern California who suffer from the effects of polluted air, particularly during the high-smog summer months.

At CCAEJ, we are dedicated to fighting for cleaner air and healthier communities, protecting our families from the persistent threat of air pollution.



Mayday: Community Action

What community power really looks like



By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator CCAEJ

The May Day mobilization in Fontana was a profoundly impactful, community-led event that brought together over 300 community members to bolster the social justice movement.

Highlighting critical issues such as Environmental Justice, Immigration Justice, Housing Justice, Labor Justice, and Warehouse Worker Rights, the event featured powerful stories from various social justice groups as participants marched through the city.

A notable moment was a speech by Liz Sena, a local advocate, who spoke passionately about environmental justice in Fontana. The march resonated strongly within the community, receiving significant media coverage and leaving participants inspired to continue their advocacy with renewed passion.

The community's response was overwhelmingly positive, with many feeling motivated by the event's messages. As a follow-up, organizers remain vigilant in monitoring Fontana, a recognized hotspot for injustice, and continue their efforts to free The Justice 8. This mobilization has set the stage for ongoing activism and community solidarity in the fight for justice.



LIBERATION & DIGNITY FOR ALL WORKERS

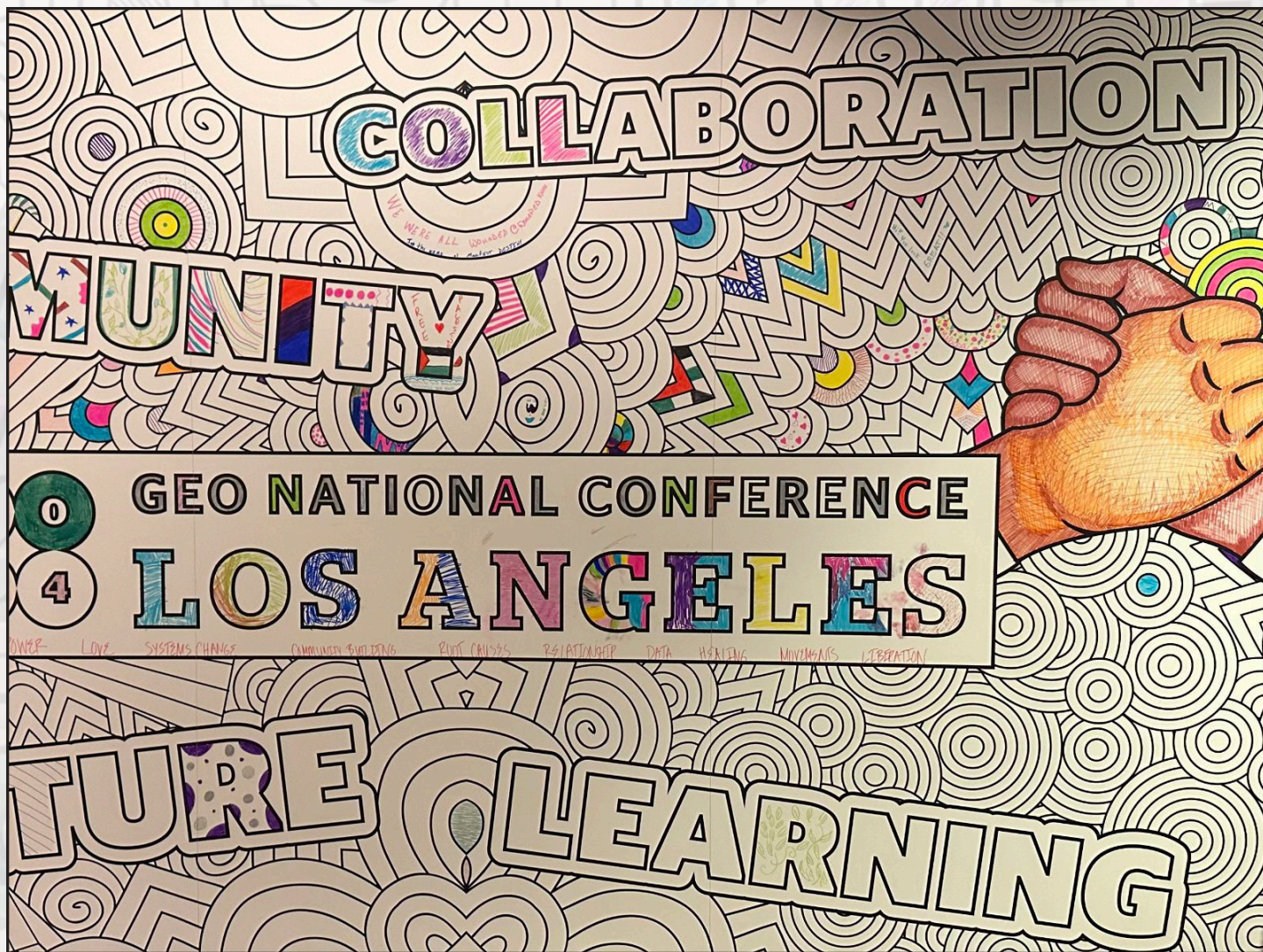
INLAND EMPIRE
MAY+DAY
FONTANA, CA • MAY 1ST, 2024





Grantmakers for Effective Organizations Conference 2024

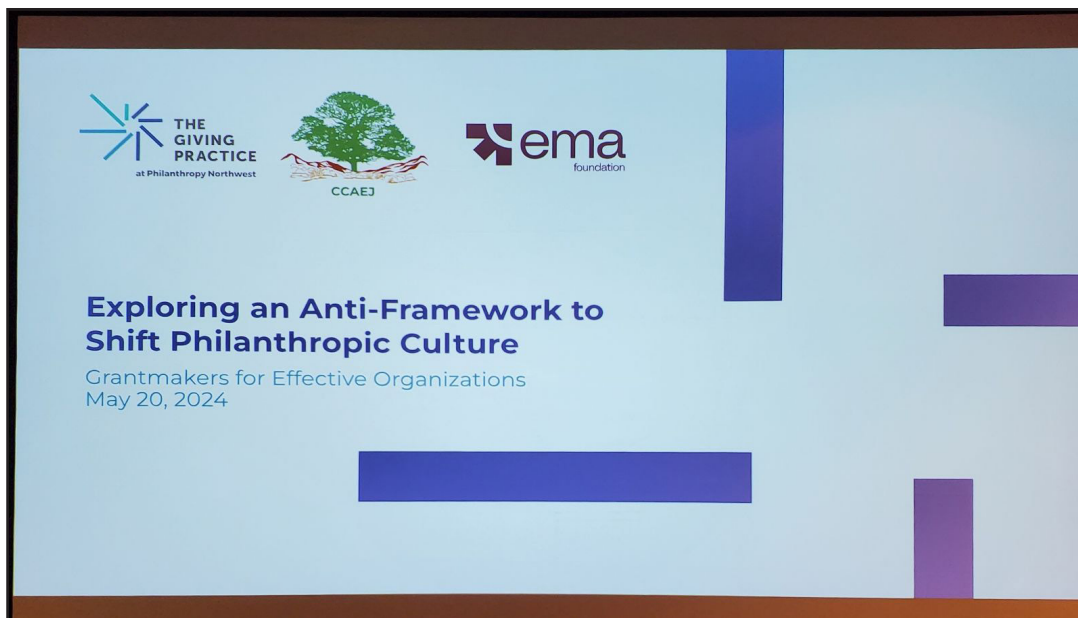
CCAIEJ's Journey to the GEO Conference 2024



By Oscar Zombrano, Development Consultant CCAIEJ

Last December, the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAIEJ) had the incredible opportunity to attend the “Shift the Power” Conference in Bogota, Colombia, thanks to an invitation from Mary Fifield of the Cotyledon Fund. As a community partner and grant recipient of the Cotyledon Fund, CCAIEJ was excited to connect with global Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and funders dedicated to advancing social justice and global equity.

During the conference, we engaged in enriching discussions about how philanthropy can become a more effective partner for CBOs by adopting “trust-based” principles. Inspired by these conversations, Mary invited CCAIEJ to co-present with other nonprofit and funder leaders at the GEO Conference 2024 in Downtown Los Angeles, California.



Our Workshop: Exploring an Anti-Framework to Shift Philanthropic Culture

CCAIEJ co-led a dynamic workshop titled “Exploring an Anti-Framework to Shift Philanthropic Culture.” This session was designed to challenge the traditional modus operandi of philanthropy and introduce a relational culture inspired by our partners in the Global South. Rather than offering a polished tool or a set of steps, we focused on hands-on practice and lively conversations.

Our anti-framework, based on research from the Global Fund for Community Foundations, encourages philanthropy and community partners to introspect through three lenses: assets (both financial and non-financial), capacities (strengths and gaps for all stakeholders), and trust (areas where greater trust can enhance collaboration). Attendees heard from grassroots philanthropy and community partners and applied this lens to their own contexts through interactive breakout groups.

Highlights from the GEO Conference

Opening Plenary: Visions and Voices for Change

The conference kicked off with a powerful plenary session. Kavon Ward delivered an impassioned reading of her poem on reparations, setting a poignant tone for the event. Bob Ross then addressed the systemic issues embedded in the term “for all” as used in the Declaration of Independence, emphasizing the importance of trust-based philanthropy. His metaphor of the Sankofa bird, which flies forward while looking backward, reminded us of the sacrifices made by previous generations for the opportunities we have today.

Plenary Luncheon: Finding Joy in Transformation - A Conversation with ALOK

The luncheon featured an unforgettable conversation with ALOK, a gender-noncon-



forming writer and performer. ALOK's insights were both profound and entertaining. They highlighted the power of joy, humor, and authenticity in social transformation. Key takeaways included:

Humor can achieve what sadness cannot.

Authentic living and fear coexist, but love should drive us.

Philanthropy must address causes, not just symptoms.

True gifts are soul-driven exchanges, not obligations.

Reflections and Future Directions

The GEO Conference 2024 was a transformative experience for CCAEJ. Our participation reinforced the importance of advocating for trust-based philanthropy, especially in the face of economic hardships and financial uncertainties caused by recent organizational challenges. We are immensely grateful to Mary and the Cotyledon Fund for their unwavering support and investment in our community in the Inland Empire.

This conference underscored the need for more funders to adopt equitable and trust-based practices. As we continue our work, we are committed to fostering a philanthropic culture that truly supports community self-determination and sustainable change.

Thank you to all who made the GEO Conference 2024 an inspiring and impactful event. Together, we can shift the power and build a more just and equitable world.



COMPLETE FUNDING ECOSYSTEM



Community Partners Highlights:

Community Orgs Take on the March JPA



By Jen Larratt Smith, RNOW

It was standing room only at the Moreno Valley Conference and Recreation Center on June 12 as over 500 community members gathered at a public hearing for a local warehouse project proposed to the March Joint Powers Authority (MJPA). The West Campus Upper Plateau proposal included a giant campus of industrial, business park and mixed use space — up to 4.7 million square feet of warehouses — in an area surrounded on three sides by residential neighborhoods. The MJPA Commission listened to over 70 speakers and looked out onto a sea of No More Warehouses signs, as a broad coalition of community opposition spoke out against the project. The coalition, spearheaded by Riverside Neighbors Opposing Warehouses (R-NOW) included CCAEJ, Sierra Club Moreno Valley, Mead Valley and Perris clean air groups, local bicyclists, and local neighborhood organizations like Mission Grove Neighborhood Alliance, Riverside Neighborhood Partnership, and the League of Women Voters.

After several hours of public comment, the MJPA Commission voted 6-1 to take the project off the calendar, tabling it indefinitely. In the Inland Empire, where politicians have routinely ignored community opposition and voted to pass industrial projects, this was a big win and testament to the power of people united in voice and action.





perrisparents_4_cleanair



meadvalleycoalition4_clean_air

By Franco Pacheco, Perris Parents for Clean Air

This is Franco Pacheco from perris parents for clean air. We will soon be changing our name from Perris parents for clean air to Inland Valley Alliance for environmental justice. This group's purpose is to unite members from Perris Parents, Mead valley coalition , and Perris neighbors in action into an umbrella term that represents all of us since we work so closely together. We are about ten members strong now. Although Mead Valley Coalition for Clean Air and Perris Neighbors in Action will continue to be independent groups, Perris Parents for Clean Air will soon be converting the name to Inland Valley Alliance for environmental justice because that's what we are;an alliance of three different groups that are fighting the same fight. I hope that makes sense. As far as quotes "We have seen when the community comes together there can be real change. For far too long the inland empire has been ignored and residents are often kept in the dark about warehouse development right next to their homes up until it's too late. We mobilized because this project directly affects us. We mobilized to put pressure on our representatives to vote down this project. We Mobilized to show we are tired of being taken over by warehouse developments. All of our communities deserve a change. There must be a better solution. We are feeling the effects of their decisions. All of the benefits that past projects have promised have NOT come to fruition. Although this project has been tabled we understand this fight is far from over. Certain elected officials in Perris have gone unchecked for a very long time in the decisions they make for obvious personal gain. We are hopeful to shed light on their dealings and contributions while activating a community that has been long seen as silent. Working and learning from other groups whether it be grassroots like us, or non-profits, we see that there is hope for real change."

By Karla Cervantes, Mead Valley Coalition for Clean Air

This is Karla Cervantes Pacheco of Mead Valley Coalition for Clean Air." Seeing rivnow take action in mobilizing and informing their community members on the developments that would harm them has been inspiring for our coalition and shows us that there is hope for real change. We are learning from as many organizations as possible and we are glad to call them,as well as other organizations, our allies. They have shown up for us and so we show up for them. That's what community is. Over 100 residents came to oppose the Upper Plateau Project. All over Riverside County we have seen industrial projects pushed through quickly and silently,specifically in the City of Perris and Moreno Valley and in rural areas like Mead Valley. It was vital for us to rally members in both of our groups to see that local officials have much power in the JPA's decisions as well as other decisions in our region as a whole. It's obvious that because of the massive community opposition and backlash that this project was tabled. Although it is much better than an approval it is also not a denial. The fight to protect our quality of life and industrialization of our region is ongoing but there is power in numbers and I hope to carry the energy that was in that room,to every room whenever there are harmful projects proposed next to neighborhoods and schools. "

Join Today To Keep The Momentum!



MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM



More Info at www.ccaej.org



Thank You To Our Partners

