



# Community Strategies for Sustainability and Justice



**Celebrates 15 Years of  
Principled Partnerships  
and Action Research**



## WHO WE ARE

The Pacific Institute is an Oakland-based independent nonprofit that works to create sustainable communities and a healthier planet. Founded in 1987, we conduct interdisciplinary research and partner with stakeholders to produce solutions that advance environmental protection, economic development, and social equity—in California, nationally, and internationally.

Our Community Strategies for Sustainability and Justice Program (CSSJ) partners with community-based organizations and coalitions to build community power to create and sustain healthy and thriving neighborhood environments. Since 1995 this program has worked to overcome the common root causes to economic, environmental, and community health challenges in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color through action research that advances innovative, cross-cutting solutions developed by impacted residents.

Our work has strengthened community capacity to address issues ranging from air quality, local tax revenue, and access to open space, to safe drinking water, employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated residents, and sustainable redevelopment. The Community Strategies Program has completed five major and many smaller research projects that have supported significant community environmental health and justice victories, including the closure of one of the Bay Area's top air polluters (Red Star Yeast), the re-routing of diesel trucks out of residential neighborhoods in West Oakland, and the passage of a local measure to increase the share of revenues for public benefit that are collected from businesses in Richmond, including the Chevron refinery.



## WHAT WE BELIEVE

*We believe* that communities have the right to excellent research support and that a participatory research process can support many aspects of community organizing and advocacy campaigns to win healthy neighborhood environments, a vibrant economy, and social justice.

*We believe* that building the power of low-income and communities of color to self-determine the environment they live in is the most effective and sustainable way to create solutions to environmental, economic, and health disparities. For research to contribute to building community power, it must begin with the experiences of the people most affected by an issue, remain accountable to their wisdom and leadership, and build their capacity to carry out research independently.

*We know* from experience that when communities have the necessary tools and support, their community-driven research produces findings with increased accuracy and solutions that are more effective, while simultaneously shifting the political relationships that make change possible.

## CSSJ RESEARCH REPORTS\*

Gearing Up for Action: A Curriculum Guide for Freight Transport Justice

Advancing Community Health through Community Benefits Agreements

Measuring What Matters: Neighborhood Research for Economic and Environmental Health and Justice in Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo *(also available en Español)*

Impacts of Sea-Level Rise Threaten California Coast

Taking a Toll: Pacific Institute and East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy

Richmond's Tax Revenue from Chevron

Paying With Our Health: The Real Cost of Freight Transport in California

Deluged by Diesel: Health Solutions for West County

West Oakland Health Survey Results

Clearing the Air: Reducing Diesel Pollution in West Oakland

Neighborhood Knowledge for Change: West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project

Brownfields Redevelopment: Meeting the Challenges of Community Participation

\*Available at [www.pacinst.org/topics/community\\_strategies](http://www.pacinst.org/topics/community_strategies)

## WHAT WE DO

CSSJ has developed a wide range of action research, community education, policy advocacy, and movement-building tools, and brings extensive experience in collaborating with organizations to build a broader movement for environmental health and justice.



The program provides high-quality and scientifically rigorous research support and technical assistance designed to fit the capacity and strategies of community-based organizations and coalitions.

Our work falls into three areas that are often integrated:

**Trainings and Popular Education, Technical Assistance, and Community-Based Research.**

## TRAININGS AND POPULAR EDUCATION

The Community Strategies Program uses popular education to document environmental injustices, demystify technical information, and develop empowering solutions that build on the lived experiences of residents directly affected by the issues that we research. We have developed and delivered skills-building trainings on a range of community research tools including survey design, community mapping, and photovoice. Our issue-based trainings have been co-developed and piloted with community and coalition partners working on issues such as the freight transport system and its community impacts, climate change impacts and resilience, and nitrate contamination of drinking water.



We also do “trainings-of-trainers” for community organizations interested in creating and leading their own issue-based or skills-building workshops. One example of this work is *Gearing up For Action: A Curriculum Guide for Freight Transport Justice*, a compilation of hands-on workshop activities for engaging community residents most affected by ports, rail lines, truck routes, and other freight transport infrastructure in local, regional, and state-level decision-making. This comprehensive tool—available from Pacific Institute website at [www.pacinst.org/freightjusticeguide](http://www.pacinst.org/freightjusticeguide)—shares the training, research, and advocacy tools that we have developed and piloted with local partners over the past five years with organizations and coalitions in other freight transport corridors and major hubs in the United States.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Community Strategies lends its technical expertise through targeted assistance that includes creating digital maps, analyzing data from public agencies, and reviewing and scrutinizing technical reports.



For instance, our mapping for the National Latino Research Council identified homes in close proximity to pesticide applications and produced maps for a community survey and health promotion project.



A GIS project for Professor Kishi Animashaun at Syracuse University analyzed historic maps used by the federal government to determine which areas qualified for subsidized home loans, a practice known as “redlining” because it tended to deter lending and investment in low-income communities of color.

Additional technical assistance has focused on analyzing technical economic and environmental documents that fail to include the costs to and impacts on local communities.

# COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS



We partner with community organizations and coalitions that see a strategic need for research and seek added capacity to plan and carry out a research project. We recognize that leadership and victories must come from the ground up, rather than from centralized efforts or through professional intermediaries or advocates. Our approach aims to empower community leaders to identify key concerns, participate in decisions about when and how to conduct research, and use research findings to document and make the case for positive change to improve social, economic, and environmental conditions in their communities.

Through the Safe Return Reintegration Research Project, the Community Strategies Program is partnered with Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization (CCISCO) and the Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) for participatory action research on reentry issues. Through this partnership, we are building the capacity of a group of formerly incarcerated residents to document and take action on the challenges facing Richmond residents coming home after incarceration.



On another front, we are working with the Community Water Center in the San Joaquin Valley to align research on nitrate contamination with grassroots efforts to ensure safe and affordable drinking water in this water-distressed community. CSSJ has worked with local leaders to design and carry out community surveys of households affected by nitrate contamination of tap water and analyze the costs of nitrate mitigation projects across the valley.



## WORKING WITH US

Action research is a central strength and unique added value that the Community Strategies for Sustainability and Justice Program brings to community struggles for environmental health and justice. We work with community-based organizations and coalitions in long-term strategic partnerships and shorter tactical projects, including consulting projects that fit with our mission.

If you are interested in working with us on a research project, receiving technical assistance, developing capacity-building trainings, or creating a curriculum adapted to meet your organization's specific needs, please contact Program Co-directors Eli Moore ([emoore@pacinst.org](mailto:emoore@pacinst.org)) and Catalina Garzón ([cgarzon@pacinst.org](mailto:cgarzon@pacinst.org)).



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