

ACCE INSTITUTE



2022

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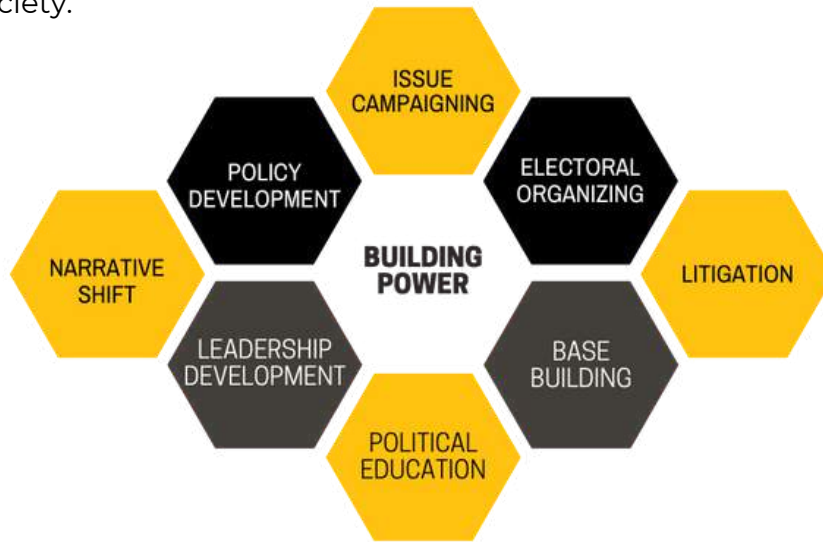
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INTRODUCTION

ACCE Institute is a 501(c)3 power building public charity founded in 2010.

Our mission is to foster transformative community change across California by engaging with low-income residents of all races in ground-up organizing in largely Black and Brown communities. Through leadership development, political education, and strategic issue campaigning, ACCE works to build an equitable and anti-racist society.



Our members are youth and elders, Native Californians, immigrants and citizens from other states and countries, people with disabilities, those who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, tenants and homeowners, workers and small business owners, dreamers and fierce freedom fighters.

We reject the myth of scarcity—that there is not enough wealth in this state to provide everyone here with basic necessities and more—and we reject systems that inflict physical or policy violence upon us.

We believe in the collective power of people to dismantle oppressive systems and to build equitable ones in their place. We believe in robust civic engagement in the streets as well as in the halls of power. We believe in the utility of direct action to demonstrate and experience our power together, and to bring light to our issues and our solutions. We believe essential needs should be freely provided to everyone with no exceptions. We believe that together we can build the world we deserve.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Core to ACCE's organizing model is a deep belief in and reliance on the leadership of our members. Given the fundamental role leaders play in our work, ACCE dedicates significant time and energy into our staff and member trainings. Our training programs seek to develop the organizing skills and social & political analysis of our members for the purposes of informing their strategies and campaigns to change the systems that impact their daily lives. Over the course of 2022, ACCE held several training programs for both members and organizers, with over 200 ACCE members and 20 organizers participating in them. Those trainings included:

- skills building like media training and how to tell your personal story,
- issue trainings on racial capitalism and social housing and,
- trainings on the electoral landscape in our cities as well as what was at stake for our communities in the June Primary and November General elections.



RECLAIM OUR ECONOMY FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

ACCE Institute's flagship political program Reclaim Our Economy took place during March to August of 2022. Over 100 ACCE members and some key ACCE allies participated in the program which uncovered the connections of the US rigged economy and racial capitalism.

Through a series of online workshops and in-person meetings we discussed key elements of racialized capitalism and the current state of our rigged economy. We discussed the impact on minorities, the working class, women, youth and many others who day by day live and toil under the oppressions of our economic system. Moreover, and to keep a hopeful eye towards the future, we studied different global manifestations of resistance to such oppressive systems. We learned about Chile's transformational democracy, as well as the fight of the Brazilian people to save the world's largest public health program.

Moreover, we worked on a declaration of principles that would guide the creation of a new economic and political system. The development of this declaration collected the views of what our members want to see in our state and country. To this purpose, large in-person meetings took place in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Richmond, to engage more ACCE members in political education and in the refinement of the declaration. In 2023 we plan to use elements of that declaration to test our ability to build a mass base of Californians who are interested in helping make that declaration a reality.



TENANT EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT



Tenant Power Toolkit - Responding to Evictions

Launched in the summer of 2022, the Tenant Power Toolkit is a collaborative effort between the The Debt Collective, The LA Tenants Union, The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality & Democracy, and ACCE. It allows a tenant anywhere in California to file a legal response to an eviction notice -in English or Spanish! The Toolkit then prepares all the documents the tenant needs to file an answer to the complaint and other essential legal papers. The effort was meant to streamline eviction defense efforts for tenants across the state as eviction moratoriums ended. In Los Angeles County — the state's densest concentration of tenants — the Toolkit can even file the court papers electronically. Once the papers are filed, the tenant is able to stay in their home, and has more time not only to find available legal help but also to connect with other tenants facing eviction and local tenant organizers.



Tenant Legal Clinics

Tenant education is the first line of defense for renters when their rights are in question. It is a core part of ACCE's organizing strategy to ensure our members and the communities we serve are educated and empowered by learning their rights locally and statewide. Across the state, ACCE's legal team hosted over 80 know your rights tenant clinics and served over a thousand tenants!



TenantProtections.org - Rent Calculator

In November, ACCE's legal team, working with our allies at Tech Equity, launched the most comprehensive anti-gouging rent calculator in California: the Tenant Protections Rent Calculator! Millions of California renters are eligible for local rent control and/or statewide rent stabilization under the Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (AB 1482). But between inadequate documentation and complicated calculations, how can tenants know what protections you're covered by? The Tenant Protections Rent Calculator helps tenants navigate their rights by:

- Understanding their eligibility for statewide rent caps and local rent control laws
- Determining if their rent increases meet or exceed legal limits
- Empowering tenants and their neighbors by helping them to know their rights in the face of unfair rent increases and unjust evictions—and connecting them with resources to fight back.



ORGANIZING CAMPAIGNS

While building a base of aware and activated people is core to our ability to change California, moving them into coordinated action is how collective power is developed and how we are able to deliver relief to our folks while working to change the conditions that led to needing relief in the first place. Our campaign work is fought in the corporate/electoral/legislative, (winning), administrative (implementing), and judicial (protecting and enforcing) arenas. Below are some of our most exciting fights/wins in 2022

DEFENDING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS



TRINITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ACCE-LA, through the Reclaiming our Schools LA (ROSLA Coalition) is at the forefront of fighting against the privatization of our public school system in Los Angeles. In South LA we are continuing our efforts to stop a private charter school from displacing public school students at Trinity Elementary. We have gone on offense by reaching out to other public schools to convert them to community schools, thus ensuring that our community has control and access to our education institutions. In early June 2022, we celebrated the news that the community's beloved Trinity will stay open and become a Community School. Trinity's second grade students will also be allowed to remain at the site. The coalition successfully fought off L.A. Unified School District plans to permanently close the 118-year old Trinity and hand the building over to Gabriella Charter School. ACCE Education Chapter members, some of whom are parents of Trinity students, worked tirelessly organizing rallies at the school and creating video testimonials telling LAUSD and Gabriella Charter board members not to displace Trinity students and harm the community.



DEFENDING OUR HOMES



Eviction Defense

ACCE organizers work with our housing insecure members to defend against unfair evictions across the state. From rapid response teams showing up at illegal lockouts to actions at courthouses and property management firms, in San Diego, Los Angeles, Oakland, Richmond and Sacramento, ACCE organizers defended over 100 people from unfair evictions in 2022.



Habitability & Code Enforcement

In each of our cities ACCE organizers worked with members facing dire habitability concerns. From mold, cockroaches, shut off appliances, or broken AC units during heat waves, ACCE organizers and members are campaigning to hold landlords accountable and keep families safe and healthy. In particular, last year we defended over 200 families living in decrepit conditions as part of our Chesapeake campaign, and in Sacramento we launched a tenant self check tool designed to assist tenants in reporting problems with their rental units directly to Sacramento code enforcement. The tool allows renters to submit their contact information, responses to questions about a variety of characteristics of the property — from electricity, to water, to pests — and upload pictures of the unit. Those responses are then sent to the city, allowing tenants to more easily and efficiently communicate with both their landlords and the city about habitability concerns in their units.



Stopping Harrassment

Throughout the year, ACCE defended dozens of tenants being harassed by their landlords. In LA, after successfully passing a Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance (TAHO) in 2021, ACCE members have continued to fight for strong TAHO implementation to ensure the law is being followed and enforced. ACCE's legal team played a critical role in drafting and advocating for the anti-harassment ordinance that was successfully passed in Concord in early 2022. And in Sacramento, tenants across the county have begun the campaign to pass a similar anti-harassment ordinance.

HIGHLIGHT VICTORIES



SIESTA RV PARK

For years, residents living at the Siesta RV Park based in Imperial Beach were forced to move out of their homes every 6 months in order to prevent them from being covered by tenant protections - causing stress, anxiety and chaos in the lives of many residents. But after a months-long campaign, the ACCE leaders in the Siesta RV Park finally won strong city-wide renter protections - including an eviction ban, anti-harassment protections and a prohibition on rent increases of more than 5% annually. The Imperial Beach City Council ended a rule the park's owner, Miramar Imperial Beach LLC, was enforcing that required residents of RV parks to sign six-month leases and vacate their spaces for 48 hours after those leases expired.

RENT STRIKE TO LAND TRUST VICTORY

After one of the longest rent strikes in Oakland history, ACCE Members collectively organized in their 14-Unit Fruitvale building were finally able to claim victory and celebrate after the owner officially sold the apartment complex to the Oakland Community Land Trust!!!! The sale is part of a growing movement of renters across California pushing for our homes to be taken off the failed speculative, profit-driven, housing market and placed into democratic ownership where it can be made permanently affordable. In multiple major cities across California, including Oakland, renters are pushing for Tenant and Community Opportunity to Purchase Acts (TOPA or COPA) to combat the spike in real estate speculation.

PACE SETTLEMENT

After thousands of working-class and low-income homeowners in LA County- the majority of whom are Latino and African American - were defrauded by the government-sponsored Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, many faced foreclosure. But after years of organizing and fighting back, in a significant victory for approximately one hundred homeowners defrauded by PACE, City Attorney Mike Feuer announced a \$6 million settlement to be distributed to Los Angeles homeowners harmed by the unfair deceptive and unlawful practices by Eco Solar, a company connected to the PACE program. There is much more to be done to right the injustices caused by those who were defrauded under the PACE program, but the settlement is a major step forward!

CORPORATE CAMPAIGNS



BLACKSTONE TENANTS UNION

Blackstone is one of the largest private equity firms in the world, and now they are the largest landlord. After this Wall Street mega company purchased nearly 6,000 apartments in San Diego County, ACCE swung into action supporting the company's new low-income and working class tenants to organize and fight for housing justice.

In 2022, hundreds of these Blackstone tenants joined ACCE's Blackstone Tenants Union. Terrible habitability issues went unresolved for months while rents were increasing. Local elected officials joined a press conference in front of a Blackstone property where the group made their demands public, ACCE held a statewide day of action, visiting Blackstone and their management firm in three cities, and then the group took their demands to the San Diego County Employees Retirement Association, that invests pension funds in Blackstone.

Relentless pressure led to a meeting between ACCE tenant leaders and a senior Blackstone representative, which resulted in a grievance procedure around habitability issues that has led to the completion of numerous needed repairs and improvements. Now, as the base of organized tenants grows and a broader coalition of organizations is coming together to hold Blackstone accountable, the group has their sites on limiting annual rent increases to 3% and preventing "no fault" evictions.

CALIFORNIA COMMON GOOD

Directly taking on corporate actors to win concessions and reduce their power over our democratic processes is a powerful but less commonly used organizing strategy. To help expand the use of this strategy and add to the progressive organizing infrastructure of the state, in 2022 ACCE has partnered with AFSCME 3299 and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) to launch California Common Good. This effort will build out a community/labor front to rein-in corporate power and advance our shared community agenda through comprehensive campaigns that include the utilization of labor bargaining fights as key opportunities to advance our demands. In 2023 we plan to launch a strategic campaign against several of the major statewide corporate drivers of the high cost of housing and displacement.



CHESAPEAKE

ACCE Los Angeles is taking on one of Southern California's largest rental empires and its' leader: billionaire mega landlord Mike Nijjar. For years, tenants have complained of broken pipes spewing raw sewage into the building, vermin, toxic black mold, and faulty heaters causing carbon monoxide poisoning. Conditions at the property are so unsafe that some residents have been hospitalized.

After a months-long organizing campaign in Nijjar's Chesapeake apartments - ACCE leaders got the city to do an inspection of the 425-unit complex. And while inspections by the city and county are ongoing, and ACCE LA leaders are meeting with elected leaders and city officials to keep the pressure up, ACCE LA is determined to make an example of Nijjar - demanding that slumlords like him not be allowed to operate the rental housing business.

POLICY WINS & IMPLEMENTATION



CONTRA COSTA CARES

In 2015, ACCE fought for and won the Contra Costa CARES program which has provided healthcare for more than 8,000 undocumented individuals. However, in 2022 program funding was in question. ACCE and our coalition partners waged a successful campaign to get the County Board of Supervisors to reinvest in Contra Costa CARES, an East County Youth Center and a non-police response program for mental health emergencies, ultimately ensuring life saving healthcare for thousands of Contra Costa families.

OAKLAND & RICHMOND 3% RENT CAP

With a spike in inflation in 2022, tenants saw hikes in allowable rent increases in cities whose rent stabilization ordinances were tied to the Consumer Price Index. As a result, in Oakland and Richmond, ACCE fought for and won a 3 percent cap on rent increases. These wins were won through strong organizing combined with the expertise of our legal team. ACCE's legal team worked to write the policies, train local movement allies on the key elements of the proposals, and educate various elected officials and government staff both on what the policy would do and how best to implement it.

ANTIOCH WINS RENT CONTROL

After months of organizing and actions demanding stronger protections for Antioch tenants, the Antioch City Council passed a rent control ordinance that would cap annual rent increases to 3% or 60% of CPI, whichever is lower. The vote reflects a shift in housing policy across the state with dozens of cities across CA working to pass stronger tenant protections!

"When the vote came in we all jumped for joy. Everyone crying. After being threatened w/ a \$500 rent increase, I'm relieved it won't happen again. To see my neighbors come together united to win this & stand up for ourselves is the highlight of my life." - Kim Carlson ACCE Member

"I'm incredibly relieved. There's so much security in knowing our landlords can't just price us out. In the past, I was made homeless after getting a \$500 rent increase- knowing that can never happen again here is a huge." - Kamilah Miller, ACCE Member



LA COUNTY & CITY STRENGTHENED EVICTION PROTECTIONS

Los Angeles County tenants made new gains in 2022 at both the county and city level, thanks to amazing organizing work by ACCE Los Angeles tenant leaders and our allies in the Keep LA Housed coalition. The Los Angeles City Council agreed to implement permanent just cause protections for all LA City tenants, and the County Board of Supervisors voted to strengthen renter protections and expand eviction defense services for all tenants in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles. The housing justice movement in Los Angeles is growing stronger and more powerful every day!

CHULA VISTA JUST CAUSE

After a year-long campaign, ACCE tenant leaders in Chula Vista claimed victory in October after the Chula Vista City Council approved stronger protections against no-fault evictions. The new law goes beyond state law by making it harder for landlords in the city to pursue no-fault evictions, and by requiring that tenants who do get evicted receive relocation assistance. The law also strengthens anti-harassment protections, by including prohibitions on verbal harassment, threats, coercion and refusal to take rent payments. The ordinance is slated to go into effect in March 2023.



EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ERAP) IMPLEMENTATION

After winning state-level emergency COVID-19 tenant protections and a rental assistance program that doesn't depend on landlord participation, ACCE has been focused on fighting hard to make sure everyone who meets the income eligibility requirement gets the rent and utility help they need. The state and local emergency rental assistance programs have been both a godsend for those whose applications went through smoothly, and a nightmare of delay, confusion, and wrongful denials for others. ACCE has been fighting, case by case, to get people their money! Throughout the year we held town halls, workshops and direct actions to educate the public and demand our elected leaders fix the broken ERAP system to stop unjust denials, and get the funds out to families in need as quickly as possible. Additionally, we are plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the State, both for their failure to get many people this vital help due to faulty administration and for abruptly ending the program at the end of March 2022.

LITIGATION



SUING THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (HCD) OVER ERAP HANDLING

In January 2021, the State of California established the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to distribute billions in funds allocated by the federal government for those struggling to pay rent due to COVID-related illness or job loss. The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) was charged with administering the state program, with support from a network of local community partners. ACCE and other groups partnered with HCD to help tenants in applying for ERAP, and immediately began to notice issues with the application process, as well as unjustified and increasing denials. After seeing denial rates climb to a staggering 31% of applications in 2022, on June 6, Western Center on Law and Poverty, Public Counsel, and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles filed a lawsuit on behalf of SAJE, ACCE, and PolicyLink against HCD arguing that the state's administration of ERAP violated constitutional due process by denying applicants without an adequate explanation and failing to provide a transparent appeals process. The suit also argued that HCD's flawed administration disproportionately harmed Black, Latine, and Asian tenants on the basis of race, color, and national origin. In a huge victory for ACCE and California tenants, on July 7, the court found we were likely to be successful on the merits of our case and granted our motion for a preliminary injunction, halting HCD from processing any more denials of applications until the court could rule further!



LOS ANGELES AND ALAMEDA COUNTY EVICTIION MORATORIUM DEFENSE

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, government agencies took emergency actions. In Los Angeles and Alameda County, local governments passed eviction moratoriums as part of their emergency response which were successful at stopping unjust evictions, preventing homelessness, and protecting public health. As a result of the shut downs, the federal government issued billions of dollars to corporate landlords in PPP loans, and in California the state paid billions of dollars of emergency rental assistance to landlords. Despite that, in 2022 the real estate industry filed two lawsuits asking courts to declare the local eviction moratoriums unconstitutional. Their lawsuits attack the ability of cities, counties, and even states to pass eviction protections in times of need and ask the court to order local governments to pay them millions more as compensation. ACCE intervened in both lawsuits by landlords and were successful in getting the court to affirm the validity of the moratoriums to exist.

MOSSER COMPANIES LAWSUIT

In 2021 ACCE filed a lawsuit against one of California's largest landlords that had been violating tenants' rights - Mosser Companies. In 2022, ACCE's legal department obtained a significant monetary settlement for a tenant who was wrongfully evicted through an illegal lockout! Other impact litigation against the Mosser Companies and affiliates is ongoing. 50 Plaintiffs continue to challenge tenant harassment as a business practice as well as several tangential practices plaintiffs view as unfair or fraudulent business practices. These practices include varying plaintiffs' monthly rent for alleged estimations of "utility bills" and charging plaintiffs non-refundable security deposit "bond" fees. Plaintiffs have received several favorable court rulings.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



ACCE has spent the last decade working to shift the electorate to more closely match the demographics of the state - with a focus on increasing participation among communities of color, low income people, young folks, and newly naturalized voters. And 2022 was a monumental year for ACCE's civic engagement and political work! After a pandemic that critically disrupted the way we traditionally organize, we were safely and successfully able to reintegrate door-knocking as part of our outreach strategy. Operating within a hybrid work model—Zoom, phone banking & in-person door-knocking—we were able to extend our electoral reach.

Between our outreach during the June Primary and November General election, ACCE's paid canvass and member volunteer teams reached out to a combined total of 33,479 voters! Of those we outreached to, 9,300 said they were impacted by housing issues - many of which opted into both phone and email communications from us. As the election cycle closed, ACCE offices and organizers began immediately following up with these contacts to bring them into our organizing campaigns beyond the election cycle. Several have already joined as members!

ACCE ELECTORAL DEEP DIVE DEBRIEFS

Additionally, for the first time ever, ACCE hosted Electoral Deep Dive Debriefs for members throughout the year to talk about why elections matter, understand the electoral landscape in our cities and geographies, discuss our strategy for building electoral power for our people, look at our past wins, and understand how to get out the vote. Between our electoral deep dive debriefs in February, May and July - over 50 members participated.

FINAL THOUGHTS

2022 was a year full of gains for ACCE! We deepened our organizing programs and experiments, we built out our training programs and critical discussions about the systems and actors we are up against, we sharpened our understanding of what we are called to do, we expanded our base and our staff team, and we WON A LOT for our people. And yet, 2023 has already reminded us that there is a lot more to do.

Despite how grim reality can be, ACCE organizers have the hope (and skill) needed to keep the work moving forward. We believe that organizing works. We believe that we will win AND are committed to stay in the fight until we do.

Hasta la victoria,
- ACCE Executive Director, Christina Livingston

