

LATINO YOUTH COOL DOWN THE PLANET

ORGANIZING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE IN SAN FRANCISCO

SPRING 2012

PODER has been organizing for environmental justice in San Francisco for over 20 years. We have fostered the leadership of hundreds of youth from southeast San Francisco to organize in their neighborhoods. In 2011, we made the connections between our local struggles and the climate crisis facing our world.



Our families are feeling the symptoms of the climate crisis here in San Francisco and in our home countries in Latin America. They are directly affected by hurricanes, tornados, oil spills, Cap & Trade policies and other natural and human created disasters. On our learning journey, we've recognized that local solutions cool down the planet and we are committed to continue organizing for our community's health and well-being.

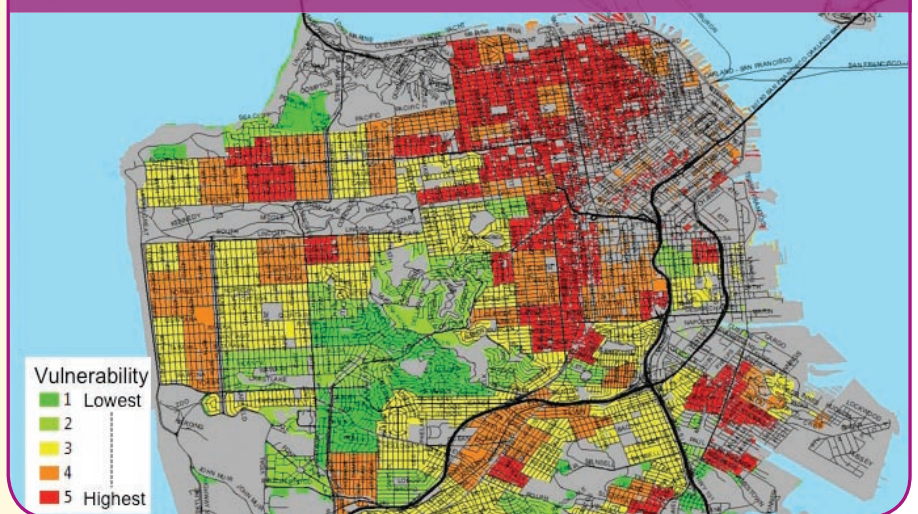


OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Southeast San Francisco, where we live, play, pray and go to school, is home to 68% of the City's Latino population, and it is also plagued with environmental injustices. Our neighborhoods bear the brunt of the city's pollution. They house the city's sewage facilities, garbage dumps, industrial zones, and two freeways with heavy diesel-fueled traffic, many times right next to our homes. Because of this, our families have among the highest rates of cancer, heart disease and asthma in the city.

Our communities not only deal with the stress of pollution, but are also at constant risk of losing our homes and jobs because of evictions, foreclosures, a bad economy and unjust immigration laws. At PODER, we celebrate the diversity of cultures, languages, and histories of resistance, and we work together to unite and improve our neighborhoods.

Climate vulnerabilities in San Francisco



Analysis and cartography by Manuel Pastor and James L. Sadd, USC Program for Regional and Environmental Equity (PERE), and Rachel Morello-Frosch, UC Berkeley School of Public Health

BUILDING TOGETHER AND

Throughout 2011, PODER youth had the opportunity to bridge our local work to the global climate crisis through a series of activities that raised consciousness, highlighted local solutions and lead to action.



POWERSHIFT ORGANIZING TRAINING

ENERGY ACTION COALITION, SAN FRANCISCO, CA,
MARCH 2011

.....

Over 60 youth from across California converged at the Centro del Pueblo in San Francisco's Mission District to learn about the global environmental crisis our world is facing and how it is connected to the same economic crisis that has prompted the global "Occupy Wall Street" movement.

As Raul Barrera stated, "During the Powershift training I was able to "tell my story," connecting the economic struggles of my family in Mexico, my migration to the US and the systems that are destroying our environments. I was shocked at how fast we are trashing and destroying our planet. Through a series of pictures I was able to see how we are destroying our planet, how fast the North Pole is melting and how our oceans are dumping sites for all the garbage we produce. I felt empowered when I told my story because I feel stories are a useful tool other people can relate to and learn from. Stories can also be used to recruit more folks to our movement and bring us together to work towards solutions and create change."

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE YOUTH EXCHANGE

LOS ANGELES, CA, JUNE 2011

.....

Over 40 youth from San Francisco and Los Angeles converged at Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) in Huntington Park to learn about environmental racism and environmental justice campaigns through Toxic Tours in East LA, Wilmington and Huntington Park. Youth from both regions exchanged strategies and ideas for confronting these issues in their communities.

Luisa Aguilar reflected, "On the toxic tour the oil refineries really stood out to me. It is crazy how many people have to live right next to the refineries. We heard the testimonies of the youth organizers from CBE who live next to the refineries. They talked about how this has affected their families' health, and how youth aren't allowed to speak out on this issue at their schools. The oil being refined in LA not only hurts its local residents but also communities like ours in southeast San Francisco. I live in the Excelsior, which is nestled between both of San Francisco's freeways, the 101 and the 280. You can often smell the emissions in the air.

"I have 3 younger cousins that also live in the Excelsior district and they suffer from asthma. The homes right next to the freeways are covered in black soot, evidence of constant pollution emitted from the cars. The cars that run through these freeways and endanger our health are using the oil that is processed in refineries like the one in LA. Our communities are the most impacted by oil from the Bay to LA, and we are going to continue to suffer if this issue isn't addressed. Our families will continue to suffer until we unify and stop depending so much on oil."



DEEPENING CONSCIOUSNESS

INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK'S

"PROTECTING MOTHER EARTH GATHERING: ENERGY, CLIMATE, WATER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH AND CULTURE"

NORTH DAKOTA, JULY 2011

.....

At the Protecting Mother Earth Gathering, we saw first-hand the effects of the fossil fuel economy in Native American communities. Local indigenous communities have had their land taken away by oil corporations on their own reservations. They are now dealing with constant oil drilling, natural gas flames, large diesel trucks used to transport oil, and the contamination of their sacred homelands by all these activities. PODER youth deepened their awareness on the role of their traditions and spirituality in the fights for environmental justice.



As Ismael Iversander explained, "At the Indigenous Environmental Network gathering I had the opportunity to get closer to Mother Earth and develop a spiritual connection with her. I went into a sweat lodge for the first time, and I was told that the sweat lodge was like going back into your mother's womb, the womb of Mother Earth. You are able to offer prayers, praying for things that you are happy about and to improve the areas that you need help with. After I got out the sweat lodge I felt a rebirth, a new beginning ... I felt like all our communities need to start clean and our neighborhoods had the right to be pollution free. Connecting to Mother Earth you see how she provides but when we choose to pollute her, like when we create landfills and fill her up with garbage we contaminate her soil and take away her ability to provide, she can't grow food anymore. And the contamination hurts her, people, animals, plants, all living beings on this earth."

TAKING DIRECT ACTION FOR REAL SOLUTIONS

SACRAMENTO, CA, AUGUST 2011

.....

Youth from PODER participated in a "No Carbon Trading Statewide Day of Action" in California's state capitol. The youth, along with youth from CBE and other environmental justice organizations, deployed a 20-foot balloon banner outside the California Environmental Protection Agency building during the Air Resource Board's Hearing on the "Cap and Trade Program." Communities from across the state converged in Sacramento to give testimony at the hearing and urge the California Air Resources Board and Governor Brown to not to include Cap & Trade in implementing AB32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act, the legislation meant to protect our air and address the climate crisis.

According to Christian Villareal, "Walking through the capitol building with youth and elders from all across the state felt good. I never thought I would be representing my community at the governor's office sharing our stories, letting them know that we care about our communities and we expect them to do the same."



YOUTH-LED LOCAL SOLUTIONS COOL THE PLANET



Armed with knowledge and skills, PODER youth organizers decided to create a project to engage youth in our neighborhoods in activities that would promote the reduction of car and truck emissions in southeast San Francisco, encourage youth to participate in co-ops, and inspire them to organize for community parks and gardens, affordable housing and jobs. We decided to create our own community resiliency biking tours to highlight environmental health hazards and community organizing victories in our neighborhoods while at the same time promoting sustainable transportation through biking.

For Edgar Molina, the benefits of this project are clear: "By becoming part of a co-op like the Bike Kitchen, not only do we get a bike at the end, but we gain skills and access to materials to fix and maintain our bikes to transport ourselves throughout the city without having to worry about whether or not we have bus fare. Also, by working on the bike resiliency tour of the Mission not only are we physically exercising and promoting alternative forms of travel but we are also educating our neighbors about the injustices our neighborhoods face and our victories that create change."

FROM RED ZONES TO GREEN ZONES

Movement building from LA to North Dakota, and learning from all the organizing in our sister communities, affirmed that local solutions cool down the planet. In our own neighborhoods, we are working to create *green zones* by organizing to convert parking lots to parks and affordable housing that's much needed in our communities.

We work with collectives like the Bike Kitchen, gaining the skills to build our bikes from scratch, maintain them, and transport ourselves without contributing to the fossil fuel economy or polluting the air. We, thereby, reduce harming the health of our organizing family from Three Bears Reservation, ND to Wilmington, CA and beyond. We continue sharing all we have learned with our family, friends and allies, fine tuning our organizing skills, and creating healthy, thriving communities for all. **Join us!**



474 Valencia Street, #125
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-431-4210
www.podersf.org

PODER YOUTH LEADERS:

Luisa Aguilar
Raul Barrera
Alvin Blanco
Sam Brown
Jaime Chavarria
Nicole Estrada
Leroy Garcia
Stephanny Garcia
Iversander Ismael Marroquin
Edgar Molina

Gabriel Navarette
Alessandra Ortiz
Adriana Ramirez
Ingried Segundo
Juan Segundo
Yosel Segundo
Chris Sielizar
Christopher Silva
Lesly Torres
Christian Villareal

This effort was supported by the Center for Environmental Health's Community Environmental Action & Justice Fund; the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families' Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) Mini-Grants for the Winter-Spring 2011 Cycle; the Indigenous Environmental Network; Southwest Network for Environmental & Economic Justice and the Surdna Foundation.

PODER is a project of the Tides Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

*Design by Design Action Collective
Printing by Inkworks Press on 100% recycled paper.
Worker cooperatives. Union labor.*

For more information, please contact Teresa Almaguer at tere@podersf.org or at 415-431-4210.