



POWER CALIFORNIA
5 YEARS

NEW LANES OF POWER





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INTRODUCTION

VOTERS OF COLOR ARE CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

Fabiola Argueta still remembers the terror that swept her household the night of the 2016 presidential election. She was only a sophomore at Garfield High in unincorporated East Los Angeles.

“I remember crying because my mom was an immigrant,” she says. “I kept thinking, why does this country hate us?” Argueta recalls the despair she felt. Just a week before the election, she had been registering young people to vote.

Now 23, she says, “I was sad, but organizing taught me that I have power. And I needed to make sure our voices were heard.”

Argueta is one of thousands of young leaders across our state who organizes in their communities. Refusing to accept the harm of broken systems, they care deeply and step up to lead fights for their families and neighborhoods.

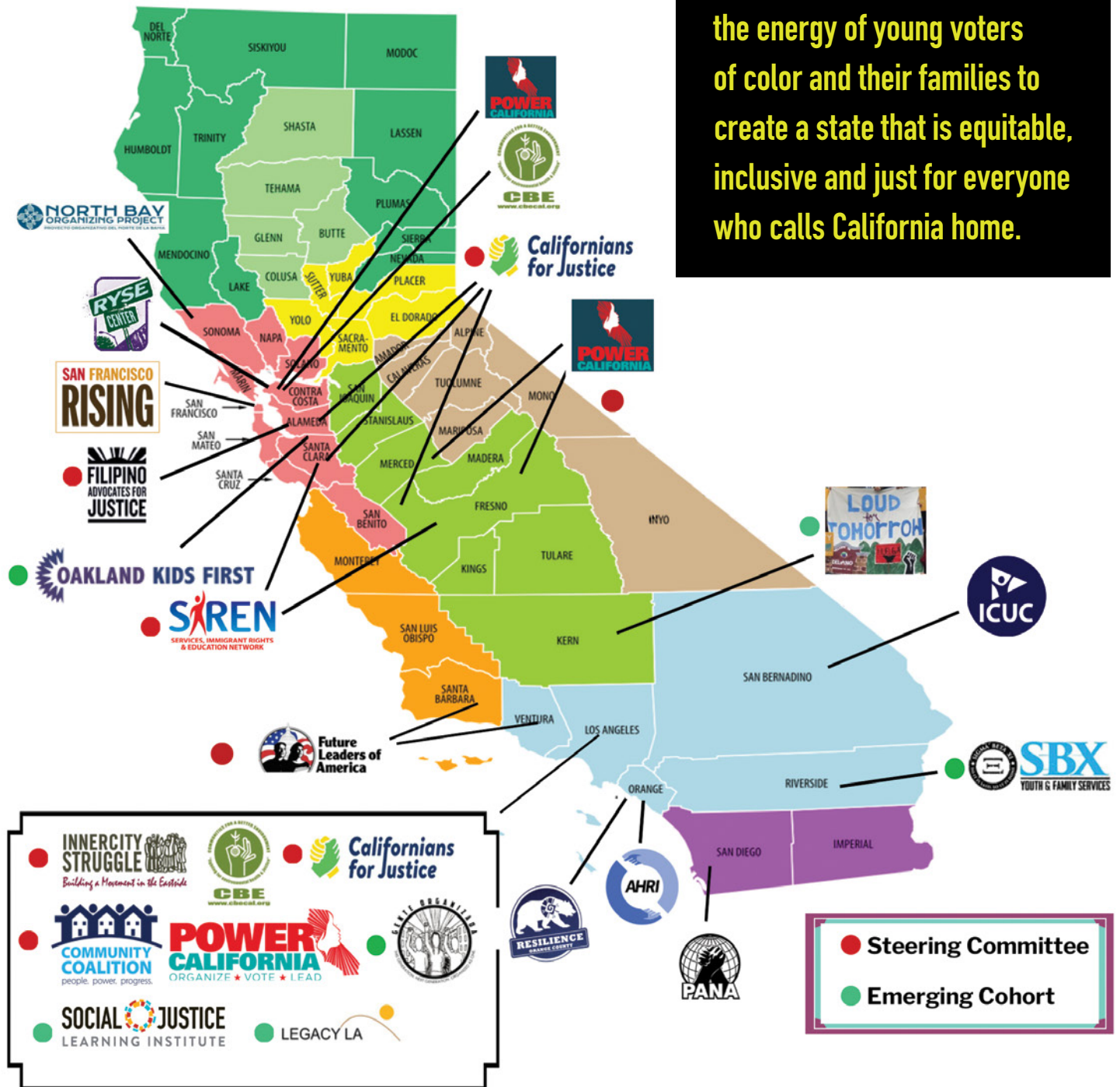
In California, youth of color make up 75% of voters under 25. 50% have an immigrant or refugee background.

Five years ago, Power California emerged to assert that young voters of color are the future of our state, and their political power should no longer be dismissed and underestimated.



ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Power California harnesses the energy of young voters of color and their families to create a state that is equitable, inclusive and just for everyone who calls California home.





EXPANDING DEMOCRACY

YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR, A NEW MAJORITY

The first to pull up and the last to back down.

From the polls to the picket lines, this is the unmatched energy of young folks—especially young people of color—whom since the birth of Power California in 2018, have turned out in staggering numbers to demand the futures they deserve.

‘Decline-to-State’: The Untapped Base

Power California knew that by 2028, 18-34 year olds would make up California’s largest voting block. By 2030, 3 in 4 will be people of color.

What’s more, nearly half (47.5%) of pre-registered 16 and 17 year olds in 2018 listed no party preference / declined-to-state, and nearly all decline-to-state voters under the age of 30 are not engaged by any political party.

Seeing the potential in swaying this massive, untapped base, we understood California’s future could no longer ignore young people’s political power. As an Alliance, we could ensure young people had a place real and resonant enough to call their political home.

So we got to work guiding every last one to the table.

Over five years, across 58 counties and alongside 30 grassroots organizations and registrar’s offices, we’ve drawn in tens of thousands of young

folks of color, by organizing mass ready-to-vote events & festivals, political education bootcamps, peer trainings, youth conventions, fellowships, and paid leadership projects.

Headlining many of these events with cultural icons and practices—from murals and MCs to visual arts and influencers—we transformed the experience of politics for young voters by calling in the truths they live everyday.

With the critical help of our Alliance partners—who step up statewide to turn out their members, resources, and local expertise—together, we’ve successfully pre-registered and registered 100,000 young voters and had 609,000 voter education conversations since 2018.

By 2028, 18–34 year olds will be CA’s largest voting block.

By no surprise, young voters ages 18-34 that Power California identified as aligning with us on key issues voted at higher rates than all youth voters of color statewide in 2018 and 2022.



5-YEAR VOTER IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

100,000 PRE-REGISTERED
AND REGISTERED

7,047

**YOUNG
LEADERS
TRAINED**

150
PARTNERS
ENGAGED

609,000
VOTER
EDUCATION
CONVERSIONS

Prop 15: Schools & Communities First

In the 2020 general election, our young organizers played a leading role in the statewide push to reclaim billions annually from wealthy corporations to invest in local schools and communities with Proposition 15, the Schools and Communities First campaign.

With our coalition partners, they submitted a historic 1.7 million signatures to qualify the

measure for the November 2020 ballot. Power California's field program alone reached 102,000 voters statewide, and persuaded nearly 20,000 Californians to opt in to volunteer.

While Proposition 15 fell short by just a few percentage points, the loss in the Central Valley was closer to 20 points, elevating the importance of organizing a base in untapped regions of our state to achieve future wins.





SHIFTING NARRATIVES

YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE MIC & IN THE MEDIA

Young people have too often been historically erased from media narratives, portrayed as politically disengaged and dismissed from participating.

As we began our integrated voter strategies, we launched a youth of color poll—the first of its kind in California—to understand young people of color’s views on politics and voting.

Our findings surfaced powerful data that proved the dominant narratives far from true.

Young People Highly Value Voting

Power California’s inaugural 2018 youth poll, which surveyed over 2,000 Californians of color between the ages of 16-24, showed what our Alliance partners had known: Young people care deeply about their communities and are politically and civically engaged.

“The narrative is that young people don’t care about voting. That’s not true. We do care. It’s just that we’re not invested in.” – Fabiola Argueta, 23, Power California & InnerCity Struggle Member

Many young voters represent a generation with a distinct experience: they’re often the first in their family to cast a vote in a U.S. election. Like first-generation college students, young voters of color in California are navigating an uncharted political system, but committed to represent for their loved ones and communities who can’t.

“The poll was about really bringing into focus that young people had not been part of the political conversations,” says Tyler Okeke, 22, current board member and former Power California leader who served as a media spokesperson for the poll results.

Los Angeles Times

Young voters turned out in force for Democrats in 2020. Will they stick around?

teenVOGUE

These Teens Are Leading the Fight to Lower the Voting Age

The Fresno Bee

Young voters are ready to make a difference in Tuesday’s election

As a result of the polls—which we conducted during every major election year starting in 2018—Power California successfully shifted prevailing media narratives to include youth voices in dozens of headlines and stories, and called attention to the need for year-round civic engagement opportunities. “The solution is to involve us more deeply and more meaningfully,” says Okeke.

PARKLAND

A NATIONAL FLASHPOINT

In February 2018, all eyes were on the suburb of Parkland, Florida, where a group of predominantly white teens demanded gun reform in the wake of a school shooting that took the lives of 17 classmates. Their demands resonated across the country, sparking massive youth-led marches, school walkouts, teach-ins, and rallies.

**219 media hits featuring
Power California youth voices**

But when the media and local elected officials centered solutions, the dominant response focused overwhelmingly on an antiquated safety narrative calling for more police, security, and militarization of public schools.

Centering Racial Justice in School Safety

In California, gun violence was sadly not a new issue for young people of color and their families.

“The Parkland students got a lot of attention,” says Joaquin Gonzalez. “But that’s because the media normalizes violence in Black and Brown neighborhoods. The walkouts in LA was to make sure we were seen. This is what we as students of color experience daily.”

Following the 1999 Columbine massacre, public schools across the nation, and especially in California, adopted zero-tolerance policies and

divested in systems of care—often adding more police than college counselors—that further criminalized, suspended, and expelled Black and Brown students, and barred them from graduation and four-year colleges.



**“The media normalizes
violence in Black and Brown
neighborhoods. The walkouts
in LA was to make sure
we were seen.” – Joaquin
Gonzalez, 19, Power California
& InnerCity Struggle Member**

Parkland served as a critical moment to shift the national narrative on school safety and awaken a new generation to connect their lived experiences to their vote.

Power California leaders saw these conservative narratives gaining momentum, threatening to worsen student wellness, and more, reverse critical victories the youth organizing movement had won in ending the school-to-prison pipeline, from removal of metal detectors to the banning “willful defiance” suspensions.

In the wake of Parkland, as interest peaked amongst youth of color to join March for Our Lives, the national action on gun reform, Power

California seized the moment to shift the national narrative on gun violence and redefine school safety: we led a robust training program for civil action which centered racial justice messaging, direct action planning, and registering new voters.

We also collaborated with partners on the nationwide rally in Washington D.C. to integrate our narrative on school safety. At the rally, Community Coalition’s Edna Chavez’s story went viral when she shared, “I learned to duck from bullets before I learned how to read.” Moved, Parkland students soon adapted our narrative and helped reshape the dominant narrative.

California witnessed tens of thousands of young people participate in walkouts and thousands more in marches, with a shared message of safety rooted in care and community. Power California youth leaders registered scores of young people to vote at these demonstrations, awakening a generation of powerful leaders who were connecting their votes and voices directly to a nationwide legislation.





DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF NARRATIVE LEADERS

For years, Power California’s Alliance partners had named communications capacity as a gap for their organizations. While our internal team could provide strategy and tactics aligned to our collective campaigns, we saw a need and opportunity to develop the long-term narrative capacity of Alliance partners.

The Gen Now Fellowship

In late 2019, Power California launched the Gen Now Fellowship (initially called The New Majority Fellowship), a landmark narrative and strategic communications training program for Alliance partners. In partnership with ReFrame, a national nonprofit dedicated to building the narrative power of social justice organizations, our fellowship trained ten Alliance staff members through small group coaching, hands-on narrative strategy development, and skills workshops.

“The fellowship really shaped my leadership style, how I support my team, and how I show up,” says Daniel Gonzalez of Future Leaders of America,

who grew from lead organizer to director of organizing & advocacy during the course of the fellowship.

Due to the unique investment in Alliance partners through our fellowship, many committed

“The fellowship really shaped my leadership style, how I support my team, and how I show up.” – Daniel Gonzalez, 34, Future Leaders of America

afterwards to expanding their communications capacity through dedicated staffing and resources, integrating narrative strategy as a key part of their organizing work moving forward.





UNLOCKING A PROGRESSIVE CALIFORNIA THE CENTRAL VALLEY & INLANDS



“Young people in the Valley are energized to make change. We’re building them up with leadership and training.”
— Astrid Morales, 23, Central Valley Organizer

As greedy and wealthy corporations continue pushing young folks and their families inland, unaffordable, unsafe living conditions follow. Yet too often, political and youth organizing overlooks these inland areas—which have the greatest needs and the greatest potential for building youth power.

That’s why Power California, in just a few years, has filled gaps to build fierce coalitions in inland cities like Fresno and Merced.

With our guidance and resources, local coalitions have fought to:

- shift media and public narratives in conservative, rural districts towards supporting renters, low-income families, and housing-insecure students
- win millions in city and COVID-19 recovery funding for youth programs and tenant protections

Through 99Rootz, a first-of-its-kind youth organizing program created by Power California in the Valley, we tapped in across local high schools to activate the leadership of more than 1,400 young people of color.

Connecting over their shared ancestral and cultural roots, these same young folks—turned skilled organizers through deep trainings, conferences, and academies on identity, political education,



2020-2021

FRESNO EDUCATION JUSTICE COALITION FOR POLICE FREE SCHOOLS

500 PUBLIC COMMENTS



1,300 PETITION SIGNATURES



100 YOUTH+ COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED



2022-2023

FRESNO HOUSING COALITION FOR RENT CONTROL



1,200 VOTERS ENGAGED



92% AGREE: WE NEED RENT CONTROL NOW

169 VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED





“Rent control would mean my community could advance themselves. We’d experience less stress and be able to afford what we need.”

– Miracle Jackson, 22, Power California Member

and voter pre/registration—have hit the streets to lead demands for their futures. They’ve reached thousands of neighbors at the doors, phones and halls of power to build support for campaigns like police free schools and rent control in Fresno, and affordable housing and youth jobs programs in Merced.

Our learnings from 99Rootz laid the foundation for our organization’s membership model, grounded in offering a political home for young people across multiple sociocultural identities—especially those who have aged out of youth programs in the years beyond high school—to not only be civically engaged, but to improve their communities.

While we’re still fighting for decision-makers to put dollars and commitments on our demands, our youth movement in the Valley is powered up and poised to win—transforming not only their under-represented regions, but tipping the scales statewide toward justice.





DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION

GROWING GRASSROOTS LEADERS

Building the Movement Pipeline

“The sooner youth can see themselves generating change, the more powerful they become,” says Daisy Maxion, lead organizer with Filipino Advocates for Justice (FAJ). Maxion credits FAJ’s participation in Power California’s Alliance network as critical to developing their leadership pipeline.

“The sooner youth can see themselves generating change, the more powerful they become.” – Daisy Maxion, 26, Filipino Advocates for Justice

“Being part of Power California meant our members in the Bay Area got to have conversations with youth in the Central Valley and SoCal who had the same struggles but hoped for a better future.”

Year-round, we hear reflections from our Alliance partners on the impact of connecting young people across regions to their shared histories and futures. Together, they’re inspiring each other with the will to win movements.

From Volunteer to Movement Organizer

Astrid Morales, raised in South Gate, California as

the daughter of El Salvadorian and Guatemalan immigrants, recalls, “I always thought the system was broken. I thought we were meant to struggle and stay poor.”

But through a classroom presentation where she met an organizer with Power California, another first-generation voter, Astrid was inspired to see that change was possible. “She shared the wins that young people had made throughout California and I realized that wow, I could do that too.”

And she did. Not only did Morales become an active member at 15, but she continued her organizing as a student at UC Merced, volunteering on Power California’s campaigns. Now, at 23, Morales is a proud staff member of Power California as the Membership Organizer, developing the next generation of leaders in the Central Valley.





VOTE AT 16

SPARKING A MOVEMENT—CITY TO CITY

As the Los Angeles Unified School District’s 2018-19 student board rep, Tyler Okeke, then 17, witnessed up close the harms of adult policy-making and politicking on young people.

“Our youth vote efforts in LA and cities statewide changed the narrative.” – Tyler Okeke, 22, Board Member & Former Organizer

Frustrated with decision after decision neglecting real student concerns, Tyler reached out to Power California to co-organize a campaign to expand school board election voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds. Together, we strategized with coalition partners, labor, and teachers’ unions to unanimously pass a resolution to conduct a study on expanding the youth school board vote.

Soon enough, youth and Alliance partners statewide joined the fight. Over the following year, our Vote at 16 movement sent resources and organizers to urban, suburban, and rural communities across California to build infrastructure and capacity to achieve the early right to vote.

Armed with tactics on everything from earned media and messaging to lobbying and direct action,

young leaders from Power California and our Alliance partners advocated with local coalitions for measures in San Francisco, Oakland, and Woodlake.

A Groundbreaking Win

In the Bay Area, under the visionary leadership and organizing of the Oakland Kids First coalition, Californians for Justice and other Meaningful Student Engagement (MSE) coalition partners, Power California added value with messaging trainings and field program support, calling in the people power of our pre-existing voter registration work in Oakland.

Even our Alliance partners outside of the Bay Area recognized the need to push for wins that could





“Even though I was in Long Beach, I felt called to the Oakland campaign because I wanted to mobilize as many youth that looked like me as possible to fight.” – Jeacile Bell, 25, Californians for Justice

ripple from one city to the next. Jeacile Bell, then 22, recalls leading a satellite campaign from Long Beach with Californians for Justice for vote at 16 in Oakland. “Even though I was in Long Beach, I felt called to the Oakland campaign because I wanted to mobilize as many youth that looked like me as possible to fight. Location has never mattered—it’s always been about the youth and our collective solidarity.”

Together, we reached more than 6,000 Oakland neighbors who, in an overwhelming majority, passed Measure QQ to expand the school board election voting age to 16.

Leveling Up the Fight

As local campaigns built momentum, we pushed forward at the State Capitol, too.

Throughout 2019, Power California leaders took city-level learnings to Sacramento, lobbying around proposals such as Proposition 18, the Primary Voting for 17-Year-Olds Amendment, to expand the voting age to 17. Our network of youth organizers met with state legislators and made waves in the press, presenting compelling data on young people’s readiness and demand to strengthen our democracy.

The uphill battle to expand the youth vote at the state level emphasizes our need for a strategy that targets power in multiple lanes. In a state where certain politicians do not believe young people are ready to vote, we must also work to shift the narratives, build up the youth electorate, and help elect new leaders who believe in the next generation.

Though Proposition 18 ultimately fell short, years later, the same proposal (SCA 2 – Stern) is now making its way successfully through the state legislative cycle.

To this day, Tyler still receives messages from youth across the country inspired to vote early, often, and on behalf of loved ones who can’t. They’re energized to replicate efforts like those in Los Angeles and Oakland. Lucky for us all, there’s a strong blueprint to build from.



CONCLUSION

The last five years changed the rules of the game: California's young people of color have unlocked their ability not only to demand more, but to fight hard and win big.

They've risen to influence thousands of hearts, minds, and votes. They've powered the frontlines of campaigns that are steadily improving the wellness of communities locally and statewide.

Ready to Win: The Next 5 Years

Moving forward, we are laser-focused on deepening the youth organizing movement to further disrupt establishment politics throughout California.

- This means expanding youth leadership in the Central Valley and Inlands especially, where conservative forces maintain a stronghold against the needs of farmworking and low-income families.
- This means recommitting to center young people of color as the shot-callers and play-makers of every plan and pivot. Our membership model is bringing together Gen Z and Millennial activists, healers, organizers, and hustlers from all across the state to hold those in power accountable.

This next generation of young leaders is quickly becoming the state's most formidable political force. We're ready to power their next moves, and hope you'll join us to make history together.



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Elizabeth Lugo, Associate Director
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Alliance Partners

AHRI for Justice
Californians for Justice
Community Coalition
Communities for a Better Environment
Filipino Advocates for Justice
Future Leaders of America
Gente Organizada
Inland Congregations United for Change
InnerCity Struggle
Legacy LA
Loud for Tomorrow
North Bay Organizing Project
Oakland Kids First
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
Resilience OC
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San Francisco Rising
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network
Sigma Beta Xi Family Services
Social Justice Leadership Institute

Report Authors

Tiffany Kang
Sandra Hamada

Portrait Photographer

Alejandro Berber @alexknowbody





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www.powercalifornia.org

@powercanow