

Part IV. California's New Majority

Confronts Climate Crisis

BY REIMAGINE! RP&E

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Figure 1. Oakland Climate Action Coalition Rally at Oakland City Hall, March 2010, courtesy of Ella Baker Center.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the process of advancing climate resilience plays out in communities and regions around the country, there are unique and inspiring lessons to be gleaned from recent efforts in California. These efforts point to the promise and peril of winning and implementing the resilience policy that can advance adaptation, mitigation and social cohesion in sustained and integrated ways. The work in California shows what is possible and builds momentum for advances to be made in other regions of the country.

Shaping a resilient future: Lessons from California

Low-income communities and communities of color are on the frontlines of the changing climate — they are hit first and hardest by climate impacts. But these communities are also leading the way to a resilient future. Here, we explore case studies from California, where frontline communities are using their growing political power to defeat harmful legislation and implement alternatives that are both socially just and climate resilient.

Policy Highlights

1. *Developing policy-making capacity at the grassroots level within communities of color is crucial for coalitions to succeed in winning power and building climate resilience at local and state levels.*
2. *People of color are the new majority in California and the emerging majority in the nation. New majority support and action on environmental issues undergird the success of climate policy measures in California and are also key to building a successful national movement.*
3. *The combination of state mandates and local action in California provide a model for building movement capacity to shape a new policy landscape.*

A shifting landscape

Climate change and demographic change are both reshaping California's political landscape. On the one hand, the combined electoral power of Latinos, Asians and African Americans has repeatedly tipped the balance in state and local elections to bring forth a more liberal if not yet progressive generation of political leadership.¹ On the other, climate change is hitting low-income people and communities of color first and hardest.²

Now more than ever, environmental and climate justice communities have a vital role in shaping climate policy choices that will result in better opportunities for health, jobs, transit, and housing for all. Our communities can and should provide the next generation of leadership for the environmental and climate movement. Greenhouse gas reduction policies and mitigation and adaptation measures that aim to protect the human and natural environment from the impacts of climate change can be leveraged to strengthen our communities, make them more resilient and open pathways for a just transition to a new economy.

This opportunity is still nascent. Policy victories require multi-year campaigns with multiple coalition participants. They also require the ability to challenge undemocratic planning processes through a political program based on input from impacted communities. Even if communities present coherent, expert-tested plans that are objectively superior to industry-backed proposals, they will not be adopted without the exercise of political power.

Results from California's redistricting as well as the newly enforced California Voting Rights Act (which enables fair representation of communities of color at the local level) demonstrate that the raw electoral power of communities of color and low-income people is on the upswing.³ The campaign against the Dirty Energy Proposition 23 demonstrated that a political alliance of communities of color can engage with state-wide mainstream and environmental groups to defend progressive environmental

policy. The victory in creating a Green House Gas Reduction Fund (SB535) with specific percentage targets for impacted communities shows that organizing can shape public policy in a positive — and not just a defensive — manner.

The scorecard on environmental justice and climate policy, however, still remains to be tallied. The economic and environmental impacts of the processes set in motion by AB32⁴ have not yet resulted in substantive results on the ground.

The most challenging aspect of California's climate policy in the past two decades has been that the progressive thrust of legislation and climate planning, achieved through community input and democratic process, has been channeled into less accountable forums, such as the Air Resources Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), where neither democratic process nor policy expertise determine outcomes. Vested interests in polluting industries, corporate lobbyists and politicians who serve them often dominate such decision-making entities.

But there is an important lesson to be learned even in defeat: policy proposals that are debated and contested in democratic or popular political forums create opportunities for constituent education, alliance building with other constituencies and regions, a public record of the deliberations, and a better jumping off point for the next round. It's important, therefore, for environmental and climate justice advocates to create a terrain of contention where democratic process can carry the day. While behind-the-scenes lobbying and relationships with politicians and policy-makers in the environmental and administrative agencies are necessary for moving policy, they are simply not enough by themselves.

1 Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Surveys 2008-2012 (ppic.org/main/series.asp?i=12) and "A Perfect Storm," Catherine Lerza. 2011. (wherewelivefilm.org/more/white-paper/)

2 "Getting Ready for Change: Green Economics and Climate Justice," B. Jesse Clarke, *RP&E Journal*, Vol.13, No.1. 2006. (reimaginerpe.org/rpe/13-1/about)

3 "Voting Rights are Local Rights," Gil Cedillo, *RP&E Journal*, Vol.18., No.2. 2011. (reimaginerpe.org/18-2/cedillo)

4 AB32, California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB or ARB) to develop regulations and market mechanisms to reduce California's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020, representing a 25 percent reduction statewide.

Long-term environmental and climate justice organizing shapes the playing field

Since the late 1980s, in California and nationally, climate and environmental justice organizers have been engaging communities to fight pollution and toxic contamination. Kettleman City, California, still a site of contention between waste disposal companies and the community, was at the heart of a 1988 struggle that characterized the organizing efforts of the time. Kettleman's predominantly Latino residents, prevented from participating in public hearings by government actions, organized a political campaign based on civil rights principles, which halted the siting of that particular incinerator.⁵

Numerous other battles in Los Angeles, Oakland and the Central Valley resulted in the first California State environmental justice legislation. In 1999, Governor Grey Davis signed SB115, making

California the first state in the nation to codify a definition of "environmental justice." In the years following, a number of related measures have created state oversight boards for environmental justice in numerous departments.

As Manuel Pastor, director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community, observed at the time,⁶ it was often the Latino politicians responding to their constituencies — key swing districts in California state politics — that moved EJ into state law. Similarly now, as climate change has become ever more important in California, it is often the pressure from communities of color that pushes California to the national forefront on climate mitigation and adaptation legislation.

Cities break national climate policy paralysis

Global climate impact and policy are being driven in a local and trans-local way. As international climate negotiations and the actions of most national commitments have consistently fallen short of the dramatic action needed to address climate change, the most significant policy advances have been in cities and states that have stepped forward to try to fill the gap created by the failure at the international and national government levels.

In 2005, over 50 mayors from cities, such as London, Rio de Janeiro, Tehran, Cape Town, Sydney, and Shanghai came to San Francisco to sign the "Urban Environmental Accords," a city-to-city compact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.⁷ The

Kyoto protocol was only eight years old and had just come into force that February.⁸ But as local governments across the United States were trying to implement climate policies and build momentum for the global treaty, they were being stymied at the national level by the George Bush administration.

The Accords addressed seven environmental areas common to all the world's large cities: water, energy, waste, urban design, transportation, urban nature, and environmental health.⁹ Parin Shah, a climate activist then working to implement the Accords,¹⁰ hailed the fact that direct action by cities made it more likely that climate policy would take the needs of environmental justice

5 California Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Program Update, February 2014. (www.calepa.ca.gov/Publications)

6 "Environmental Justice: Reflections from the United States," Manuel Pastor. 2002. (peri.umass.edu/ Political Economy Research Institute)

7 "Mayors gather for climate change summit." Associated Press, May 31, 2005. (nbcnews.com/id/8044734/#.UugSgfbTkYI)

8 The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on December 11, 1997 and entered into force on February 16, 2005. The detailed rules for implementation of the Protocol were adopted at COP 7 in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2001 and are referred to as the "Marrakesh Accords." The Protocol's first commitment period started in 2008 and ended in 2012. (unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)

9 "Mayors Sign Historic Urban Environmental Accords." Department of the Environment, City and County of San Francisco, June 5, 2005. (sfenvironment.org/news/press-release/mayors-sign-historic-urban-environmental-accords)

10 Parin Shah on Urban Environmental Accords (transcript of audio interview). (old.globalpublicmedia.com/transcripts/829). Shah was director of the Urban Accords Institute. He now works at APEN.

communities into account. Bay Area environmental and climate justice groups coordinated by the Ella Baker Center organized to create the first Social Equity Track at the UN World Environment Day and staged a dozen events during the three-day Accords conference to ensure that the voices of people of color were heard.¹¹

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom both played prominent roles at the Accords. (In 2004, San Francisco became one of the first U.S. cities to adopt a local climate action plan). The Governor used

the occasion to sign an executive order that set non-binding statewide greenhouse gas emissions targets and ordered state agencies to begin planning toward those ends.¹²

Since then, California's climate policy has seen a dynamic interplay between mainstream political leaders making ambitious and publicly popular promises — often with no implementation plan in sight — and environmental and climate justice organizations struggling to include the interests of low-income people and communities of color in actionable policy language.

California responds to popular support for climate action

Environmental protection has always been popular in California and following the 2005 Executive Order, politicians throughout the state began work to turn the non-binding targets into actual legislation. The back- and-forth between the Democratic legislature and the Republican Governor continued throughout the legislative process with frequent and visible public debates that in the end produced the California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB32).¹³

A key accomplishment of the lobbying by environmental and climate justice groups was the explicit language in the law requiring the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to “ensure that activities undertaken to comply with the regulations do not disproportionately impact low-income communities and that these communities also benefit from statewide efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”¹⁴

The legislation has numerous sections directing the executive

branch to take environmental and climate justice communities into account. The body responsible for monitoring the impacts is the Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC).¹⁵

Unfortunately, on the eve of the 2006 election, Governor Schwarzenegger — although campaigning as pro-environment — started to undermine AB32 with an executive order that pushed the state toward implementation of his original agenda, a cap-and-trade program.¹⁶ In 2007, he fired ARB Chair Robert Sawyer who wanted to aggressively implement early action regulations to bring down emissions quickly. ARB Executive Officer Catherine Witherspoon resigned in protest.

Angela Johnson-Meszaros, co-chair of the EJAC, reportedly said that ARB was already ignoring their recommendations “not just for climate change, but for co-pollutants.”¹⁷ (Co-pollution is a term for the emission of both toxic chemicals and carbon. Reducing those toxic emissions is central to the protection of

11 “Reclaim the Future: Striving for Restorative, Economic and Environmental Justice in Oakland.” Joshua Abraham, *Left Turn Magazine*. March 1, 2006. (leftturn.org/reclaim-future-striving-restorative-economic-and-environmental-justice-oakland)

12 Executive Order S-3-05 by the Governor of the State of California. Signed June 1, 2005. (dot.ca.gov/hq/energy/ExecOrderS-3-05.htm)

13 “The History of Schwarzenegger, AB 32, and Global Warming.” California Progress Report. February 23, 2007. (californiaprogressreport.com/site/history-schwarzenegger-ab-32-and-global-warming)

14 Assessing the Effects of AB 32 Climate Change Mitigation Programs in Environmental Justice Communities. (arb.ca.gov/cc/ejac/meetings/102213/tracking-indicators.pdf)

15 arb.ca.gov/cc/ejac/ejac.htm

16 Executive Order S-17-06. Office of the Governor of the State of California. October 16, 2006. (c2es.org/docUploads/CAExecOrderS%2017%2006.pdf)

17 “Gov. Schwarzenegger’s Global Warming Act Called Hot Air.” Paul Rosenberg, *Consumer Watchdog*. July 27, 2007. (consumerwatchdog.org/story/gov-schwarzeneggers-global-warming-act-called-hot-air)

low-income communities, which are usually located near the sources.)

This particular dynamic — public support for climate action and environmental justice vs. closed-door pressure from incumbent polluters — continues to plague the implementation of AB32. Nonetheless, public support is so strong that whenever the issues are considered in an authentic democratic process, a better environment for all is advanced. This lesson was borne out in 2010.

Communities of color defeat Proposition 23 with “Climate Firewall”

Just as the major provisions of AB32 were to begin taking effect, two oil companies financed a campaign to suspend implementation of the law until unemployment dropped below 5 percent. Proponents of Prop 23 (Dirty Energy) cloaked their argument for overturning AB32 in the classic “jobs vs. environment” format.

Environmental and climate justice advocates faced a tough challenge. Despite its drawbacks, AB32 was California’s strongest piece of pro-environment legislation in a generation and a leader in the nation’s climate policy. And while the protection of impacted communities had been a struggle at each stage of its implementation, it was still considered a major step in working toward the environmental health of those communities.

Mainstream environmentalists and business groups were quick to form a

In “A Perfect Storm,”¹⁸ her post-election analysis of the campaign and its results, Catherine Lerza draws a number of important demographic and policy conclusions about the leadership role that communities of color can and are playing in California’s environmental policy battles.

(Read the entire report at edgefunders.org/publications-resources).



Figure 2. Prop 23 was soundly defeated in the 2010 election, thanks to communities of color, which turned the tide. According to surveys by the California Public Policy Institute, Latinos (67%) and blacks (63%) are far more likely than whites (40%) or Asians (38%) to say that global warming is a very serious threat.

18 “A Perfect Storm.” Funders Network for Transforming the Global Economy (FNTG). (edgefunders.org/publications-resources/; edgefunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Prop23CaseStudy_000.pdf)

well-funded coalition to defeat the measure. Many environmental and climate justice groups joined this larger coalition but others created their own statewide coalition — Communities United Against the Dirty Energy Proposition — which laid the groundwork for future collective action and advocacy. This enabled a

Cap-and-trade

The next big battle for the environmental and climate justice community was cap-and-trade. Steam-rolled in as the methodology for “putting a price on carbon,” advocates on the ground and within the legislature knew from the start that cap-and-trade would allow incumbent polluters to keep their facilities dirty while vulnerable communities suffocate in the toxic effluents of power plants, refineries, industrial agriculture, and automobile exhaust. Direct regulations of carbon pollution or an actual carbon tax were considered by many to be more effective ways of improving health and safety for impacted communities.

In the initial legislative battle, Governor Schwarzenegger had lost his bid to force “market-based mechanisms” into the legislation. Cap-and-trade policies were mandated to be considered only after “early action” measures — primarily direct regulation of carbon pollution — had been implemented. But the legislation also gave considerable discretionary power to the ARB. The firing of the Board’s chairperson, coupled with the Governor’s order directing the Executive Branch agencies to prioritize cap-and-trade moved it to the top of the agenda.²⁰

Repeated expert testimony that called cap-and-trade an untested methodology for controlling carbon emissions, as well as Europe’s failure in implementing it, were ignored.²¹ Scores of policy recommendations made by the legislatively mandated EJAC

statewide conversation about the equity of environmental priorities, culture-specific organizing within impacted communities, and the creation of a strong statewide network with equity concerns at its heart. Working collaboratively, the coalitions defeated Prop 23 by a majority 60 percent vote.¹⁹

went unimplemented as the legislature provided practically no funds for the work. Although EJAC members had a clear grasp of the intricacies of climate policy, they lacked the leverage to alter the cap-and-trade program included in the draft scoping plan proposed by the ARB.²² As a result, several of the organizations represented on the EJAC, including the Center on Race Poverty and the Environment (CRPE) and Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), decided to sue the ARB to block implementation of cap-and-trade.

The plaintiffs were pleasantly surprised when on May 20, 2011, Judge Ernest Goldsmith of the San Francisco Superior Court ruled that the ARB had violated the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because, among other things, it had failed to properly consider alternatives to a cap-and-trade program in its Scoping Plan to implement AB32.²³ Unfortunately, the ruling only addressed the procedures the ARB had used, not the merits of the program. So the ARB was able to proceed with cap-and-trade after formally considering and rejecting the alternative plan.

19 Suspend Air Pollution Control Law (AB 23). Election Results by County, California Secretary of State. (sos.ca.gov/elections/sov/2010-general/maps/prop-23.htm)

20 “California’s Climate Change Planning: Policy Innovation and Structural Hurdles,” Stephen M. Wheeler. Planning for Climate Change: Strategies for Mitigation and Adaptation (Eds. Simin Davoudi, Jenny Crawford and Abid Mehmood). London: Earthscan. 2009. (its.ucdavis.edu/research/publications/publication-detail/?pub_id=1616)

21 “Equitable Alternatives to AB 32’s Cap-and-Trade Program.” Recorded remarks of Adrienne Bloch, Senior Staff Attorney, Communities for a Better Environment. (reimaginecrpe.org/files/Bloch-AB32-06.10.11-64kbs.mp3)

22 Recommendations and Comments of the Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. Proposed Scoping Plan. October 1, 2008. (arb.ca.gov/cc/ejac/ejac_comments_final.pdf)

23 crpe-ej.org/crpe/images/stories/campaigns_climate/AIR_v_ARB_5-20-11.pdf

Greenhouse gas reduction revenues could fund climate action

The lawsuit against the ARB provided significant media visibility for the environmental justice critique of cap- and-trade. Across the state, people were educated about the fact that carbon pollution and toxic pollution are co-pollutants and that cap-and-trade permitted continued emissions at refineries, power plants, and other sources situated in low-income communities. The lawsuit helped build a persuasive argument that communities of color and low-income people need to be included in shaping policy on how climate change mitigation efforts impact our communities.

Community organizations that had tried and failed to establish an ambitious carbon trust fund (SB31) in 2009²⁴ came back to the legislature with a new plan and in 2012, two Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Fund measures (AB1532 and SB535) were passed and signed by Governor Jerry Brown. Organizations both for and against cap-and-trade had united in support of directing 25 percent of the proceeds from carbon permit auctions towards improving conditions in impacted communities.²⁵

After a decade of struggle, there is now in place a revenue stream specifically targeted at funding local and regional efforts to reduce GHG emissions and climate change impacts. In 2013-14, carbon permit auctions yielded over \$500 million in revenues and the ARB estimates that within a few years, depending on market conditions, the amount of money flowing through this channel could be substantial — as much as \$1.5 billion in 2014-15 and \$2.4 billion in 2015-16 and 2016-17.²⁶

Gaining access to that money, however, is an on-going battle with the State, as well as with regional and local agencies that make allocation decisions. One major channel for the funds will

be regional transportation planning organizations, mandated to reduce carbon emissions as a result of another California state climate policy, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, commonly referred to as SB375. This legislation supports the State's climate action goals to reduce GHGs through coordinated transportation and land-use planning for more sustainable communities.²⁷

The planning agencies are critical sites for decision-making on a host of issues, ranging from transportation access to jobs and economic opportunities to neighborhood streetscape improvements. Broad-based community intervention in the San Francisco Bay Area attempted to ensure that benefits and impacts of such development would be shared by all communities. The alternative plan proposed by community forces demonstrated that by addressing the needs of low-income people, the plan could better serve the entire Bay area, both in terms of mitigating carbon emissions and improving health outcomes.

24 "A Trust Fund for California's Poor Communities." Evelyn Marcelina Rangel-Medina, *RP&E Journal*, Vol.16, No.2. 2009. (reimaginerpe.org/node/4921)

25 "California Cap-and-Trade." Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. January 2014. (c2es.org/us-states-regions/key-legislation/california-cap-trade)

26 "Politics of Carbon Auction Proceeds—The Battle Ahead." Four Twenty Seven Climate Solutions. (427mt.com/2013/12/politics-carbon-auction-proceeds-battle-ahead)

27 arb.ca.gov/cc/sb375/sb375.htm

Equity, Environment and Jobs | Grassroots participation in SB375 San Francisco Bay area

Richard A. Marcantonio and Alex Karner detail the course of one battle in their case study of the San Francisco Bay area planning process “One Bay Area.”²⁸ Anticipating the possible opening SB375 could create for local organizations, community groups across the nine-county San Francisco Bay region came together in 2010 to create a regional policy and investment platform that would put the needs of disadvantaged communities first. The coalition that emerged — The 6 Wins Network — has since been engaged in shaping planning priorities.

Public Advocates, a key member of this broad network of over 40 organizations, summarizes three of the important accomplishments of The 6 Wins so far:

1. Launching the first-ever community-built, equity-driven, alternative regional plan. Developed in 2011, the Equity, Environment and Jobs (EEJ) scenario focuses on creating a more healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for Bay Area residents of all races and incomes, including struggling families.

2. Showing that equity is better for everyone. In July 2012, MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) were persuaded to study the benefits of an EEJ scenario in their Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of the Plan. The EIR, released in April 2013, concluded that the EEJ out-performed the Draft Plan and three other alternatives. In fact, MTC and ABAG called the EEJ scenario an “environmentally superior alternative” because it resulted in fewer greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants; a broader distribution of affordable housing; \$8 billion more to increase transit



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community.

(continued on following page)

Figure 3. Cal EPA is developing an instrument that combines multiple metrics to measure pollution and poverty and analyzes (by zip code) the “disadvantaged communities” that could receive benefits from SB535. [July 1, 2014]

28 “Disadvantaged Communities Teach Regional Planners a Lesson in Equitable and Sustainable Development.” Richard A. Marcantonio and Alex Karner, *Poverty & Race*, Vol. 23, No. 1, January, 2014.

Moving the money

Another dimension of climate engagement may be found in the Municipal Energy and Climate Action Plans (ECAP), which set policies on how cities can engage in GHG emissions reductions and energy conservation. ECAPs potentially are the basis by which GHG reduction funds will be directed. Since 2004, when San Francisco first enacted its plan, other cities across California have followed suit. In Oakland, the community-based Climate Action Coalition (OCAC) engaged in a two-year campaign to institute an 18-point program now in place.²⁹

Miya Yoshitani, executive director of APEN, compares these plans to the “shovel ready projects” of the stimulus fund in 2008. Cities that are ready with a plan will get the funding when the money finally comes through.

Across the state, there are hundreds of small-scale projects that are already moving ahead with climate resilience policies and practices that are equity-driven efforts from the ground up. Communities are finding intervention points in classic land-use battles, such as the work of the Environmental Health Coalition in San Diego’s Barrio Logan.³⁰ Transit organizing projects in Los Angeles³¹ and the San Francisco Bay Area³² are fusing concerns about climate with transit access organizing to force authorities to provide better service to low-income communities — and reduce carbon and other forms of pollution. Urban greening projects, such as Urban Tilth in Richmond³³ and Urban Releaf in Oakland³⁴ are building greener cities, strengthening communities, and advancing policy positions on carbon reduction and sustainable agriculture.

In “Facing the Climate Gap,” published in 2012, authors Manuel Pastor, et al. demonstrate the breadth of community involvement in climate resilience action through 12 case studies at 18 community-engaged organizations.³⁵ The authors observe that “impacted communities are knowledge rich; they have often been a part of action research projects that expose the weakness of compliance, rule-making, and record-keeping. Beyond environmental needs, they know what would work, on the ground, in their neighborhoods. Combining community wisdom — especially the traditional ecological knowledge of California’s indigenous communities — with

service levels; more opportunities for walking and biking; fewer injuries and fatalities from traffic accidents; the fewest renters priced out of their neighborhoods; and the lowest combined housing and transportation costs for low-income households.

3. Linking grassroots groups, academics, and policy and legal advocates. *We know that we’re stronger when we each bring our unique skills to the table and work collectively across issue areas. The 6 Wins has built bridges to groups that focus on environment, public health, good government, and business. By May 2013, more than 40 groups, including the American Lung Association, the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, had joined in calling on MTC and ABAG to incorporate key elements of the EEJ in the final plan.*

Cal EPA is developing an instrument that combines multiple metrics to measure pollution and poverty and analyze (by zip code) the “disadvantaged communities” that could receive benefits from SB535.

29 “Oakland Coalition Charts New Course on Climate Strategy.” Al Weinrub, *RP&E Journal*, Vol.16, No.2. 2009. (reimaginerpe.org/cj/weinrub)

30 environmentalhealth.org/index.php/en

31 “LA Bus Riders’ Union Rolls Over Transit Racism.” Geoff Ray, *RP&E Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2007. (reimaginerpe.org/node/327) (thestrategycenter.org/project/bus-riders-union)

32 “TJ Youth Score Win for Free MUNI Passes.” Rene Ciria-Cruz, *RP&E Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2. 2007. (reimaginerpe.org/19-2/ciria-cruz-TJ)

33 urbantilth.org

34 urbanreleaf.org

35 “Facing the Climate Gap: How Environmental Justice Communities are Leading the Way to a More Sustainable and Equitable California.” Ellen Kersten, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Manuel Pastor, and Marlene Ramos. Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), University of Southern California. October 2012.

academic and policy-making expertise has the potential for deep impact.”

In 2014, the Legislature and Governor Brown agreed on the first release of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds.³⁶ Approximately \$230 million (about 26 per cent) was allocated to aid environmental and climate justice communities. This includes \$75 million to weatherize low-income homes and \$25 million for transit and intercity rail networks in poor communities.³⁷ Another \$130 million will go to the Strategic Growth Council to fund local planning efforts across the state.

According to William Fulton, in an analysis published in the California Development and Planning Report, “local governments and their nonprofit partners are focusing on implementation of previous plans — especially climate action plans.”³⁸ If this prediction bears out, local governments should be more receptive than ever to partnering with grassroots organizations to promote climate resilience work developed with an equity framework.

California is in the grip of a three-year drought — the worst since it acquired statehood — and perfectly in line with the prediction of more extreme weather resulting from climate change. The drought, which has hit all western U.S. states, is already threatening water supplies, worsening air quality, and beginning to drive up food prices.³⁹ These climate impacts are hitting our communities now. While international climate policy has stalled, and the EPA has only just begun the rulemaking to limit carbon emissions, California’s decades-long struggle to shape a coherent policy is a notable bright spot in the efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

We need to continue the fight, acknowledging that it will be a generations-long process. Now is the time for us to move beyond reframing the debate and educating our communities, to winning resources and political power that can make positive change.

Catherine Lerza calls California’s communities of color “a climate firewall” because it was *our* voting power that turned the tide to preserve AB32 in the 2010 elections. Indeed, low-income people and communities of color are our best hope for preventing the firestorm of extreme weather and extreme right political positions that dominate the national political and environmental landscape. Accepting the centrality of community-based leadership and decision-making in channeling climate adaptation and mitigation investments is also the best method of ensuring that the proceeds produce real community resilience. ■

Since publication, *ReImagine!* published the following articles updating the story on the work in California:

- Moving the Money: CalEnviroScreen Debate Signals New Focus on Environmental Justice in State Policy
By Amy Vanderwarker
<http://reimagineerpe.org/20-1/vanderwarker>
- Can’t See the Trees... or the Forest: Why Oakland Can’t Afford to Keep Ignoring Urban Forestry
By Eric Arnold
<http://reimagineerpe.org/20-1/arnold>

B. Jesse Clarke is the project director of ReImagine!, a nonprofit collaboration that enables media-making by community-based organizations. ReImagine! is the new home of Race Poverty & the Environment (RP&E) Journal and a fiscally sponsored project of the Movement Strategy Center.

36 AB-1532 California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. 2011-12. (leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB1532)

37 “Calif. Earmarks a Quarter of Its Cap-and-Trade Riches for Environmental Justice.” *Inside Climate News*. June 25, 2014. \$230 million from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund will go to programs for low-income and minorities this year. (insideclimatenews.org/news/20140625/calif-earmarks-quarter-its-cap-and-trade-riches-environmental-justice)

38 “Will SGC money pay for planning or implementation?” William Fulton. (cp-dr.com/node/3513)

39 “Severe Drought Has U.S. West Fearing Worst.” Adam Nagourney and Ian Lovett, *The New York Times*, February 1, 2014. (nytimes.com/2014/02/02/us/severe-drought-has-us-west-fearing-worst.html?_r=0)