Youth Organizing Best Practices and the Advancement of Racial Justice, Equity, and Inclusivity in Los Angeles County

Veronica Terriquez
UC Santa Cruz
Engaging individuals during a critical stage of the life course, the best practices of youth organizing empower adolescents and young adults from marginalized and vulnerable communities to lead equity-minded policy and social change efforts.
Youth Organizing Groups in LA County

API Equality-LA
Brothers Sons Selves Coalition
CARECEN
Changeist
CHIRLA - Wise Up & CDN
CBE
Community Coalition
East Yard Communities for EJ
Esperanza Community H.C.
Filipino Migrant Center
GSA Network
Gente Organizada
InnerCity Struggle
Khmer Girls in Action
Korean Resource Center
Labor/Community Strategy Center
Latino Equality Alliance
Legacy LA
Brotherhood Crusade
Pacoima Beautiful
Power CA
Roots For Peace
Schools LA Students Deserve
Social Justice Learning Institute
SEACA
UCLA Dream Resource Center
Weingart ELA YMCA
Young Invincibles
Youth Justice Coalition

Photo Credit: Khmer Girls in Action
Multi-Level Impacts of Youth Organizing Best Practices

**Individuals:**
- Positive civic, health, and educational outcomes

**Families:**
- Enhanced civic engagement

**Communities and society:**
- Advances policy change and government accountability
- Increases young voter turnout
- Contributes to cultural and narrative change
Impact of Youth Organizing on Individuals
LA County Youth Organizing Members Report Impacts on Health Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Taking better care of physical health</th>
<th>Taking better care of emotional well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little impact</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some impact</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of impact</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N=384)
LA County Youth Members Report
Expanded Critical Civic Knowledge About:

Issues impacting the community:
- No impact: 5%
- A little impact: 26%
- Some impact: 67%

How government decisions affect the community:
- No impact: 4%
- A little impact: 33%
- Some impact: 60%

(N=384)
Youth Members Report Learning About Diversity and Inequality

(N=384)

- Learned about own ethnic/racial group:
  - No impact: 4%
  - A little impact: 7%
  - Some impact: 23%
  - A lot of impact: 66%

- Learned about other ethnic/racial groups:
  - No impact: 2%
  - A little impact: 6%
  - Some impact: 32%
  - A lot of impact: 60%

- Learned about gender issues:
  - No impact: 4%
  - A little impact: 7%
  - Some impact: 29%
  - A lot of impact: 60%

- Learned about economic inequality:
  - No impact: 3%
  - A little impact: 7%
  - Some impact: 30%
  - A lot of impact: 60%

- Learned about LGBTQ issues:
  - No impact: 11%
  - A little impact: 8%
  - Some impact: 28%
  - A lot of impact: 53%
### Youth Members Report Expanded Civic Skills (N=384)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>A little impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>A lot of impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved ability to communicate with others</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved ability to speak in public</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved ability to plan events and activities</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Youth Members Report Improved Capacity for Civic Action

(N=384)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact policy change</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>A little impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>A lot of impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organize others for campaigns</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>A little impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>A lot of impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Former members of high school youth organizing groups were more likely to report 4-year college enrollment when compared to similar peers.

- **Community College**: 49% (General Population: N=2200, Youth Organizing Alumni: N=410)
- **CSU or Similar**: 34% (General Population: N=2200, Youth Organizing Alumni: N=410)
- **Selective 4 Year College**: 41% (General Population: N=2200, Youth Organizing Alumni: N=410)
Youth Organizing Impacts on Families

Photo Credit: Community Coalition
As I became more active, I would try to get my family to support, come to the rallies. My sister eventually came to the rallies—my mom, too. My mom was like, ‘Wow, this is serious.’ So then she started helping out with the campaign.

CHIRLA Wise Up Alum, Male, age 21
Youth Organizing Impacts on Communities
Youth Organizing Campaign Issues

- **Criminal Justice Reform**: 24% primary, 34% shared
- **Education**: 28% primary, 69% shared
- **Employment**: 7% primary, 41% shared
- **Environmental**: 28% primary, 34% shared
- **Gender/LGBTQ**: 17% primary, 52% shared
- **Health**: 21% primary, 45% shared
- **Housing**: 24% primary, 38% shared
- **Immigration**: 24% primary, 52% shared
- **Native Rights**: 34% primary
- **Violence Prevention, Gun Reform, and/or antimilitarism**: 7% primary, 41% shared
- **Voting**: 24% primary, 62% shared

Legend:
- **Pink**: Primary Issue
- **Gray**: Shared Issue
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Schools</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Legislature</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental agencies</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice/Criminal Justice</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=29
Turnout Among 18-24 Year Old LA County Residents in Recent Midterms

Turnout Data Sources:
California Civic Engagement Project (2014)
Political Data Inc.I (2018)

Twenty-five youth organizing groups reported engaging young voters in LA County in 2018
Source: FCYO Field Scan 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth Organizing Increases Voter Turnout

LA County Voters Aged 18-24, 2018
Results of a Randomized Experiment

N= 81,572

- Control Group: 40.8%
- Target Group: 43.3%
- Contacted Group: 46.6%

Data Source: Power California and PDI
The Lasting Implications of Youth Organizing Best Practices

- Marginalized and vulnerable youth learn to advocate for systems change now and over the life course.
- Political efficacy and a commitment to racial justice, equity and inclusivity are shared across generations.
- Local systems become more accountable to the most marginalized and vulnerable residents.
Key Recommendations

● Develop State, County, and City funding streams for youth organizing and other youth development programming with a track record of engaging Black, Indigenous, system-impacted, immigrant, refugee, and other low-income youth

● Provide support for training youth-serving organizations on the best practices of youth organizing

● Create mechanisms for incorporating youth voice into local decision-making