



JUSTICE ON THE HORIZON
ANNUAL REPORT 2017



CRLA

2017 IMPACT

CRLA provides an array of legal services that improves the lives and communities of thousands of low-income Californians.

Housing



▶ **2,615** Cases Closed

Enforcing federal and state fair housing laws; monitoring low-income community redevelopment; enforcing habitability standards; preventing evictions; providing foreclosure counseling; promoting homeownership; preventing predatory lending.

Labor & Employment



▶ **1,406** Cases Closed

Collecting unpaid wages; enforcing minimum wage and overtime laws; upholding health and safety protections; enforcing workers' rights to rest and meal periods; collecting unemployment insurance benefits; fighting sexual harassment in the workplace.

Education



▶ **131** Cases Closed

Enforcing students' rights in areas of special education and suspensions/expulsions; guaranteeing access to a free and appropriate public education; migrant education programs and alternative school placements.

Rural Health



▶ **772** Cases Closed

Securing public benefits; supporting victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence; maintaining health insurance, disability and SSI coverage; guaranteeing access to clean water and preventing pesticide poisoning; assisting with ACA applications and needs.

Money Recovered



▶ **\$2,115,340**

Money recovered for CRLA clients in 2017. Includes back awards, lump sum settlements, and monthly benefits obtained.

Make our impact even greater, donate online www.crla.org



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Our Mission

To fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society.

Our Vision of Justice

A rural California where all people are treated with dignity and respect and guaranteed their fundamental rights.





José Padilla



Roberto de la Rosa Jr.

Dear Friends:

Together, let's create Rural Justice and with it light for these darker times!

In this unceasing state of national turmoil, CRLA's work has become even more vital as it seeks to serve as a counterpoint to that negative politic. Injustices that CRLA has always fought against seem more important these days: sexual harassment, racism, LGBTQ discrimination, wage theft. Why? Perhaps CRLA advocacy can serve as a beacon of hope to those most vulnerable to losing those social justice gains achieved during the War on Poverty and what has followed.

Every case we take on, every phone call we make, every interview we do, works towards the goal of giving the rural working poor the highest quality legal service that the wealthy enjoy and expect. The high goal is Justice! CRLA cannot create this Justice alone. Together—donors, board members, political supporters, colleague attorneys—all of us can and must work towards this vision of a better future in which poor women can work with dignity, all children can get a quality education, and a disabled veteran can keep his foreclosed home when the local bank wants one more to add to its cache of foreclosed properties!

There is a Mexican dicho that says: ¡La esperanza es lo ultimo que muere! Hope is the last thing that dies! So it is this hope in the client who walks into the CRLA neighborhood legal aid office that drives our devoted staff and inspires us to continue that hard daily toil in their names. And it is that same hope that then allows CRLA to make a justice difference in that rural California that treats the rural, low-income resident—farm worker like veteran—the lesser member of the community.

Thanks to you for your continuing generosity. Together we will meet and beat these challenging times.

*Adelante creando luz,
Forward creating light,*

José Padilla,
CRLA Executive Director

Roberto de la Rosa Jr.,
CRLA Board Chairperson

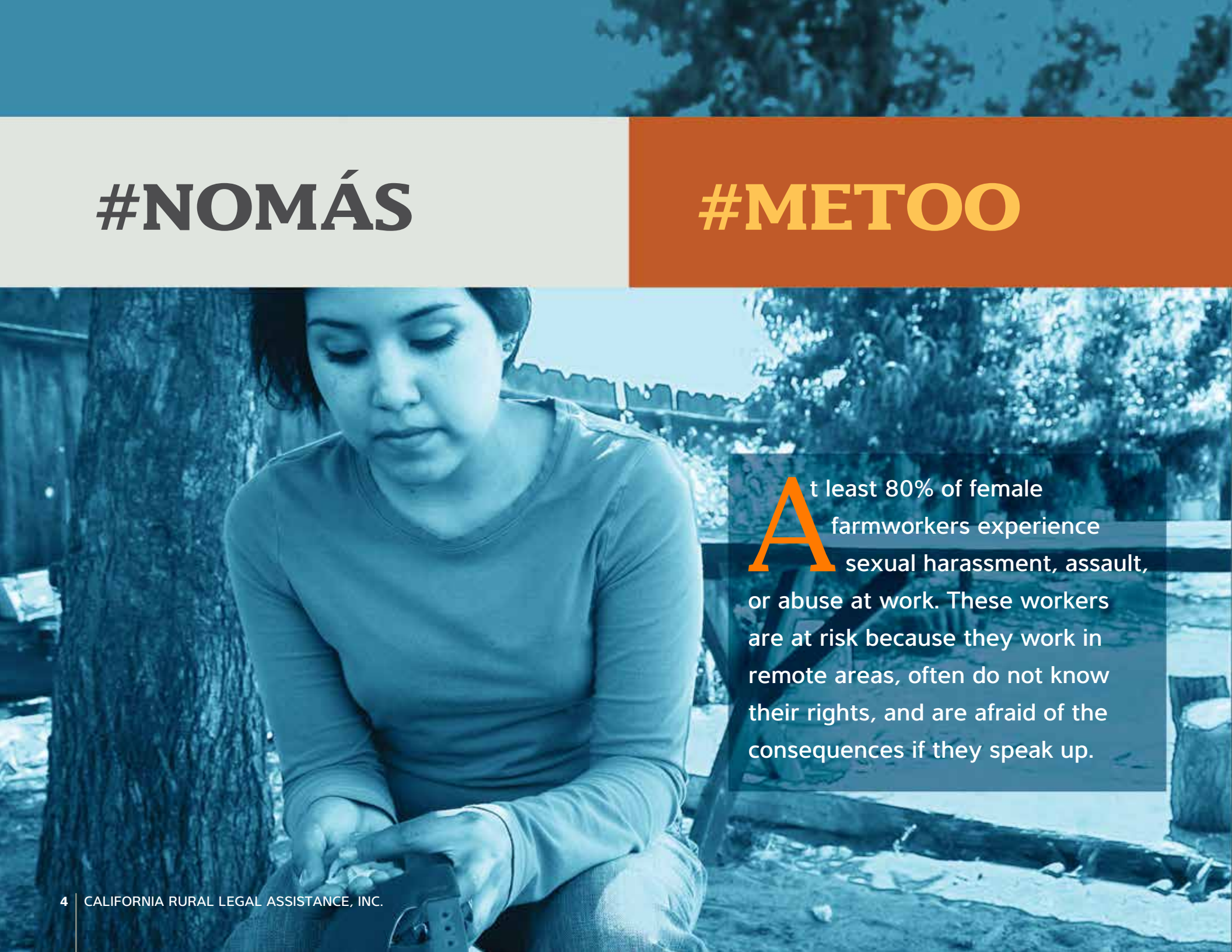


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the CRLA staff, donors
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believing in rural justice.



#NOMÁS

#METOO



At least 80% of female farmworkers experience sexual harassment, assault, or abuse at work. These workers are at risk because they work in remote areas, often do not know their rights, and are afraid of the consequences if they speak up.

“It is not normal to have a realistic fear of being attacked on the worksite during the middle of the day.”



C RLA’s team of community workers and attorneys educate workers about their rights, provide prevention training, and defend survivors.



For nearly 30 years, CRLA has fought alongside workers who have stood up to sexual predators and abusers. CRLA represents workers in a wide array of sexual harassment cases, including cases involving rape in the fields.

While every case is different, it's often the same story. The woman agricultural worker is doing her work and trying to earn a paycheck. A male co-worker or supervisor begins by making comments, some initially appearing to be innocent, while others are clearly inappropriate. The harasser then begins to touch the woman and put her in uncomfortable situations. The woman will either complain to her employer or will be too afraid or ashamed to report. In most of the cases CRLA has handled, the employer does not address the complaint or conduct. Eventually, in many cases, the woman will be working alone in the fields, and the harasser will ultimately assault or even rape her. She will tell the employer and the police, but nothing will happen to the predator. The woman may or may not get support from her family and community. Often times, she will be blamed.

Workers who are finally fed up and willing to come forward come to CRLA to demand justice. CRLA not only represents these workers, but also empowers survivors to use their voice to fight back and to know that someone is on their side.

Survivors like CRLA clients Blanca Alfaro, Francisca Alvarado Garcia, Georgina Jimenez, and so many more took on the growers who allowed sexual harassment to take place. CRLA cases have resulted in tens of millions of dollars in damages, an increase in sexual harassment prevention training in the fields, and help for other women who stand up and say #nomas to sexual harassment. CRLA's cases signal to workers to stand up, fight back, and demand justice. ■



“Our clients who are survivors of sexual assault and harassment are some of the bravest clients we have. Although many of them have been shunned, blamed and humiliated, they do not lose their will to stand up for themselves. These women valiantly tell their stories. CRLA is honored to stand with them and help them use their voices to fight back.”

-Blanca A. Banuelos, Director of the Migrant Program



“These cases have personal and community impacts. For the women who are harassed, it is a chance for them to get justice. For the community, it affirms that harassment or assault in the workplace will not be tolerated, and that there are attorneys who believe them, that will fight for them, and that they are not alone”

-Esmeralda Zendjas, Regional Director of the Migrant Program



“Agricultural work is already one of the most dangerous occupations in the U.S. – from heat stress to occupational injuries, farm-workers face many workplace hazards every day. They should not also have to worry about being leered at, touched or sexually assaulted when they are simply trying to earn a living and feed their families. Sexual harassment and assault is not tolerated in offices and board rooms – it should not be tolerated in the fields either.”

-Estella Cisneros, Regional Director of the Migrant Program





Northern California Wildfires

The October 2017 Northern California wildfires caused unprecedented destruction across six counties.

Santa Rosa and nearby communities were devastated. People lost family members, homes, neighborhoods, and jobs.

“We had to be there for our clients, but the flames moved so fast that at any moment our families were in danger too.”



CRLA helped thousands of people with issues arising from the fires and the recovery process.

The fires moved so fast that many people had little time to pack before being forced to evacuate. The fires moved into urban Santa Rosa and at one point over 100,000 people evacuated the area. The fires burned tens of thousands of acres and destroyed over 6,000 structures, including thousands of homes in Santa Rosa alone.

“It was scary and challenging,” said Jeff Hoffman, Directing Attorney at CRLA’s Santa Rosa office. “We had to be there for our clients, but our office and staff were also affected. We had to close our office for several weeks.”

Attorneys play an essential role in natural disaster relief. They provide counseling, advice, and legal assistance to survivors, helping them apply for emergency aid and address ongoing legal issues. Attorneys help survivors with insurance claims, claims with FEMA, disaster related evictions or employment issues, and more.

“It is sometimes not easy to navigate the maze of assistance programs and regulatory requirements, or to understand the specifics of an insurance policy and claim procedure, especially after you may have just lost all of your belongings, your home, your community, and maybe your job,” explained Hoffman.

CRLA worked with a coalition of partners to help survivors by providing outreach programs



Top: Jeffery Hoffman, Robert Lotero, and Fernando Torres. Bottom: Monica Guzman, Patricia Fink, Mariano Alvarez, and Dulce Leal Romero

and consults, legal clinics, and one on one assistance. CRLA supported thousands of survivors during the first few months after the disaster hit. The work continues to date.

“Our partners came together quickly and put the focus on those hurt by the disaster,” said Hoffman.

One of CRLA’s client communities, Indigenous Mexicans, who speak such languages as Triqui, Mixtec, Chatino, Zapotec, and Purépecha, were especially vulnerable in the aftermath of the fires.

Cultural and language barriers stopped many from getting disaster relief. Government agencies did not provide the information in

languages they understood. Instead of receiving aid, many were left homeless.

CRLA Community Workers Mariano Alvarez and Nora Ramirez sought out people that government agencies missed. They met with people one on one and in small groups and attended as many community meetings as possible.

“Our client communities remain deeply affected by these wildfires, whether it is the lingering effects of immediate trauma or long-term impact on housing availability and other basic human needs,” said Ilene Jacobs, CRLA Director of Litigation, Advocacy & Training, who provides statewide and national support on disaster recovery.

CRLA will play an active and critical role in ongoing recovery. “We will continue to advocate for disaster assistance, including decent, affordable housing, equitable community development, language access, health care, and a living wage,” said Jacobs.

“We went through a lot as a community,” said Hoffman. “People lost everything; but we will rebuild.”

CRLA thanks our supporters who provided extra assistance after the fires: Cooley LLP, Michael Flynn, Jessica Juarez, Bill Hoerger, Ellen Lake, Juliette Bleecker with the San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association, the Plant-Rao Family, CRLA Alum Marcela Ruiz with the CA Department of Social Services, Dan Torres with the Governor’s Office, the California State Bar Association, and many others who volunteered their time and energy to assist our work. ■

“We went through a lot as a community. People lost everything, but we will rebuild.”



Connecting Communities

Some rural communities lack safe drinking water, sewers, public transportation, and other resources. They are often remote, unsafe and ignored by the county.

“Working together with CRLA...[we moved] this bus project forward.”



CRLA’s Community Equity Initiative (CEI) strengthens unincorporated communities. CEI works with local leaders to create change.

The community of West Park sits less than half a mile outside the city limits of Fresno. It is small – around 130 residences – and many farmworker families call West Park home. Despite its proximity to the city, the unincorporated community lacks sidewalks, a sewer system, gutters, street lights, green space, and park space.

“One of CEI’s roles is to provide residents the legal education to help their community from within.”

Residents must travel into the city for all of their needs and have never had a public transit service. Lack of transportation was a significant obstacle for them. The West Park community knew there had to be a better way, so residents formed a community group called Los Olvidados (The Forgotten) to tackle the community’s most pressing needs.

Los Olvidados started working with CRLA’s Community Equity Initiative (CEI). CEI works alongside community leaders to increase investment in community infrastructure, advocate for equitable development, and build



Terry Hernandez (Los Olvidados), Victoria Santillan (CRLA), Josie Galvan (Los Olvidados), Juan Benavidez (Los Olvidados), and Mariah Thompson (CRLA).

leadership capacity, so that residents can engage meaningfully in decision-making that impacts their neighborhoods.

CEI’s Mariah Thompson and Victoria Santillan provided legal education and leadership training to members of Los Olvidados.

“One of CEI’s roles is to provide residents the legal education to help their community from within,” said Mariah.

Los Olvidados started working with local transit officials and achieved their first big victory in 2017: a public transit line serving the

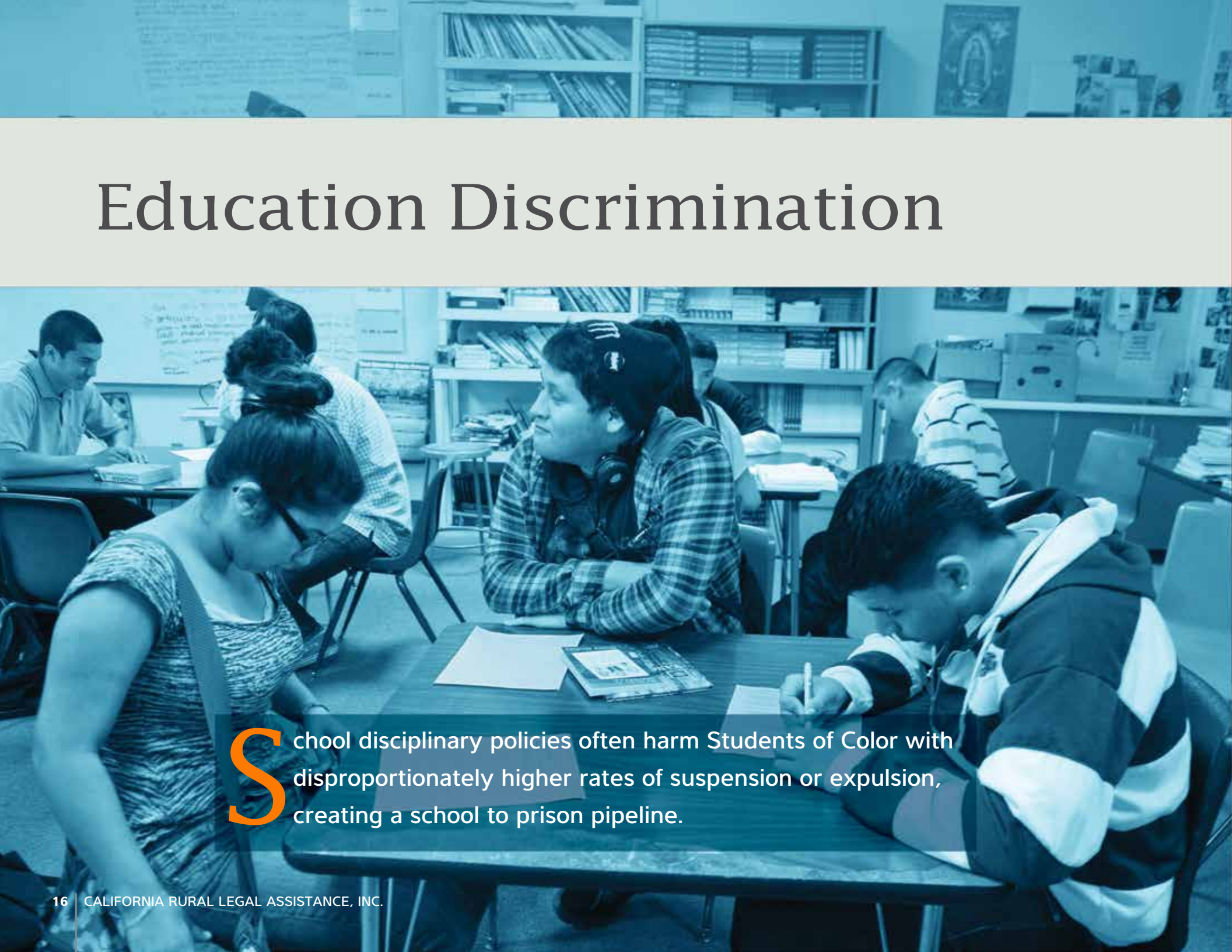
community. “Working together with CRLA... [we moved] this bus project forward,” said community member David Sanchez. The route represented a milestone for the community and demonstrated the strength of community leadership.

This year Los Olvidados is working with CEI to conduct a community clean-up event, seeking funding for the community group, and is collaborating with Fresno County to design a walking and biking path for the school children of the community. ■

“This is going to empower the residents of West Park and will allow us to be more independent!”



Education Discrimination



School disciplinary policies often harm Students of Color with disproportionately higher rates of suspension or expulsion, creating a school to prison pipeline.

CRLA works with students, parents, teachers, and schools to create a pipeline to success for all students. CRLA defends the rights of students and promotes better ways for students and schools to work together for healthy outcomes.





Lyndsi Adreas (GBLA), Cynthia Rice (CRLA), Jade Crawford (Kern High School Student) Eva Paterson (Equal Justice Society).

For decades the Kern High School District (KHSD) discipline system forced Latino and African American students out of their classrooms. Students were suspended, expelled, and sent to alternative high schools that offered poor academics and limited extracurricular activities. CRLA and other civil rights groups joined forces to challenge these discriminatory policies.

CRLA, representing parents and community groups, filed a lawsuit arguing that the policies were unconstitutional and deprived students of the education they were guaranteed by law. The case was settled and required immediate and substantial changes to KHSD's discipline policies.

“We spent nearly three years to get the District to stop discriminating against these students, and we will be right here the next three years to make sure that they do stop.”

“This settlement provides structure and accountability for addressing the discriminatory effects of KHSD’s past practices,” said Cynthia Rice, CRLA Director of Litigation and Training.

A team of five experts will design and implement new policies that keep students on the path to success. Teachers and district staff will receive mandatory cultural competency and implicit bias training. KHSD will translate all discipline documents into the primary language of students and parents. The District must also hold public forums with the community to report back on their progress.

“We spent nearly three years to get the District to stop discriminating against these



Jessica Jewell (CRLA), Cynthia Rice (CRLA), Jacque Wilson (Advocates for Justice), Gladys Williams (NAACP), Deborah Escobedo (LCCR), José Padilla (CRLA), Benjamin Wagner (Gibson Dunn), Jacq Wilson (Advocates for Justice).

students, and we will be right here the next three years to make sure that they do stop,” said Rebecca Buckley-Stein, Directing Attorney in CRLA’s Delano office.

The first-of-its-kind settlement sent a message to other districts and is leading to changes throughout the Central Valley.

Modesto City Schools (MCS) reached an agreement after hearing of the Kern settlement and being confronted with data collected by CRLA and Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR) that showed similar trends. MCS agreed to engage a nationally recognized expert on race and discipline and has begun a review of policies that were

pushing students of color and English-learners out of school.

“Districts across California saw that the courts were not going to allow this type of discrimination and they needed to make a change,” said Cynthia.

Education discrimination cases are incredibly important to CRLA’s mission to change lives and rural communities.

“These cases and settlements are the grandchildren of the desegregation cases and an unfortunate reminder that the vestiges of racism exist in our country and our schools. It is about giving children the opportunity to get an

education. I am proud to be part of that,” said Cynthia.

CRLA thanks our partners in these cases: MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), Equal Justice Society, Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. (GBLA), Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati, P.C., Dolores Huerta Foundation, National Brotherhood Association, Faith in Kern, Advocates for Justice, the Modesto-Stanislaus Branch of the NAACP, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, Deborah Escobedo, Benjamin Wagner, Jacq Wilson, and Jacque Wilson. ■

Richard Pearl: Balancing The Scales

CRLA Alumni stay connected in many ways: they mentor staff, serve on our board, and donate volunteer time or make financial contributions. CRLA has been privileged and honored to have Richard “Rich” Pearl’s involvement and support for five decades.



José Padilla, the Honorable Cruz Reynoso, and Richard Pearl



Richard Pearl with fellow CRLA alumni William McNeill, III and John O'Toole

Rich Pearl started his legal career with the Legal Aid Society of Atlanta after graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (Berkeley Law) in 1969. He joined CRLA's McFarland staff in 1971.

"CRLA already had a great reputation and I really wanted to be a part of that effort," said Rich.

Rich would be joined by an all-star line-up of attorneys. "I was the senior attorney with three years of experience directing people like Richard Paez, who is now the United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Tomas Olmos, who would become the Executive Director of the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles and head of the EEOC's Los Angeles office, and Chuck Elsesser, who went on to a prestigious public interest career in both Los Angeles and Florida. I got to

work with such amazing talent and people."

Rich worked at CRLA for over a decade, first as a staff attorney, then directing attorney, first of the McFarland office, then of CRLA's Backup Center, and finally as CRLA's Director of Litigation. Over that time, he again worked with an amazing

group of people, including Ralph Abascal, Al Meyerhoff, and Bill McNeill.

"We had the spirit and feeling that we could take on any injustice. We did not consider ourselves the underdog when we were taking on segregation in Delano, the housing authority in Tulare County, and going to federal court in Sacramento; we believed we were going to win."

Rich went into private practice in the early 80s, but he never truly left CRLA or stopped helping rural Californians.

"I stay involved because there is such a great need in rural communities. The people need CRLA and need this type of help."

"I have always believed that a great public interest attorney needs to be filled with a sense

of outrage to be effective at their job. The outrage has never left me, especially when you see how racism and sexism continue to exist in our society, how the housing issues in these communities continue to hurt low-income people, and how the government programs (the "safety net") are constantly underfunded and under attack."

Rich has been one of CRLA's steady donors since leaving CRLA. His support has led to tens of thousands of people receiving help and representation in court.

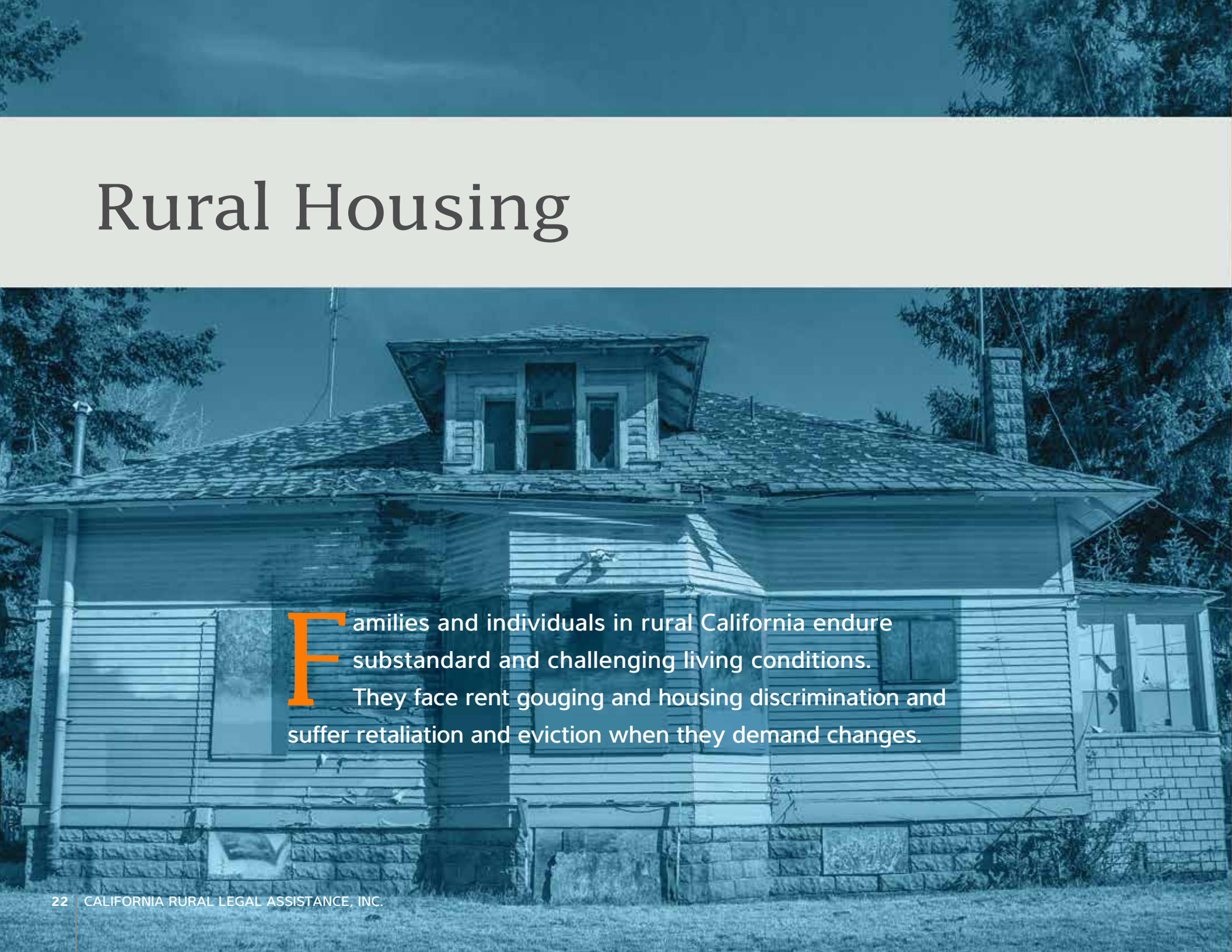
"I know that my donations are going towards funding a very worthwhile organization with a very dedicated staff. The staff, past and present, are the most devoted and passionate advocates out there, and I want to do my small part to help."

Besides donations, Rich gives back through his pro bono work with CRLA, which also helps bring in funds for CRLA's work. He is an expert on attorney fees, and his pro bono advice on attorney fee awards has allowed CRLA attorneys to recover money from other parties.

"I have an expertise and I know it can help CRLA and its clients. I believe that my work can really help bring in extra money to the organization to keep making a difference."

CRLA is grateful to Rich's commitment to CRLA and its client community. CRLA would not be the same without him. Thank you Rich! ■

Rural Housing



Families and individuals in rural California endure substandard and challenging living conditions. They face rent gouging and housing discrimination and suffer retaliation and eviction when they demand changes.



CRLA defends and supports families and individuals who face housing issues through a combination of litigation, enforcement of regulations, and Know Your Rights housing training with the community and other nonprofits.

CRLA clients come to CRLA for help with housing disputes from El Centro to Marysville and Santa Rosa. They face living without hot water or heat, live in substandard housing conditions, face evictions or foreclosure, and often are on the brink of homelessness. Clients in need of decent, affordable housing are from all genders, ages, races and ethnicities. They are veterans, people with disabilities, and LGBT individuals.

CRLA's housing work focuses on improving housing conditions, fighting housing discrimination, foreclosure and eviction defense, fighting for tenant rights, and enforcing farmworker housing rights. CRLA makes sure that landlords are not violating the laws and seeks alternative solutions to help keep people and families in their homes.



Director of Litigation, Advocacy and Training, Ilene J. Jacobs

"Rural California residents often face rent gouging for substandard and dangerous housing units," said Director of Litigation, Advocacy and Training, Ilene J. Jacobs. "Sometimes it is so extreme that people sleep in onion fields, tool sheds, barns and in river banks."

CRLA has two special programs devoted to housing services in addition to the housing disputes addressed daily.

The *Fair Housing Project* provides a range of services to support fair housing and civil rights for rural populations facing housing discrimination, for example, not allowing single mothers to rent or segregating families of color from white families.

"People and families face housing discrimination because of who they are, what they look like or the language they speak, and they need to be protected," said Ilene.

"We investigate claims and will take landlords and agencies to court to ensure that discrimination ends."

The *Rural Foreclosure Assistance Project* assists homeowners with loan modifications, fair lending issues, and investigates mortgage-related scams. The Project also provides trainings and workshops to help stop the effects of discriminatory foreclosure-related practices in rural communities across the state.



CRLA's Johanna Torres and Sylvia Torres

"A great example of our work is the case of Leonard R.," said Foreclosure Intervention Coordinator Sylvia Torres.

Leonard is a disabled veteran who lives in the heart of California's Central Valley, Madera. Leonard and his wife, Virginia, defaulted on their mortgage after they lost their car in an accident. Virginia could no longer get to work. Soon after, Leonard suffered a heart attack and had open-heart surgery. They applied for Keep Your Home California (KYHC), which was created to provide aid to struggling homeowners after the financial crisis, but they were denied due to their unfamiliarity with the process. That is when CRLA's Foreclosure Administrative Assistant Johanna Torres stepped in.

"People often get denied these types of services because they did not explain their hardship with the correct words," said Johanna. "We know how to do this work,



“My wife and I were discouraged from re-applying after getting denied, but thanks to CRLA we no longer live paycheck to paycheck. We have financial breathing room now”



because we work closely with the lenders and know how to tell our clients' stories.”

CRLA's assistance resulted in Leonard and Virginia being awarded almost \$100,000 in KYHC funds to reduce their outstanding principal balance, which lowered their monthly payment by nearly \$400.

“My wife and I were discouraged from re-applying after getting denied, but thanks to CRLA we no longer live paycheck to paycheck. We have financial breathing room now,” said Leonard.

“I have been at CRLA for a long time and these types of victories never stop feeling good,” said Sylvia. “Leonard and Virginia may have fallen victims to mortgage scammers, if they had not received our help.” ■

Leonard and Virginia in front of their home saved by CRLA

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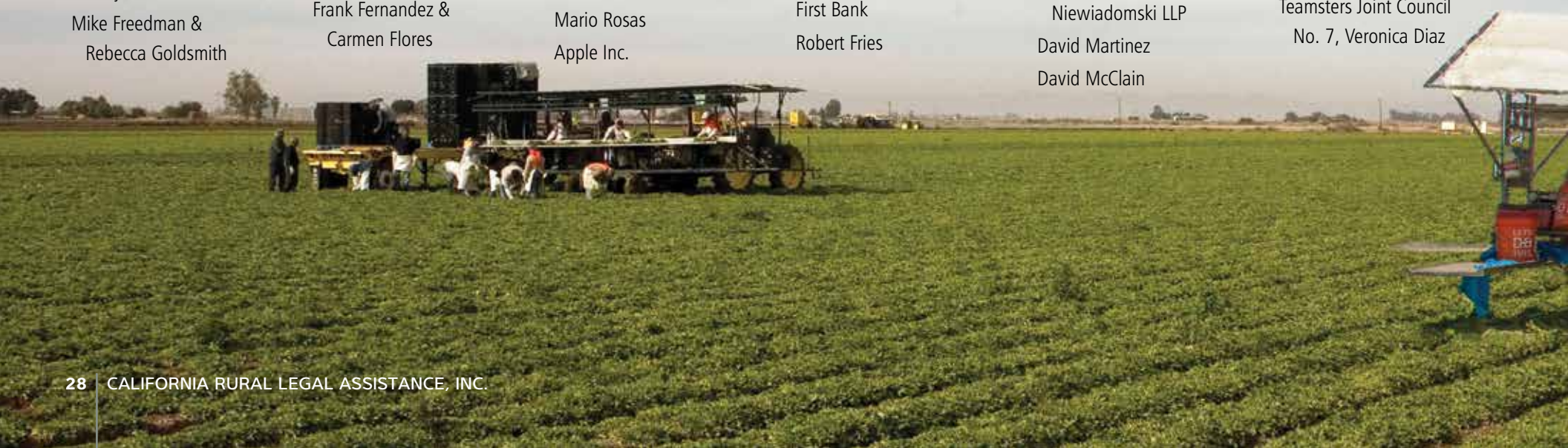
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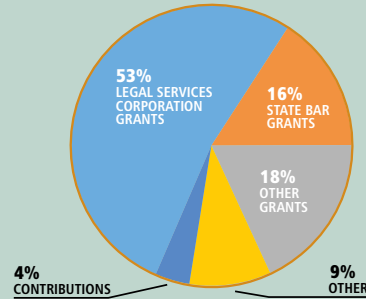


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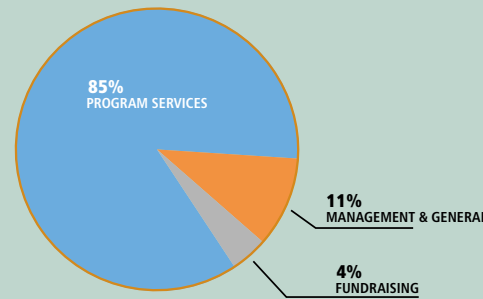
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2017 REVENUE



2017 EXPENSES



STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

	Year Ended December 31, 2017			Year Ended December 31, 2016 (As Restated)		
	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
REVENUE AND SUPPORT						
Grant revenue	\$147,144	\$11,867,064	\$12,014,208	\$150,000	\$12,478,191	\$12,628,191
Contributions	460,895	25,000	485,895	1,405,854	125,350	1,531,204
Attorneys fees and costs recovery	96,009	1,204,302	1,300,311	41,473	475,949	517,422
In-kind contributions	4,560	-	4,560	328,220	-	328,220
Other revenue	149,991	-	149,991	90,038	84,478	174,516
Special event revenue, net of direct expenses of \$22,100 and 251,184, respectively	70,336	-	70,336	70,943	-	70,943
Net assets released from restrictions	11,422,169	(11,422,169)	-	12,629,316	(12,629,316)	-
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE	12,351,104	1,674,197	14,025,301	14,715,844	534,652	15,250,496
EXPENSES						
Program services	10,978,342	-	10,978,342	10,604,913	-	10,604,913
Management and general	1,337,929	-	1,337,929	2,351,372	-	2,351,372
Fundraising	549,323	-	549,323	620,060	-	620,060
TOTAL EXPENSES	12,865,594	-	12,865,594	13,576,345	-	13,576,345
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(514,490)	1,674,197	1,159,707	1,139,499	534,652	1,674,151
NET ASSETS - Beginning of year, as originally stated	2,519,248	1,013,721	3,532,969	1,385,019	479,069	1,864,088
Prior period adjustment (Note 2)	(153,407)	-	(153,407)	(158,677)	-	(158,677)
NET ASSETS - Beginning of year, as restated	2,365,841	1,013,721	3,379,562	1,226,342	479,069	1,705,411
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$1,851,351	\$2,687,918	\$4,539,269	\$2,365,841	\$1,013,721	\$3,379,562

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

December 31, 2017 and 2016

ASSETS	2017	2016
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$2,642,607	\$1,137,223
Certificates of deposit	749,115	522,366
Grants receivable	402,198	708,623
Pledges receivable	91,960	13,800
Other receivable	47,675	84,228
Prepaid expenses	100,456	254,555
Total current assets	\$4,034,011	\$2,720,795
Property & equipment, net	3,019,996	3,104,371
Pledges receivable - long term	5,000	39,130
Client trust funds	204,703	315,834
Deposits	58,011	50,749
Total assets	\$7,321,721	\$6,230,879
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$283,687	\$127,980
Current portion of notes payable	314,580	90,046
Accrued salaries	146,750	144,182
Accrued vacation	366,766	398,196
Other accrued liabilities	121,042	111,567
Deferred rent	26,181	8,817
Total current liabilities	1,259,006	880,788
Client trust funds payable	204,703	315,834
Deferred rent - long term	118,408	144,590
Notes payable	1,200,335	1,510,105
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$2,782,452	\$2,851,317
NET ASSETS - UNRESTRICTED		
Available for operations	851,351	1,365,841
Board designated	1,000,000	1,000,000
Total unrestricted	1,851,351	2,365,841
Temporarily restricted	2,687,918	1,013,721
Total net assets	4,539,269	3,379,562
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$7,321,721	\$6,230,879

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