The wind sprays pale dirt into my mouth
The small, almost invisible scars
On my hands.

The pores in my throat and elbows
Have taken in a seed of dirt of their own.

After a day in the grape fields near Rolinda
A fine silt, washed by sweat,
Has settled into the lines
On my wrists and palms.

Already I am becoming the valley,
A soil that sprouts nothing
For any of us.
Dear Friend of CRLA,

CRLA’s mission includes a commitment to not only the delivery of no-cost legal services, but also a commitment to promote participation in the democratic process. This means that it is not enough to help one poor person defend herself against the hardship that poverty brings, but that we must also join her in the pursuit of transforming larger systemic problems that affect thousands across rural California. CRLA’s Annual Report allows us to show how the practice of law can and does bring about social change in this way – on a grand scale.

This report tells stories of both the direct assistance and the larger social change we seek. On the one hand, we report how we assist the courageous mother who painstakingly decides to break up her family, to escape fear and domestic abuse and then start anew. On the other hand, we report on our continued initiative to challenge the dairy industry to recoup significant wage victories in an effort to change the industry’s pattern and practice of disregarding the most basic of labor rights; we then prepare to take these “dairy worker rights” before the California Supreme Court.

Advancing CRLA’s mission in these ways requires a committed effort of both donors and staff. In this report you will read about Gary and Carolyn Soto, donors who see our rural cause as their own. You will learn more about committed CRLA staffers, who see CRLA’s work as their life work of beneficence to the community that raised them— including community worker Lupe Quintero who is now in her 34th year of service.

Early CRLA leaders like Cruz Reynoso taught us that law was there to protect the weakest among us, the most hidden among us, and the most desperate among us. Because the law was not there to help poor people in rural areas, CRLA was established to do just that, and bring justice to these communities. It is daunting when we understand that of all those in need of legal services, CRLA only reaches 28% of this population, at best. It is daunting when we understand that two decades ago, when CRLA was asked to serve 200,000 rural poor, it had 75 attorneys; today, to serve 550,000—CRLA has 55! Now, more than ever, we must increase our resources to advance our mission in the pursuit of justice.

A strong commitment to eradicating poverty is what drives CRLA’s work. CRLA has never done this alone and will never be able to do this alone. We continue blessed to find thousands of friends— friends to CRLA, friends to the rural poor— willing to give unselfishly so that our vision of a just and democratic rural California become a reality. We thank you for doing your part.

Adelante creando luz.
Forward creating light.

Jose R. Padilla
CRLA Executive Director

Adrian Andrade
CRLA Board Chairman
"I'm having a hard time," says Alicia (pseudonym), her voice soft and tentative. “When I left my husband, I lost my job, my belongings, my home, but I won’t go back. I don’t want to live that way, and I don’t want my daughter to live that way.”

They had been married almost three years and were looking forward to having a baby. But the problem began when she was about three months pregnant. Sometimes he raged at other people, and sometimes he used drugs. The two seemed to be connected. Then he started to turn his anger on her.

“There was nothing like this in my family,” says Alicia, “but he told me that his father used to treat his mother the same way. Once, he even told me that he’d threatened to kill a man [not his father] that he’d seen with his mother. So for awhile, I thought his anger was normal.”

Things got worse. He became jealous when she talked to other people, especially at work, and they would argue.

One night, he became more violent. He threatened her with a knife and then turned it on himself, cutting his arms. Although Alicia and her daughter stayed with him, she finally understood that this way of living was not safe.

When he began using drugs more often, his interactions with Alicia and their daughter became more erratic and violent. The incident that finally drove her to the police began when Alicia laughed at a male co-worker’s joke and ended with her husband threatening to kill her with a machete.

But it wasn’t her own life she was concerned about, it was her daughter’s. That’s what gave her the courage to leave.

After she and her daughter fled to her aunt’s house with only the clothes they were wearing and a bag of diapers, she found a social worker who helped her talk to the police and get a criminal restraining order.

Alicia’s situation is similar to so many victims of domestic violence, an issue that cuts across all races, ethnic groups, and income levels. Many women are often financially dependent on their partners, especially if they have children.

“I can’t even go back to my job if I wanted to,” explains Alicia. “I worked for my in-laws, and they want me to go back to my husband. My mother-in-law even said that when men are like this, it’s the woman’s fault.”

“This is the primary reason why so many victims return to their abusers,” says Teri Scarlett, Directing Attorney for CRLA’s Monterey, Gilroy, and Salinas offices. After working on thousands of cases, Teri is a recognized expert on this topic. “It comes down to a lack of support, a lack of resources. Low self-esteem and lack of successful role models also play a part.”

Now Teri is on a mission to convince every CRLA office to look at the larger picture, the greater toll that domestic violence takes on the community.

“If children miss school because of family crisis,” says Teri with the passion that’s kept her working on domestic violence cases for over 20 years. “If they’re stressed out, they can’t learn. If they can’t learn, they can’t get out of the cycle of poverty and violence.
You’re not just helping the women involved, but the future generation of children.

“At our statewide organizational priorities setting conference this year, domestic violence cases became a priority. This is actually the only area where we can help undocumented women gain citizenship. It’s a safety issue, a health and family wellbeing issue. I’m so grateful that CRLA took this on. It just makes sense.”

Other CRLA offices besides Monterey (Salinas, Modesto, Stockton, and Santa Rosa) are beginning to take on domestic violence cases, helping women file for citizenship and helping clients like Alicia get emergency civil restraining orders so they can get custody of their children.

“Then we can take care of the big picture,” says Teri. “We get these women hooked into resources for job training, public benefits, and any other services they may need.”

But it often takes great courage and resolve not to be intimidated by their partners, not to give in to pressure to go back. In Alicia’s case, her husband was thrown in jail twice for violating the restraining order and threatening her, but, thankfully, she hasn’t seen him since.

“I tell them it’s just a piece of paper,” says Teri. “That they always need to have an escape plan, a friend or relative that the abuser doesn’t know about. Luckily, very few of my cases have ended tragically. It’s rewarding when I get calls out of the blue from women thanking me for helping them change their lives and the lives of their children. Even though it’s discouraging when clients do go back to their abusers, the rewards far outweigh the disappointments.”

So Alicia and her daughter now depend on the generosity of her aunt, the only relative she has in the U.S. But the good news is that CRLA is helping her file for citizenship and start down a new path, interrupting the cycle of violence. And Alicia is determined to succeed; it becomes more apparent each time she speaks.

“You’re not just helping the women involved, but the future generation of children.”

“I want to show my daughter that life is not supposed to be this way, that this is not acceptable. I told my husband, ‘this is why I’m leaving you. I don’t want this for my daughter.’”

Her voice stronger now. Alicia wants other women to hear her words.

“Don’t stay quiet. There are a lot of people who will listen, people at CRLA. Without CRLA, I don’t know where I would be right now. You just have to keep going. You have to value your life.”
The first time the taps ran dry in Fairmead (Madera County), it was 109 degrees, and no one knew whom to call. Enter Nettie Amey, a former Fairmead resident and President of Fairmead Community and Friends who now lives in the nearby city of Madera.

"I started calling people," says Nettie, recounting a list that includes county supervisors and administrators. But it was the weekend, so she left a lot of messages. Nettie had a personal cause for concern; her mother and brother, both on dialysis, and her cousin with polio all live there.

The community’s well, drilled in 1972 and meant to serve only 50 to 60 families, has run dry at least four times in the past year, leaving Fairmead’s 750 plus residents without running water for several days at a time.

"We had to tell the county what to do, to knock on every door and help people with disabilities get their water. One time they came out with a tanker truck for people to fill buckets. Another time they brought bottled water. They just keep putting bandages on the problem. We’ve got a lot of kids who can’t go to school here when there’s no water to drink or to flush the toilets.”

Nearly a year after the first scare, Fairmead residents have a point of contact when the well runs dry, but only during weekday business hours. For evenings and weekends, the county offered a suggestion—call 911, a highly inefficient and potentially deadly use of emergency resources. They’re still working on a viable emergency plan.

And if there is water, no one knows when it’s safe to drink. Residents may or may not be notified (via snail mail) when they need to boil it before drinking. The risks are great for infants on formula, people with existing health problems, and the elderly.

Fairmead’s plight is familiar to those who live in any of the 220 mostly low income unincorporated communities (UCs) in the San Joaquin Valley’s eight-county region, communities that are veritable ghost towns when it comes to city services. Many have common issues: lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate or overburdened sewage disposal, little to no community lighting or facilities, high rates of unemployment and substance abuse, gang-related crime, and children slogging through the mud to get to school during the rainy season because there are no sidewalks or, in some cases, paved roads.

“Since these ‘colonias’ are largely absent from the public conscience, we don’t have much data on the effects of living in these communities,” says Phoebe Seaton, Co-director of CRLA’s Community Equity Initiative (CEI). But you don’t need data to see that opportunity is scarcer here than it should be. “Good jobs, higher education and health care are generally less accessible. It’s all determined by zip code, by living in a place where you spend your time worrying about basic services, like whether you’ve got clean water to drink. And when many don’t have the opportunity to even participate in the decision-making process, you begin to see this inequality as a civil rights issue.”

Like Fairmead, Tooleville (population 300) is another such ghost town, one of 111 UCs in Tulare County alone. Currently, Friant-Kern Canal channels water alongside the community to farms and ranches, leaving residents with access only to contaminated or insufficient drinking water.

“Tooleville is long overdue for change,” says community leader and resident Eunice Martinez, “and the community is ready to take on the challenge.”
So Tooleville residents, backed by a host of others, have become the vanguard for CRLA’s Community Equity Initiative, a five-year project (also referred to as their Colonias Project) being funded, in part, by the California Endowment and the James Irvine Foundation. CRLA has pulled together over 100 individuals and organizations to understand the issues that affect many UCs throughout the San Joaquin Valley and California. Policy Link, a national grassroots-based research and public policy organization based in Oakland, California, is a major partner in this effort.

“Them just keep putting bandages on the problem. We’ve got a lot of kids who can’t go to school here when there’s no water to drink or to flush the toilets.”

At the first meeting, participants’ identified key issues that underscore how government infrastructure characteristics exacerbate water, housing, health and safety, and civic participation problems in UCs. The follow-up meeting produced work plans to address these fundamental challenges. In this next year, project participants will focus on four to five key challenges and begin to implement detailed strategies that incorporate grassroots organizing, litigation, community education, and policy work, and research to support each.

Tooleville is the first UC to implement the strategies developed during the CEI meetings. This past April, CRLA, Community Water Center, Self Help Enterprises (also involved with Fairmead), and Center on Race and Poverty in the Environment began working with residents to draw attention and bring resources, especially safe drinking water, to the community.

“This is one of what will be many incremental changes for the community,” says Phoebe. “We’re helping them address their water issue first. If they’re successful, the Community Water Center and the Tooleville Water Board will get clean water piped into the community from Exeter about a mile away.”

One of Tooleville’s challenges may include competing for water with a 30,000-resident planned community soon to be built just down the road. This development may pit them against one of California’s most formidable foes, J.G. Boswell Company, the world’s largest privately owned farm that controls more than $1 billion worth of land and water rights in the Central Valley. But Tooleville residents are tough.

“This is only the beginning,” says Eunice. “We’re fighting for a seat at the table, and when we get there, we’ll be fighting for a fair hand.”

“Tooleville embodies how an inequitable pattern of development does a tremendous disservice to poor communities,” says Phoebe. “And we’re working hard to change that.

The California Endowment calls it working from the ‘grassroots to the treetops,’ with the end goal being to create more equitable public finance and local governance structures statewide.”

Fairmead is a prime example of how these current structures fail UCs. Chowchilla, an incorporated and wealthier town just over four miles away from Fairmead, annexed two women’s prisons in 1996, a key strategic decision that significantly increased their population tax base. The prisons, originally billed as a significant infrastructure boon and job source for Fairmead, ended up creating jobs and tax revenue for Chowchilla. Not that this is illegal. It’s just how the chess game of government politics works, leaving those of lower income and less political power to fight the battle with nothing but a handful of pawns.

But CRLA has been connecting Fairmead community activists with state agencies and nonprofit organizations who will help them fight their battles.

“They’re teaching us as we go along,” says Nettie. “They’re helping us get our 501(c)(3) status. We’re looking at possible loans and grants and partnering with churches in Sacramento so that we can get the attention we need.”

“I would just like to be treated fairly,” she adds, a wish echoed by thousands living in California’s populated ghost towns, one that very well may come true if all goes as planned.

For more information about CRLA’s Community Equity Initiative, please contact Phoebe Seaton at pseaton@crla.org

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1 Cities receive tax revenue based on population size. Current total prison population is estimated to be about 8,100, or about 43% of the town’s total population of 18,780. Estimates from January 2008, Chowchilla’s Department of Finance.
Most indigenous people don’t know it’s poison,” explains Mariano Alvarez, CRLA’s first Triqui-speaking Community Worker. “They think pesticides are a good thing for fruits and vegetables, and that it’s good for them, too. But I tell them that it’s used for killing things. Once they hear and understand this in their own language, they begin to ask questions.”

Mariano’s words illustrate the heart of CRLA’s work with indigenous communities. And one of the most critical aspects of this work is bridging language and cultural barriers.

Using anecdotal evidence, CRLA estimates that nearly 20 percent of California’s million-plus migrant farm workers and their children are indigenous people from Mexico or Central America whose first language is not Spanish, and their numbers are growing. Many have had extremely limited or even restricted access to traditional forms of education.

Desperate for work and often seeking respite from ongoing conflict or persecution in their homeland, they’re hired most often to do the least desirable farm work available. And since CRLA receives federal funding, the organization is barred from representing undocumented workers and allowed only to educate them about their rights and other available services.

“Indigenous people are targeted to do some of the most wretched, backbreaking labor in the U.S.,” says Jeff Ponting, Co-director (along with Alegría de La Cruz) of CRLA’s Indigenous Farmworker Project. “Most recent arrivals often speak no English and have limited understanding of Spanish. Because of this, they’re isolated, exploited, and easily taken advantage of.”

This isolation runs deeper, creating rifts in the family structure. When indigenous people come to the U.S., their children learn English quickly, and often learn Spanish. Then they stop speaking their first language for fear of being ridiculed for being “backward.” These children are forced to deal with awkward and age-inappropriate situations when their parents rely on them to communicate with schools, government agencies, hospitals, or law enforcement officials.

Irma Luna, a Community Worker of Mixteco origin who speaks Bajo, Spanish, and English, and who has worked for CRLA’s Migrant Office Project in Fresno for the past 10 years, was one of those kids. Although her parents died when she was young, she didn’t leave her first language behind.

“I started learning English in school when I was 11,” recalls Irma, “and I spoke Spanish at home with my brother. Within a year, I could have a basic conversation in English, and for awhile I stopped speaking Mixteco.”

But then her life came full circle. By the time she was in her early 20s with a family of her own, she began doing outreach in the Mixteco-speaking community. In 1998, she joined CRLA and has worked with the state’s burgeoning indigenous communities ever since.

“As far as I’m aware, CRLA currently employs more indigenous language speakers than the state and federal governments combined,” says Jeff, and then pauses. “We employ six.”

This number rests in the air for a moment as the magnitude of the governmental neglect sinks in, the realization that this group is likely the most underserved population in the state. Ironically, government agencies call CRLA’s community workers whenever they need help with translation. So in the end, government bureaucracy, the great tortoise, is slow to address the
most pressing need of indigenous communities—language access. But data gathered through CRLA’s a new needs assessment survey2 will turn a spotlight on the issue. CRLA has teamed up with Rick Mines, former Executive Director of the California Institute of Rural Studies and a veteran of the National Agricultural Worker Study, and other researchers to take on the monumental project of documenting the demographics and needs of indigenous people throughout the state. CRLA is contributing an extensive number of in-kind hours to ensure the success of the project.

“As far as I’m aware, CRLA currently employs more indigenous language speakers than the state and federal governments combined.”

The results of this three-year effort, funded by the California Endowment, will provide concrete statistics about indigenous communities in the state for use by health care providers, government agencies, and CRLA. To date, the research team has identified and surveyed 350 different Oaxacan communities throughout California.

“This past year, we went into many communities to find people who were willing to talk to us,” explains Irma. “We did a 45 minute survey, asking questions like where they’re from, how long they’ve been in the U.S., what languages they speak, if they know of other people from their hometowns and where they’re located in California. I covered mostly the Central Valley, Fresno and Madera, and some in Salinas.”

CRLA’s community workers also canvassed other areas of the state where migrant communities are concentrated, such as Santa Rosa. Lorenzo Oropeza, a native Oaxacan, speaks Mixteco and knows the leaders of communities who speak Triqui, Zapoteco, and Chatino in the Santa Rosa area. But getting to this point took a lot of talking to build credibility and trust.

“Investigación de Trabajadores Indígenas del Campo (ITIC). Examines language access, housing needs, health, wage and hour abuses, and other issues within indigenous communities in California.

Broadcast from Santa Rosa Community College, Lorenzo invites people from other agencies and organizations to speak on his program, talking about labor rights, housing issues, safety and working conditions, health issues, and most recently, foreclosure problems.

But even with this type of exposure, Lorenzo and the other community workers find themselves chipping slowly away at the mountain of justifiable fears within the indigenous community that if they come forward, they’ll be penalized in some way.

“This is the biggest need for my community,” says Lorenzo. “They have rights, and that’s why I do this work. It’s the farm workers who deal with the heat, the poisons, often with no drinking water, no breaks or bathrooms, living in terrible conditions—they’re the ones who feed us.”

What should indigenous communities expect in return for their labors? Access to the critical human services they deserve—in their own language, services that will protect them from being poisoned, exploited, and homeless in a land where fair treatment is supposed to be a basic human right.
You like to help people and get them involved,” said Lupe Quintero’s brother almost 35 years ago. “You should try to get the job at CRLA.”

Already active in a MEChA1 group at college, she got the job, and she’s been working in Imperial County as one of CRLA’s community workers ever since. Part of the team who help the poor raise their voices and defend themselves and their issues, Lupe also acts as a community builder and broker.

“Lupe shares a rich history with Comite Civico,” says Jose Velez, the Executive Director of Comite Civico del Valle and son of its founder, Jose Luis Velez. “She was our first volunteer teaching citizenship classes and one of our founding board members. Lupe is a remarkable leader, her work over the years has brought justice to thousands of farm workers in Imperial County. And she is still collaborating with us, helping farm workers and Latino communities with environmental justice issues.”

Why add more commitments to her demanding job as a community worker for CRLA with a paralegal case load defending clients at welfare, unemployment, and SSI hearings?

“Effective community workers blur the line between community service and daily life,” says Jose Padilla, CRLA’s Executive Director. “Lupe lives her community work.”

One of eight siblings in a farm worker family, Lupe learned a valuable lesson from her parents. When migrant work kept their children out of school in the early fall, Lupe’s father found a full-time job in El Centro so that they wouldn’t miss school.

“Education was very important to my parents,” says Lupe. “We didn’t dare drop out, so all of us went to high school and most went to college. Earning a masters degree in educational leadership was my own personal goal.”

But in her role as community educator, Lupe’s learned another valuable lesson: to listen.

“As a community worker, it’s one of the most important skills to have,” says Lupe. “And I’ve tried to get better at it over the years. People are often so frustrated that when they come to our office they just start crying. You need to understand where they’re coming from. It’s not so important to get down to the problem right away. I ask them about their families, their kids, and I just let them talk.”

“When you help people, you give them options,” says Lupe. “You give them hope. Plus, you are educating them, so the next time they might be able to handle their problem on their own. I get inspired by the people we help, they’re the ones that keep me going.”

Sometimes families find themselves in dire straits and their poverty and personal emergency demands that CRLA become their voice.

“I will never forget the family whose young son was found dead by the roadside,” recalls Lupe. “He’d been hit by a car, and at first, they couldn’t find his family. When they were found, all they wanted was to bring their son home just across the border to Mexicali to bury him. But the family was so poor.”

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1 Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán) is an organization that seeks to promote Chicano unity and empowerment through education and political action.
The mortuary wanted money to release the body, money that the family didn’t have. Someone who knew of the family’s situation called Lupe and explained what had happened. So she prepared her arguments (including threatening to call the press) and went to the mortuary to demand his release. She succeeded.

“I rode in the hearse to make the transfer,” says Lupe. “We met his family at the border. It was heartbreaking, but to be able to help that family bring their son home—I still get choked up.”

“People get the wrong idea that CRLA only serves farm workers. We really find out and try to meet the needs of the community. Everything from housing to health. We’re working more with the lesbian-gay-transgender community because of discrimination. And much of my work helps individuals get the public benefits—like food stamps or in-home support services—they need.

“Whenever you help people, you give them options, you give them hope.”

Lupe has made her mark by helping people stand up for their rights. Similarly, she’s made her mark by helping them weave their way through government bureaucracies to find the local politico who can listen to a neighborhood’s complaint or find a place that provides free food.

“As a community worker, I am the liaison between CRLA and the community. You give help to others who are helping the community, and they help you. I often get new client referrals this way, and if I can’t help them directly, I know someone who can.”

Lupe pauses for a moment.

“I want you to know that there are other community workers who have been at CRLA longer than I have. And some are quite new. But we have so much talent, hundreds of years of talent in this program. It makes me proud to be a CRLA Community Worker. I’m not exceptional. There are so many who are just as dedicated—if not more. I’m still learning.”

Still listening and learning after 34 years. Just like Lupe says, it’s constant motion—forward.

Thank you to all of our Community Workers! You are the weavers who make CRLA part of the community fabric, securing benefits for the unemployed, helping neighborhoods stand up to polluters, or serving as the last resort to those left standing at a dead end.
Fighting Injustice
IN THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

Why the Dairy Industry?
Your mother probably told you that milk was good for you, and that may or may not be true, but in the world of California’s mega-dairies, milk production is hazardous to the health and well-being of dairy workers.

Consider this: Fresno County is home to more cows than the state of Colorado. And just south of Fresno, Tulare County hosts the highest population of dairy cows per square mile in the world. Enter the twilight zone of the mega-dairy with all the attendant issues of large-scale production.

For years, CRLA has worked to enforce safe working conditions for thousands of dairy workers who often live in run-down, rodent-infested housing isolated on dairy properties. To save personnel costs, workers are expected to put in 12- to 16-hour days, and they often have to choose between eating or sleeping. On an average day, dairy workers may handle 600 cows while breathing air laden with particulate matter and the stench of manure (methane), and often being kicked, bitten, or trampled by their charges. Many are injured; the unlucky ones die.

“The dairy industry exploits workers to make a profit by not complying with state labor laws,” says Blanca Banuelos, Regional Director of Advocacy for CRLA’s Stockton Office. “Because they have such a powerful lobby, they think they can ignore workers’ rights to a safe work environment, minimum wage and overtime pay, rest and meal periods, and decent housing.”

And it’s not just the workers who suffer. Similar to issues caused by mega-hog farms in other parts of the nation, entire communities and the Central Valley suffer from water and air pollution associated with the dairies.

So to supplement a large number of active, ongoing cases, CRLA developed the Dairy Worker Safety Program in 2006 to address health and safety issues for the workers, tighten oversight of the dairy industry, and improve water and air quality in the communities that house the mega-dairies. Work includes collecting data on worker health and safety, hiring health and safety specialists in dairy production, and doing community outreach to educate workers on health, safety, and environmental hazards.

As this report goes to print, CRLA received a generous $200,000 grant from the California Wellness Foundation that will benefit the Dairy Worker Safety Program and its initiatives.

Rising to Meet the Challenge:
Dairy Issue Leads to State Supreme Court

“This case could affect all of CRLA’s wage and hour cases, fair housing cases and more,” says Blanca Banuelos, “not just employment cases against the dairy industry.”

Blanca, a young attorney who’s been with CRLA’s Stockton office since passing the bar in 2004, has come into her own while specializing in dairy cases. But the case she’s handling, Jose Arias vs. the Superior Court of California, stands out. The court’s ruling could remove a powerful legal tool from CRLA’s hands and limit the organization’s ability to file non-class1 representative lawsuits for wage and hour claims against smaller employers—forever. It would deal a significant blow to CRLA’s statewide efforts to seek justice for low-wage workers.

1 The federal government has barred CRLA from filing class action suits.
“I’m nervous to say the least—and very excited,” says Blanca. “But I’m lucky enough to have good support at CRLA, to have a boss [Mike Meuter, Director of Litigation Advocacy and Training in CRLA’s Salinas office] who believes in me even when I don’t believe in myself. I don’t think I would have had this opportunity, necessarily, if I’d worked somewhere else.”

Arguing a case at the state Supreme Court is challenging to say the least.

“There’s a time limit for presenting my argument,” says Blanca. “They’ve already reviewed the brief. Some may have already made up their minds, but it’s my last shot at convincing the seven judges who will be hearing the case.”

And instead of presenting witnesses for examination, Blanca will be in the hot seat.

“I can’t just make a speech. The judges can interrupt with questions. I’ll be grilled on our position, essentially cross-examined by the judges. I’ll be grilled on our position, essentially cross-examined by the judges. When we did the appellate hearing, Mike was with me, making sure I responded to arguments that were most important. He’ll be there again as my back-up in case I pass out,” she says, laughing. “Just because it becomes tougher, he doesn’t take over, he says let’s figure this out.”

“It’s key for younger advocates to take ownership of their work,” says Mike, “to make their own decisions and mistakes. I try to help them minimize the mistakes, based on those I’ve made, but I don’t swoop in and tell them what to do. In the end, it’s important to let them fly and do what they think is best for their clients.”

“I had some great mentors when I first came to CRLA,” adds Mike. “Claudia Smith took me under her wing, and Val Saucedo helped my development immensely. I learned a lot, especially what it means to be a good mentor.

“Blanca has so much talent, energy, and compassion for her clients. Her day at the Supreme Court will be nerve-racking, but I’m confident she’ll be fully prepared and do a great job.”

As this report goes to print, CRLA awaits a hearing date for Jose Arias vs. the Supreme Court of California.

2 Claudia Smith is currently with the CRLA Foundation. Valeriano Saucedo is a superior court judge in Tulare County, California.

$475,000 DAIRY VICTORY

Who: Phoebe Seaton, Directing Attorney for CRLA’s Delano office, and Santos Gomez of Nava & Gomez in Ventura County served as co-counsel.

What: Recovered four years of lost wages for employees of Paul Souza Dairy in Tulare County.

When: 2007

“Working with Santos [Gomez of Nava & Gomez in Ventura County] on this case was very beneficial,” says Phoebe Seaton, Directing Attorney for CRLA’s Delano office and lead counsel on the case. “His involvement and strategic guidance gave me the additional resources and confidence to litigate this case successfully. It’s also true that case settlements are higher when private attorneys are involved.”

“The legal team recovered more on a per person basis than any other case I have been involved in,” says Santos. “Many received life-changing compensation of over $40,000, while one of the named plaintiffs received much more.”

What were the keys to their success?

• “First, there’s a tremendous wealth of knowledge within CRLA about the dairy industry,” says Santos.

• “We positioned the case for resolution. Getting the best possible outcome for a client doesn’t necessarily mean going to trial. Nava & Gomez had a published opinion in 2007 on a discovery issue that we leveraged in this case. And with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all the workers, we developed a case where the defendant knew he was going to lose big time.”

• “We showed the extent of the defendant’s liability, but we also established goodwill.” Santos suggested that five days worth of depositions be rescheduled until after mediation, effectively saving the defendants a chunk of money.

• “The team gave Judge Broadman [the mediator] enough information up front to make a convincing argument,” says Santos. “So when mediation began, the judge opened by saying he was convinced; the task of the day was to get the defendants to put a figure on the table that was acceptable to the plaintiffs.”

So the pieces fell into place through hard work, or as Santos puts it, “The team created its own luck and setting for success.”

“I would like to see more co-counseling efforts throughout the state. When I was at CRLA, I benefited so much from being mentored by Valeriano Saucedo, who’s now a judge, and we still have an ongoing relationship.”

“CRLA is a source of inspiration every single year to a new generation of attorneys,” adds Santos. “There are so many lawyers who not only gain experience at CRLA, they also gain a sense of responsibility for having assisted a legal system that is not blind to the needs of the poor. And that’s inherently a value that CRLA doesn’t get credit for.”
It’s an image that stays with Gary Soto, a celebrated poet and longtime CRLA supporter. He’s a man for whom images constitute the bread of daily life.

“Jose [Padilla] once told me a story of how he had gone to pay his respects at the wake for Domingo Ulloa1 in the Imperial Valley,” recalls Gary. When Jose saw the open casket, he paused.

So many individuals choose to be buried in their finest threads, a suit, a dress. And many choose to be buried with a memento, a symbol of what they so dearly treasured in life: a family photograph, a book, a staff of wheat, a ring.

“Here was a man being buried in the finest moment of his eternity,” says Gary, “wearing a CRLA T-shirt. I know that UFW members often have flags on top of their caskets. But it’s very rare to take a symbol of justice into a casket in this way.”

A different memory stays with Carolyn Soto, a visual artist and Gary’s wife of 32 years. It was a moment of conscious, purposeful acknowledgement and appreciation.

“The first time I ever heard Jose speak in public was at a movie debut for ‘Fight in the Fields,’” says Carolyn. “He asked people in the audience to stand up if they’d ever been a farm worker. It was so moving. I was standing, too. It was the first time I’d ever felt that farm work was being honored like that. It was such a wonderful thing to acknowledge people’s value in a public way.”

Valuing the people who feed the world—it’s something to remember every time food is placed upon the table.

In an era when children think that meals come packaged in plastic or paper from a fast food restaurant or the grocery store, few will ever visit a farm or know a farm worker. If they’re lucky, they’ll actually get to meet someone who works in the fields at a farmer’s market or at a roadside stand, but nothing more than fruit or vegetables, a handful of dollar bills, and a “thank you” may ever be exchanged.

In this way, Gary and Carolyn are lucky. They know where food comes from and how hard it is to get it from the field to the table. They know the struggles of farm workers and how undervalued their services are. And they know this because they worked in the fields during their youth.

“I grew up in Fresno, and my father was a farmer,” says Carolyn. “I worked in the fields, chopped cotton, and I picked grapes and packed fruit, turning trays in the summer from childhood through high school. I worked to have money for school clothes, for things I wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

“I made money picking grapes and chopping cotton and beets,” says Gary. “And I took labor buses from Chinatown in Fresno to different sites outside the city. But my work was not nearly as constant as Carolyn’s.”

“People don’t know much about the lives of farm workers,” he adds. “If they did, they’d be astounded at their bravery, their courage, and their tenacity to stay alive. It’s a really hard life. One way to get to know farm workers is by donating to CRLA and reading and thinking about their lives.”

That’s one reason why Gary and Carolyn choose to support CRLA. But the list of reasons is long.

“The poor seldom have access to legal services or even health care,” says Gary. “Having been poor ourselves, we will always side with the poor, with the worker over the corporate farmer.

---

1 Domingo Ulloa was an artist, labor activist, and CRLA supporter memorialized through CRLA’s Cultural Worker Award. Ulloa died in 1997.
“I also like groups that are fiscally conservative and responsible. CRLA is a very streamlined organization. They’re able to do a lot with a very little amount of money.”

“And it’s also really striking that CRLA keeps going despite the attacks and audits they face,” says Carolyn. “It’s the work that comes first, even though all these other things are terribly distracting. The work still goes on because of the dedicated staff and Jose’s leadership. Their sense of abiding justice leads them. It’s very inspiring to someone who doesn’t have any way to help except through contributions.”

But despite the unwanted and unwarranted attention from the federal government, Gary and Carolyn are concerned that CRLA’s work isn’t getting the recognition it deserves from the general public.

“Everyone knows the history of the UFW,” says Gary, who’s written a book about Jessie de La Cruz, one of the early organizers. “But CRLA has a similar long history, and far fewer people know about their good work.”

That’s one reason why Gary volunteers as the Young People’s Ambassador for CRLA and the UFW. Whenever he’s asked to give a reading or address a group of elementary to college age students he talks about the history of the farm worker movement and CRLA’s part in defending workers’ rights. He wants to make sure they know the history and importance of both.

In line with this thinking, Carolyn adds: “There are a lot of people who want to support broad, more general issues like saving the planet, but there aren’t that many people who know about and want to support an organization that stands up for the rights of poor people. Our dollars make more of a difference at CRLA. They can always count on us to attend their fundraisers, and really, if Jose asked us to do almost anything for CRLA, we’d do it.”

But even though Jose hasn’t asked, the Sotos have included the organization in their planned giving. Gary and Carolyn’s generosity will help CRLA continue to make a difference in the lives of the poor long into the future by providing funding to assist and defend those who seek help in making their voices heard, those who long for a better future, and especially those whose daily labors remain undervalued as we sit down around our tables in California, the nation, and the world, to eat.

CRLA would like to thank Gary and Carolyn Soto for their continued support!

“People don’t know much about the lives of farm workers.

If they did, they’d be astounded at their bravery, their courage, and their tenacity to stay alive. It’s a really hard life.”
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Michael Gallo

for providing between $500,000 - $1 million in pro bono services assisting CRLA in its defense during recent governmental investigations.
A special thanks to the following attorneys who nominated CRLA for Cy Pres awards up to $188,000 in 2007

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Two Cy Pres awards totalling $188,000 thanks to Guido and Rick Saveri

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A special thanks to the following private foundations that provided critical support for CRLA’s special projects and initiatives in 2007

**The California Endowment**
$1,012,233 towards Agricultural Worker Health Project, Health Consumer Center of Imperial Valley, Colonias Project, and the Indigenous Farmworker Study.

**Consulado de Mexico**
$30,000 towards the Ventanilla de Salud program

**Kaiser Permanente**
$25,000 towards the Health Consumer Center of Imperial Valley

**Berkeley Law Foundation**
$17,215 towards Stockton Attorney

**Horizons Foundation**
$15,000 towards Proyecto Poderoso

**Impact Fund**
$12,000 towards litigation support

**Kinship Center**
$8,000 towards Monterey County Family Law

**University of California Davis**
$6,000 towards Farm Worker Health and Housing research

**National Health Law Program**
$2,373 towards Health Consumer Center of Imperial Valley
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## Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

For the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNRESTRICTED</th>
<th>TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>UNRESTRICTED</th>
<th>TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant revenue</td>
<td>$38,000</td>
<td>$11,252,130</td>
<td>$11,290,130</td>
<td>$645,019</td>
<td>$9,962,829</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-kind revenue</td>
<td>764,300</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>764,300</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>599,918</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>599,918</td>
<td>744,823</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special event revenue</td>
<td>236,253</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>236,253</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other revenue</td>
<td>50,190</td>
<td>92,165</td>
<td>142,355</td>
<td>30,236</td>
<td>116,737</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorneys fees and costs recovery</td>
<td>31,643</td>
<td>8,306</td>
<td>41,949</td>
<td>13,581</td>
<td>83,620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets released from program restrictions</td>
<td>11,289,795</td>
<td>(11,289,795)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,367,109</td>
<td>(10,367,109)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenue and support</strong></td>
<td>13,012,099</td>
<td>62,806</td>
<td>13,074,905</td>
<td>11,800,768</td>
<td>(203,823)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program services</td>
<td>10,672,555</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,672,555</td>
<td>9,771,904</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>1,458,031</td>
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<td>1,458,031</td>
<td>1,347,388</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>369,205</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>369,205</td>
<td>502,488</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>12,499,791</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,499,791</td>
<td>11,621,780</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in net assets</strong></td>
<td>512,308</td>
<td>62,806</td>
<td>575,114</td>
<td>178,988</td>
<td>(203,823)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of year</td>
<td>$985,455</td>
<td>$243,021</td>
<td>$1,228,476</td>
<td>$806,467</td>
<td>$446,844</td>
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<tr>
<td>End of year</td>
<td>$1,497,763</td>
<td>$305,827</td>
<td>$1,803,590</td>
<td>$985,455</td>
<td>$243,021</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## Statements of Financial Position

December 31, 2007 and 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$456,728</td>
<td>$975,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash held in trust</td>
<td>508,196</td>
<td>242,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants receivable</td>
<td>1,330,187</td>
<td>174,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pledges receivable</td>
<td>120,474</td>
<td>147,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other receivable</td>
<td>23,726</td>
<td>26,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses, deposits, and employee advances</td>
<td>443,118</td>
<td>276,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other assets</td>
<td>3,330</td>
<td>3,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and equipment</td>
<td>1,244,607</td>
<td>1,273,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td>$4,130,366</td>
<td>$3,118,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>$137,467</td>
<td>$149,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued liabilities</td>
<td>1,053,335</td>
<td>786,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refundable advances</td>
<td>383,519</td>
<td>173,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes payable</td>
<td>752,455</td>
<td>781,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities</strong></td>
<td>$2,326,776</td>
<td>$1,890,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>797,763</td>
<td>485,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted board designated</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>305,827</td>
<td>243,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total net assets</strong></td>
<td>1,803,590</td>
<td>1,228,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
<td>$4,130,366</td>
<td>$3,118,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CRLA is funded in part by the Legal Services Corporation. As a condition of the funding it receives from LSC, it is restricted from engaging in certain activities in all of its legal work, including work supported by other funding sources. CRLA may not expend any funds for any activity prohibited by the Legal Services Corporation Act, 42 U.S.C. 2996 et seq., or by Public Law 104-134. Public Law 104-134 504(d) requires that notice of these restrictions be given to all funders of programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation. For a copy of these laws or any other information or clarifications, please contact Claire Rase at (415) 777-2794, extension 309.
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AND UNION BANK OF CALIFORNIA
WILL MATCH YOUR DONATION*

Each year, California Rural Legal Assistance provides more than 40,000 poor Californians and their families with no-cost legal services, community outreach and educational workshops to improve their lives.

Give to CRLA today. Please use the envelope attached to this report on pages 10 and 11 to make your pledge.

Your individual gift to CRLA is needed. When you contribute to CRLA, you take an active role in ensuring that California’s poorest communities have access to justice.

Your donation will directly support CRLA’s work to:

- Provide farm worker families with safe and affordable housing
- Fight sexual harassment in the agricultural industry
- Advocate for immigrant civil rights
- Enforce the right of all children in California to a quality education
- Guarantee workers receive their wages for an honest day’s work
- Promote health access and health care for low-income children and their parents
- Help victims of domestic violence to start a new life
- Protect the elderly and immigrants from consumer fraud

HOW TO GIVE TO CRLA

We value your philanthropic and civic leadership. Thank you again for giving.

- Make a cash gift, or write out a check.
- Make a commemorative gift in honor of a person or in memory of a loved one.
- Make a stock contribution (speak to your broker).
- Designate CRLA in a planned gift (will, trust, insurance policy).
- Make a gift of real estate.
- Make a single or a multi-year $ pledge.
- Make a gift of goods and/or services.

All CRLA donors receive the Annual Report and are acknowledged by mail and in print. Contributions to CRLA are tax-deductible as allowed by law. CRLA is a tax-exempt corporation under Federal Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). For further information, please contact Claire Rase at (415) 777-2794, extension 309.

(*up to $125,000)

visit www.crla.org to make an online donation today!
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