

# Causa Justa::Just Cause (CJJC) – Oakland & San Francisco, CA

# SNAPSHOT

## Overview

Causa Justa::Just Cause was formed in 2010 as the product of three different grassroots organizations (St. Peter's Housing Committee, Just Cause Oakland, and People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER) in 2015). CJJC fights for tenant and immigrant rights in Oakland and San Francisco.

## Mission

*“Causa Justa::Just Cause builds grassroots power and leadership to create strong, equitable communities. Born through mergers between Black organizations and Latino organizations, we build bridges of solidarity between working class communities. Through rights-based services, policy campaigns, civic engagement, and direct action, we improve conditions in our neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area, and contribute to building the larger multi-racial, multi-generational movement needed for fundamental change.”* –CJJC website



## Constituency

- Mixed (African American & Latino)
- All ages
- Oakland & San Francisco tenants

## Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Oakland & San Francisco

### Displacement

Displacement exposes families to hazardous physical environments (e.g., having to move near refineries, homes that are not earthquake retrofitted) & creates instability (i.e., need to look for a new home, change schools, longer commutes, etc.)—“All-cause evictions” in San Francisco have increased since 2010 with 2,120 evictions in 2014-15.<sup>1</sup>

### Negligent, Unlawful Landlords

Including a lack of building maintenance, which leads to unsafe conditions and related health concerns—e.g., non-working toilets, lead poisoning, mold, rats, and bedbugs.

### Threat of Eviction and Stress

The threat of eviction/worry about trying to stay in their homes contributes to mental health stressors.

*“Zero to five youth [are concerned with] staying in school, having solid homes, not leaving their communities and their aunties and the support that is part of a community. [Mental health stressors] are high for the kids who are threatened with constant eviction. People are forced into eviction over and over and over again, so it's hard on families and it's also hard on youth.”* – Kate Sorensen, Development Director

### State Violence Causes Displacement

State violence like criminalization of Black and Brown youth in Oakland also causes displacement, the arrest rates for Black (78.6%) and Latino (14.6%) youth far exceed their representation in the population (29% and 38%, respectively).<sup>2</sup>

*“It is extremely difficult for formerly incarcerated people to find housing.”*

## Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Oakland & San Francisco



81% of the 186 WIC homes inspected in SF from 2013-15 had **environmental health hazards**.<sup>1</sup>



In San Francisco, lower-income children have **higher rates of asthma, hospitalization, obesity, and dental caries**.<sup>1</sup>



Black children in Alameda County are two times more likely to be hospitalized due to **asthma** than other races.<sup>2</sup>

**Blacks have the highest percentage of low birth weight** (11.2%) in Alameda County compared to all racial/ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> In SF, 11% of Black and 8% of Latino babies were pre-term, compared to 5% of Whites.<sup>4</sup>

# 50%

About half of Latino and half of African American 5th, 7th, and 9th graders (SFUSD) were obese or overweight compared to 25% of whites.<sup>3</sup>



## Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

### Leadership training that includes political development and practical education

So that community members can sit at the table with decision makers and make sure that those who are impacted by the city/regional development plans are part of the conversation.

*“Many funders believe that lack of affordable housing is the issue, and often the resolve is for them to put money into building affordable housing. However... there isn’t a ton of space or money to build affordable housing. When you do build, it just resolves the problem for a few hundred people. If we could actually keep people in their existing homes (instead of being kicked out of their homes, and then ...have to go find affordable housing), it is actually much more effective and efficient and innovative.”*

### Rights-based services

“Know Your Rights” trainings that lead to personal and community changes.

*“Our services are rights-based services. We aren’t just giving services, we are giving tools so people can handle their problems...hundreds of people come in to each clinic each week with: ‘I just got a three day notice...I just got a sixty day notice that I’m going to be kicked out, what do I do?’ So, already the family is under pressure. So we help those families figure out if... the notice is legal and then they can gain the tools to fight those evictions on their own before they even go to court. Then if they do need court, then we can help them get resources, we can help them with their paperwork and write letters. On an individual level, people are able to build personal strength and power. Those folks are then invited to become members. A community being built, community strength, and then whole communities are able to fight and stay in their homes. In a way we’re helping individuals learn about housing: stable housing can affect health and wellness. We are also helping policymakers and stakeholders know the same thing and we are also helping funders at the same time...as community members become leaders, they also get their friends and family and churches to become active as well. So it is like a growing community project.”*

### Multigenerational/family-oriented space

Youth are active member leaders at Causa Justa. Kids also have a safe place to play while their parents are participating in meetings.

## Allies/Partnerships Working on Children’s Health

### Oakland, CA

- Oakland Rising – <http://oaklandrising.org/>
- Bay Area Rising – <http://www.bayarearising.org/>
- Committee to Protect Oakland Renters – <http://www.protectoaklandrenters.org>
- Alameda County United in Defense of Immigrant Rights – <http://acudirca.org/>
- East Oakland Building Healthy Communities – <http://eastoaklandbhc.org/>

### San Francisco, CA

- San Francisco Rising – <http://www.sfrising.org/>
- Mission SRO Collaborative – <https://www.facebook.com/MSROC415/>
- Plaza 16 Coalition – <https://plaza16.org/>
- Our Mission No Eviction – <https://www.facebook.com/Our-Mission-NO-Eviction-533750263364322/>
- San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition – <http://sfadc.org/>

### Other Cities

- Right to the City Alliance – New York, NY <http://righttothecity.org/>
- California Calls – Los Angeles, CA <http://www.cacalls.org/>

## CJJC Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

- **Expanded renter protections in Oakland** through broad coalition with organizations across the Bay Area
- **Published a report “Development without Displacement,”** which offers a comprehensive definition of gentrification, describes the health impacts of displacement, and provides policy recommendations.<sup>5</sup>
- **Helping families stay in their homes and push back against unlawful landlords,** Rights Based Services Model
- **Multi-Unit Fire Rapid Response,** made sure families displaced by multiple fires in the Mission District (SF) were able to move back
- **Creating a community-centered process in their fight against the development of luxury housing in SF**—in collaboration with anti-displacement allies (Plaza 16 Coalition)

*“[A huge luxury housing complex is slated for construction] in the middle of the Mission District. Community members do not want this building. They have been fighting through the city planning board to stop it and they have actually been able to...significantly [slow down the process] so [residents] can have a voice. At the same time [community members] have been working on what is their dream, what is their hope for this project. Hundreds of people have been working with an architect on a plan for what they would like to see. Now the city is looking at that plan.”*

## Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

- **Multiple campaigns that reinforce Black & Brown Unity and the united fight for the Right to the City including:** Housing Rights Campaign, Immigrant Rights Campaign, Black Priorities Project, Youth in Power
- **Housing Committee/Tenants’ Rights Clinic provides free tenant counseling and case management for low-income residents of Oakland and San Francisco**

*“The landlord was charging [two families] with neglect and trying to forcibly evict them. They were actually evicted, they were at the end of their rope, and they came to us. There were small children. I think one of them was a family of five with little kids and the whole thing, puppies and everything. They got evicted, but we got them un-evicted. We used community support to get a lot of press and go have an action at the courts to make sure that people understood that these families were upstanding, so now they get to go back to their homes. That is kind of a miracle.”*



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**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/causajusta>

**Twitter:** @Causajusta1

**Instagram:** @causa\_justa

**Flickr:** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/40635602@N05/>

**YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/CausajustaJustCause>

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