

# PROP 4 VICTORY BRIEF

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AT THE BALLOT BOX



## THE MOMENTUM SERIES

A project of EMERJ: Expanding the Movement for  
Empowerment and Reproductive Justice

### Volume 3



EMERJ is a national movement-building initiative of  
Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice



**ACRJ**  
ASIAN COMMUNITIES FOR  
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE



## **PROP 4 VICTORY BRIEF:**

### **Reproductive Justice at the Ballot Box**

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# INTRODUCTION

In Proposition 4, California faced the latest incarnation of a parental notification initiative and delivered yet another loss to proponents of restricting access to health care and support for young women.

Once again, reproductive justice organizations stepped up and made significant and unique contributions to the defeat of the ballot measure. While no one looks forward to defensive ballot measure fights, Prop 4 was a catalyst for increasing our efforts to engage communities of color in critical voter education strategies while simultaneously supporting new leaders and building new coalitions that will serve our communities over the long term. Our organizations emerged from the elections stronger and better equipped to move a proactive agenda for reproductive justice

As pundits and formal initiative campaigns tell the story of the election and how we won, it is critical that the organizations outside the mainstream campaign augment that public narrative. As we highlight our contributions to this victory, we also seek to illuminate the need for traditional ballot measure campaigns to invest more deeply in our communities. While we defeated Prop 4, at the same time we lost another critical reproductive justice battle that harms our communities - Prop 8. In both of these cases, unfortunately, the formal initiative campaigns made decisions about resources, priorities, and messaging that did not fully engage our communities as a critical part of the electorate.

PHOTO: KHMER GIRLS IN ACTION



This is not a new experience. Our organizations realize that our communities are often shortchanged and our electoral efforts overlooked in traditional ballot measure campaigns. While traditional 50% +1 efforts may be able to defeat attacks on reproductive justice at the ballot, we are concerned that these strategies will not build the capacity to move a proactive agenda in California that achieves reproductive justice for all communities. The lessons of this presidential election point to the potential for deep change when we revise the “tried and true” campaign strategy and refuse to cede ground based on preconceived notions of who is on our side and who votes.



This *Prop 4 Victory Brief* is one part of this revisioning process. It highlights the work of a number of reproductive justice organizations that were convened by Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice and California Latinas for Reproductive Justice as a Reproductive Justice Alliance during the election season to share ideas, resources, and strategies.

The creation of the Reproductive Justice Alliance is itself a key victory. It represents the growing infrastructure within the Reproductive Justice Movement in California. While still in an early stage of development, the Alliance impacted the work of each organization by reducing duplication of effort where necessary and encouraging and inspiring organizations to replicate effective tactics that were being used in other parts of the state.

We are not claiming to fully describe the achievements of all these incredible organizations. Nor are we telling an exhaustive story of all the reproductive justice work in California. We are, however, highlighting some of the contributions by reproductive justice organizations who strove to ensure communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities were not an afterthought but central to the efforts to defeat Prop 4 and other ballot measures that would ultimately impact our youth and communities most harshly.

Organizations that shared their stories as part of developing a shared analysis of *Reproductive Justice at the Ballot Box* include:

- ACCESS/Women’s Health Rights Initiative (Oakland, CA)
- ACT for Women and Girls (Tulare County, CA)
- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (Oakland, CA)
- Black Women for Wellness (Los Angeles, CA)
- California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (Los Angeles, CA)
- Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (Los Angeles, CA)
- Dolores Huerta Foundation (Bakersfield, CA)
- Khmer Girls in Action (Long Beach, CA)
- National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (Tacoma Park, MD)

# VOTER ORGANIZING: BRINGING OUR COMMUNITIES TO THE BALLOT BOX

Our organizations used a range of tactics to register, educate, and mobilize voters. These tactics mirrored traditional voter organizing activities but emphasized supporting our communities in developing an understanding of the potential negative impact of Prop 4 and other ballot measures on our youth and families. With limited resources, we reached out to tens of thousands of people in our communities through speaking to community and professional groups; mobilizing at community events; organizing on campuses; and broadcasting our message through local, ethnic, alternative, and new media.

## Voter Education and Persuasion

*This was an amazing experience. I honestly would have voted yes on this proposition if I had not come here tonight. Thank you!*

— Participant in BWW Prop 4 focus group

*One young woman of color was so ecstatic to vote for the first time and expressed that her main goal was to talk to her friends and family into voting No on Props 4 and 8.*

— ACCESS organizer describing outreach at Mills College

Reproductive justice issues are put on the ballot specifically to wedge the progressive base – to divide low-income communities from middle-class communities, to divide white communities and communities of color, and in political terms, to divide the Democratic Party from its historical base. Overcoming these wedges requires deep relationships and a sense of trust between our communities and those of us delivering voter persuasion messages. Because of this, traditional voter education and mobilization techniques are somewhat limited. In other words, the most successful messengers come from organizations that have an historic presence and relationships within specific communities. Reproductive justice groups are uniquely positioned within communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities to talk to voters about how particular ballot measures will increase reproductive oppression, because we do it every day in our work.

One of the lessons reproductive justice organizations have learned over time is the need to create spaces to have open and honest conversations that allow individuals to develop an understanding of the ballot measures and the potential impact on their families and communities. Face to face contact with voters is the most effective form of voter education, persuasion and Get Out The Vote (GOTV). The following organizations had this kind of personal contact with almost 8,000 individuals. This is a partial list of the reproductive justice organizations that did this kind of one-on-one work:

- Black Women for Wellness (BWW) – 3000 individuals
- California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) – 1200 individuals



- Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) – 1000 individuals
- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) – 1000 individuals
- ACT for Women and Girls (ACT) – 1000 individuals
- ACCESS/Women's Health Rights Initiative (ACCESS) – 700 individuals

The following stories are examples of voter education and persuasion from this reproductive justice perspective:

- BWW utilized their relationships in the community to hold focus groups for young Black women and paraprofessional Black women. These focus groups provided the space for women to think deeply about the impact of Prop 4 and to develop messages that would be effective in their communities. In addition, BWW integrated Prop 4 into their annual Serious Business Conference. They discussed Prop 4 within the context of their shared experience of health disparities and secured No on Prop 4 pledges.
- ACRJ's POLISH program works with Vietnamese nail salon workers to increase their reproductive health and safety. ACRJ convened leaders from POLISH as critical messengers to deliver a No on Prop 4 message to their community. Leaders developed culturally resonant messages and phone banked other

PHOTO: ACCESS/WOMEN'S HEALTH RIGHTS INITIATIVE



role in elections, most of the voters called said that this was the first time they had ever been contacted around elections, not to mention in their own language. By the end of their efforts, 80% of the voters they reached reported that they would vote No on Prop 4.

- ACCESS engaged 700 community members in one-on-one contact. In one case, their organizer participated in a high school parents' group that had researched and taken positions on all the ballot measures – including Yes on 4. As a result of deep discussion that investigated their concerns, unveiled the myths, and explored what would be best for the community, the parents reversed their position and decided to use ACCESS's materials to build support for the defeat of Prop 4.
- CLRJ built upon its efforts over the prior two parental notification initiative campaigns in developing values-based messages for the Latina/o community. These messages were directly informed by Latina community leaders – including Promotoras, farm workers, and young women – who participate actively in CLRJ's education and mobilization efforts. CLRJ infused these messages into its outreach, voter education, and alliance building and activities. Moreover, CLRJ provided consultation and training support to the statewide campaign in the development of Latina/o messages for the second time.

Each of these stories demonstrate the importance of creating space within our communities for complicated and nuanced discussions that get to the heart of wedge issues designed to drive us apart. Moreover, these experiences point to the inherent expertise held by messengers from within our communities to educate and inform others. The power of reproductive justice organizations lies in our connection to our communities that engenders trust and relationships. This enables us to have these essential discussions that spur our members to grapple critically with how these ballot initiatives affect their lives.

## Voter Education Tools

*Como comunidad, nuestra responsabilidad más grande es la de proteger la salud y la seguridad de nuestras hijas.*

— From ACCESS and CLRJ's Spanish-language flyer

*Giới trẻ cần dịch vụ chăm sóc sức khỏe, mà không cần những đạo luật tạo nên rào cản các bạn trẻ đến với các dịch vụ chăm sóc sức khỏe.*

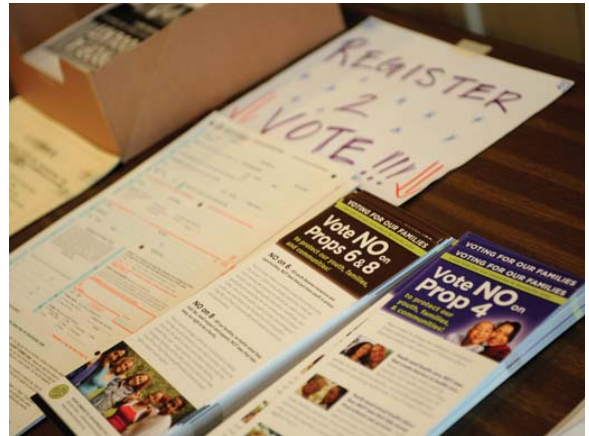
— From ACRJ's Vietnamese-language Flyer

All too often, campaign materials do not reflect the voices, languages, or faces of our communities. However, as conservative forces have grown more adept at using ballot measures to wedge communities of color, they have also grown increasingly savvy at using messages and communication vehicles that speak directly to the cultural context of the voters they are trying to mobilize. This was exemplified by the Yes on 8 campaign in their “robo calls” that featured the voice of one of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nieces encouraging African-Americans to vote Yes on 8. Pro-justice forces need to develop equally culturally resonant messages and vehicles to support real dialogue within communities of color.



In the case of Prop 4, many reproductive justice organizations developed voter education tools that were specifically designed to connect with the cultural values and lived experiences of our communities. One of the core principles of reproductive justice is the inclusion and engagement of grassroots communities in developing and implementing strategies for change. As our organizations developed materials, we put this principle into action in a number of ways. Some examples of this work include:

- Through their focus groups, BWW learned that African American women were especially concerned about their voting rights and whether they would be disenfranchised at the polls. With high expectations of voter turnout and high anxiety surrounding voting, BWW integrated these concerns into a “VoteHER Guide” highlighting information on the Proposition as well as including a question and answer format addressing the circulating rumors in the community on possible barriers to voting with solutions and resources to address problems or challenges experienced by community members.
- CLRJ reflected their work with community-based Latina leaders in crafting popular education-influenced voter education materials. They combined forces with ACCESS to co-produce a bilingual, bicultural No on Prop 4 voter education piece for adult Latinas. The piece was disseminated extensively in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, and was made available statewide through broad electronic dissemination. Positive images of Latina/o families and young women, combined with the most resonant messages that both organizations know work with the Latina/o community, enabled CLRJ and ACCESS to spark new conversations and thoughtful reflections for voters.
- KGA youth leaders created a media tool to frame the impact of Prop 4 from the perspective of young women of color. They produced and directed a commercial with their own script, music, and spoken words to send a moving, passionate, and powerful message that the potential passage of Prop 4 would greatly impact their reproductive rights to access safe and confidential medical care and how they communicate with their parents. KGA leaders’ media and critical thinking skills were developed through partnership with the Global Action Project.



- Youth at ACRJ decided that one of the most effective ways to communicate their voices and experiences was through Web 2.0 technologies. So each group created YouTube videos that spread a viral message on the impact of Props 4, 6, and 8 and the need for voters to stand with youth in this election.
- ACRJ engaged youth leaders in message development and produced and distributed voter guides on Props 4, 6, 8, and 9 and made information on Prop 4 available in Korean, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Chinese.
- NAPAWF also developed voter education materials specifically targeted to young Asian women.
- CLRJ reached out to its Statewide Alliance Network with two electronic voter guides to provide a reproductive justice analysis to grassroots networks and membership bases. One guide addressed Props 4, 6, 8, and 9, while another encouraged women of color to “Get out HER Vote” and use their voice to break the silence in our communities.

## Media Outreach

### *Bay Area Youth Rally Against State Propositions*

— *Headline in AsianWeek, Oct 10, 2008*

### *Latina Leaders Speak Out Against Prop 4: Parental Notification Will Harm California’s Latinas*

— *CLRJ, ACCESS, and DHF Joint Statement, October 31, 2008*

Our communities often rely on local and ethnic media to gather information about elections. Especially for communities for whom English is not their first language, local and ethnic media is a critical venue for understanding the impact of ballot measures on specific communities. In this election, reproductive justice organizations and our allies used local and ethnic media as vehicles for explaining the real impact of Prop 4 and other harmful ballot measures. We earned significant media attention through coordinated press conferences, radio and print interviews, and organizing press to attend our events and activities. Together we garnered over 30 media stories in local, ethnic, and mainstream media.

- CLRJ participated in live election night coverage for Telemundo as well as both a press conference and video webcast with the Strategy Center/Bus Riders Union’s “No on the Six” campaign highlighting No on Props 4, 6, 8, and 9. Coverage included AOL/Video, YouTube, and Sing Tao Daily.
- ACCESS was interviewed on Univision for a Spanish language story that aired both the night of their joint community forum with ACRJ and on election night.
- Thanks to opportunities developed by Chinese for Affirmative Action, ACRJ’s “No on 4” messages were featured in five Chinese language articles and radio programs.
- The National Radio Project produced a 30-minute segment on parental notification that was distributed

nationally and featured the youth organizing of ACRJ's SAFIRE (Sisters in Action for Reproductive Empowerment), program to defeat Prop 4.

- ACCESS, ACT, BWW, CLRJ, and ACRJ took advantage of local radio shows to get the word out in multiple languages, including CLRJ's interview on a Spanish language radio program that serves the farm worker population in the Central Valley, Radio Campesino.
- Many organizations worked to get Op-Eds published in mainstream papers. Due to the challenge of placing pieces in a presidential election year, these Op-Eds were used as voter education tools. ACT was successful in publishing an Op-Ed in the Visalia Times-Delta.





## BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX: DEVELOPING OUR ORGANIZATIONS & COMMUNITIES

*Every time we have faced a parental notification ballot measure we've been able to build our capacity to do more and more electoral organizing. Our capacity to make an impact on Prop 4 is bigger than ever.*

— Erin Garner-Ford, ACT for Women and Girls

*The election allowed us to raise awareness of the organization with our target populations. Because the mainstream campaign wasn't active in our community, we were able to play that lead role.*

— Destiny Lopez, ACCESS

The external pressures of fighting defensive ballot measures can have a range of impacts on grassroots organizations. In the worst case scenario, organizations work at a feverish pace and make it to election day overwhelmed, burnt out, and unable to continue to engage the community they activated during the election. This was not the case for reproductive justice organizations in California this election cycle.

PHOTO: KHMER GIRLS IN ACTION





For a number of groups, their engagement in Prop 4 demonstrated a growing capacity and a level of engagement that built upon earlier parental notification initiatives. Groups like CLRJ and ACRJ expended more resources and engaged significantly more people than ever before. In addition, the number of reproductive justice organizations engaged in electoral work grew to include groups like ACCESS and Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking. For all organizations, the election was an opportunity to train and develop leaders and staff in core electoral activities like media outreach, voter education, and GOTV. As a movement, we capitalized on the urgency of the election to build the capacity of our communities to engage in this election and beyond.

### Supporting the Leadership of Young People

*I learned a lot from outreaching for the No on Prop 4 community forum in Inglewood. I heard everything from apathy to surprise. One woman I met at a community college was so delighted to see that I was talking to her about something that was important in this election - because she remembers what it was like for young girls before abortion was legal and knows how important it is to vote No.*

— Xochitl Franco, CLRJ volunteer leader

*I voted this year for the first time and it feels cool to have been able to vote this year because it was so historic. If I had not been in SAFIRE I don't think I would have voted or been so involved. It's made me want to continue what I've done so far, which is to help my community as much as I can. It is amazing that we youth can make such a difference!*

— SAFIRE Youth Leader (ACRJ)

In every post-election analysis by political pundits, the power and potential of young voters aged 18-29 is being extolled as a critical new voting demographic that progressives must continue to organize and mobilize. One of the unique approaches to electoral organizing by reproductive justice organizations in this cycle was the strong emphasis on developing young leaders as key agents for change in our communities. We know that youth are interested in issues of reproductive justice that impact their lives, and are motivated to take political action even if they cannot vote because of age or immigration status.

The approach of reproductive justice organizations to developing leadership goes far beyond getting young women to volunteer to phone bank or canvass. Many of our organizations work with young women who are not supported to develop their leadership and fall through the cracks of institutional support systems. Therefore, young women in our communities are not the “usual suspects” for traditional volunteer recruitment. For reproductive justice groups, leadership development means recognizing the leadership that young people already provide and supporting them in honing analyses and skills so we can make change today and build long-term leaders. Our leadership development work went far beyond filling campaign shifts this election cycle and resulted in young women acting collectively to mobilize their communities. Here are some stories of building our communities through supporting the leadership of young women.

Young women in Visalia and the surrounding areas face a number of challenges to exercising leadership - poverty, being pushed out of school, and lack of resources for immigrant families. ACT for Women and Girls supported young women in dismantling these challenges through their Female Leadership Academy. Young

women in the Academy developed both knowledge and experience around a range of electoral organizing techniques including one-on-one in person voter persuasion, phone banking, visibility activities and GOTV. These women will advance their leadership as they continue to support reproductive justice in the Central Valley and organize a social justice event in the Spring of 2009 through the Academy.

Young leaders in CLRJ's Latinas Empowered for Action (LEA) program participated in message training, community outreach, and phone banking. CLRJ developed a tailored Facebook page for LEA leaders, "Don't Vote Against a Sister!" This site provided messaging they could use to speak to their family and friends about Proposition 4. Individually, the young women were able to influence their own families, work places, and campus organizations.

KGA's youth leaders came face to face with over 1000 voters through a community forum, phone banking, and precinct walking, urging the Asian community to vote no on Prop 4 by explaining how it would adversely impact them. Through this process, they built political power and changed norms of what leaders look like. KGA youth's capacity to implement voter education, outreach, and mobilization work was built in collaboration with Mobilize the Immigrant Vote.

ACRJ's youth organizing program SAFIRE conducted a wide range of activities that reached their communities while providing a youth voice to propositions that directly affect youth and training young people of color to be conscious future voters. They hosted and facilitated the first-ever Youth + Power = Change conference to develop the capacity of API youth to conduct GOTV activities. They helped create the core messages that



PHOTO: ACRJ, BY STEVE WAKE

ACRJ used in our Voter Guide for Props 4, 6, 8, and 9. SAFIRE members created their own media outreach team, which was interviewed by newspaper editorial boards and national and local radio programs. And as part of Trick of Vote, a national day of action, SAFIRE youth knocked on over 600 doors on Halloween night. SAFIRE's capacity to conduct electoral organizing on Prop 4 was magnified due to ACRJ's experience in organizing during the previous two parental notification fights.



Black Women for Wellness harnessed the surge of excitement over the presidential election and worked with 20 young women and men as key volunteers to carry out their voter education and mobilization strategies. Their ability to reach deeply into the African American community in Los Angeles was made possible by the engagement and support of these young people.

### Building Values-Based Collaborations

*Collaborative work allows CLRJ to continue building community with our justice allies. Working to defeat Prop 4 allowed us to deepen our relationships with groups such as CHIRLA, the Bus Riders Union/Strategy Center, Lambda Legal Defense Fund, and Visión y Compromiso – organizations that hold our respect for their work on crucial issues that intersect with reproductive justice work.*

— Gabriela Valle, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice

*We've informally worked together for a long time but the election gave us the opportunity to do concrete work through joint forums, media, and developing materials that will allow us to engage more deeply beyond Prop 4.*

— Destiny Lopez, ACCESS

The nature of elections and voting reveals that our communities are reliant on one another for creating the change we need. As the demographics of California and the country shift, political strategists and campaign managers are learning this lesson. For reproductive justice organizations, this reality is at the core of what we do and how we do it.

During this campaign season, reproductive justice organizations worked collaboratively through the Reproductive Justice Alliance to defeat harmful ballot initiatives and deepen relationships between our organizations and our constituencies. In many cases, we also worked with organizations that do not specifically identify as reproductive justice organizations but that work in communities of color to achieve justice on a number of fronts. These collaborative efforts represent both the current expansive networks in existence in and between communities of color in California and the opportunity for future cross-issue cross-community efforts toward a broad justice agenda for communities of color.



In many cases, we worked in collaboration in order to leverage the expertise of our various organizations and constituencies to strengthen our understanding of the impact of various ballot measures on our own communities. Often, these collaborations included working across communities to build a shared analysis of the impact of Prop 4 and other ballot measures on communities of color as a whole. The examples of this are numerous and include events like Keep Teens Safe: Community of Color Forum in Inglewood, a collaborative effort between CLRJ, BWW, California Black Women's Health Project, Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health and Reproductive Justice Coalition of LA; and the Community Forum on Props 4, 6 and 8 sponsored by ACCESS, ACRJ and Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition.

In other cases, we collaborated in order to unite our communities across divided geographies and share our resources. For example, the bilingual, bicultural No on Prop 4 brochure produced by ACCESS and CLRJ provided an opportunity for these organizations to pool resources and expertise in order to make sure that Spanish speaking communities at both ends of the state had access to culturally resonant information about the Proposition. They also worked with the Dolores Huerta Foundation to develop an Op-Ed that furthered this outreach.

Finally, we collaborated in order to increase our people power and visibility of our work. This kind of collaboration manifested on the ground when ACT and the Dolores Huerta Foundation joined together in canvassing and visibility actions in the migrant farm worker community in Bakersfield. In addition, ACT worked closely with Planned Parenthood of Mar Monte, a long-term partner who supported all of their electoral activities.

As well, BWW and CLRJ collaborated with a local African American bookstore and filmmaker to screen "Engage Her." Held in the heart of the Black business & cultural community of Los Angeles, the screening reached beyond the usual suspects. Coverage of the event in the LA Watts Times reached an African American readership not touched by mainstream No on 4 efforts. As well, a local filmmaker recorded the panel, interviewed attendees and culled together a cable television program highlighting the program, organizations and the issues.

These various collaborations were especially useful in garnering media attention through joint press conferences like the one sponsored by KGA, CLRJ, BWW, the Bus Riders Union, and the "No on the Six" campaign in Los Angeles.



PHOTOS: BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS



While it is important to detail what these collaborations did, it is potentially more important to explore what they mean for our communities and the long-term movement for justice. When in collaboration, justice organizations strengthen the infrastructure and capacity of our communities. In electoral terms and on political terrain, communities of color are under-resourced and isolated, even in a state like California. Cross-constituency, cross-issue, and cross-geography collaboration is essential to breaking that isolation, blunting wedge issues, and building the political power required for long-term change. But, like leadership development, organizational relationships are not built in a day or even an election season. The high level of collaboration between justice organizations to defeat Prop 4 was the result of the energy and commitment that reproductive justice organizations have prioritized to building these relationships from the ground up.

## MOVING FORWARD

We look forward to continuing to learn from our experiences as well as the experiences of others as we build the capacity of our organizations and communities. We hope these highlights from reproductive justice organizing in California are not a “wrap-up” to the election but a beginning of broader and deeper strategic thinking about how to use elections to build a strong and vibrant movement that achieves reproductive justice for all communities.

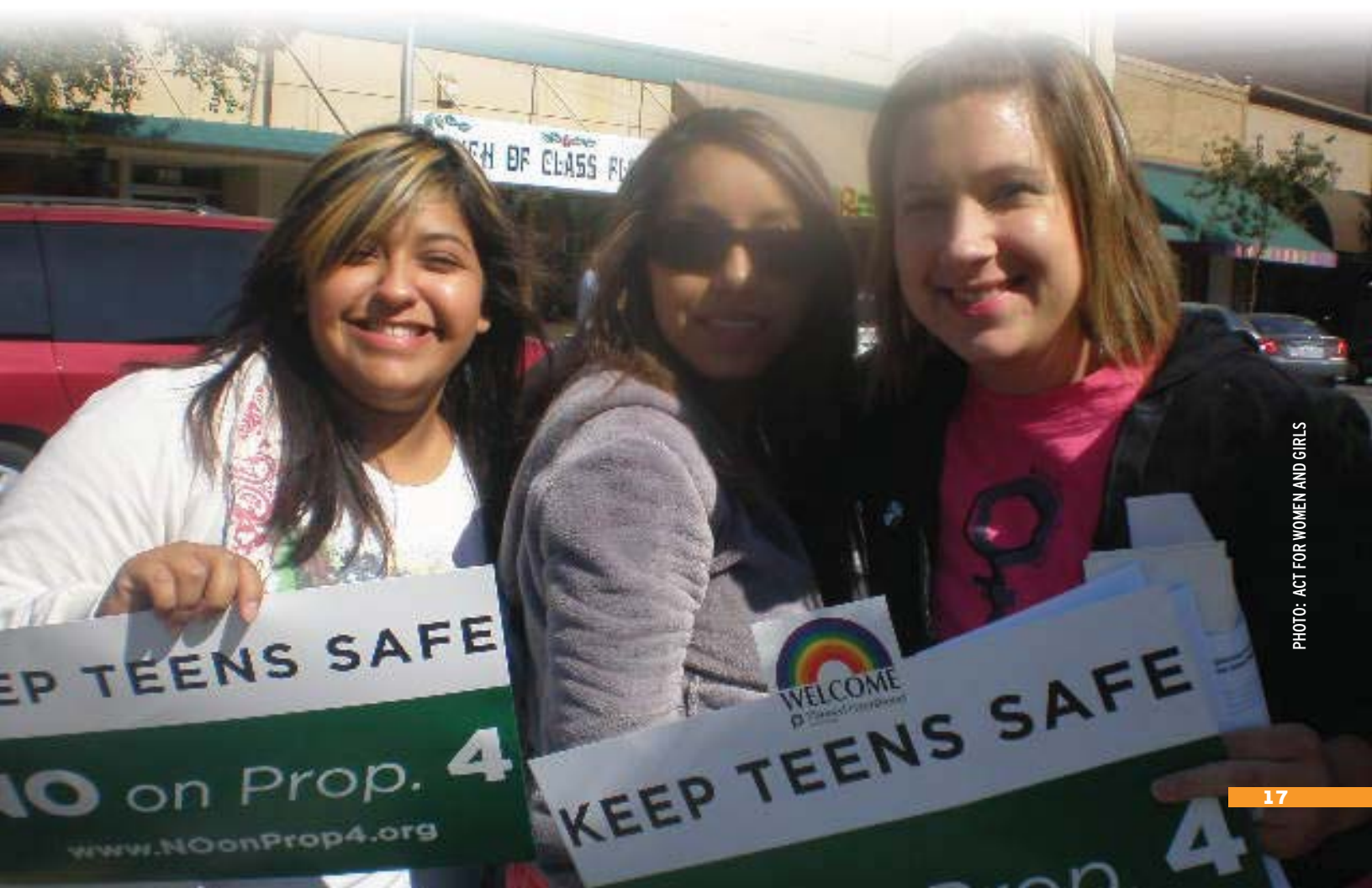


PHOTO: ACT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

# ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

**ACCESS/Women's Health Rights Initiative**

Oakland, CA  
510.923.0739  
[www.whrc-access.org](http://www.whrc-access.org)

**ACT for Women and Girls**

Visalia, CA  
[www.actulareco.org](http://www.actulareco.org)

**Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice**

Oakland, CA  
510.434.7900  
[www.reproductivejustice.org](http://www.reproductivejustice.org)

**Black Women for Wellness**

Los Angeles, CA  
323.290.5955  
[www.bwwla.com](http://www.bwwla.com)

**California Latinas for Reproductive Justice**

Los Angeles, CA  
213.270.5258  
[www.californialatinas.org](http://www.californialatinas.org)

**Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking**

Los Angeles, CA  
213.365.1906  
[www.castla.org](http://www.castla.org)

**Dolores Huerta Foundation**

Bakersfield, CA  
661.322.3033  
[www.doloreshuerta.org](http://www.doloreshuerta.org)

**Khmer Girls in Action**

Long Beach, CA  
562.986.9415  
[www.kgalb.org](http://www.kgalb.org)

**National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum**

Tacoma Park, MD  
301.270.4440  
[www.napawf.org](http://www.napawf.org)

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