



2021 Year in Review





THIS IS
WHAT
THEOLOGY
LOOKS LIKE

& VOTE

"How will we choose to answer the immense peril and promise of this new year? **Our answer is to organize.** Our answer is to commit ourselves to building multiracial, multi-faith community and power.

We confront structural racism head-on when we organize to make dignified housing a human right. We take on the caste system which reinforces a hierarchy of human value when we change the structures that uphold a law enforcement system stealing the lives of our Black, Brown, and Indigenous siblings. We embody beloved community when we say to our immigrant relatives, 'this is your home, too.'

We lay the foundation together for a California where all people and creation can belong and thrive when we invite our fellow congregants, neighbors, and family members to join us by voting, mobilizing, and telling our elected leaders the new story we want to write for our communities."

- Executive Director Joseph Tomas McKellar



A YEAR TO REMEMBER

In the past year, our work to hold police accountable, to ensure that everyone has a safe and affordable home, and to protect immigrants has taken on new meaning. We have been confronted by the interconnectedness of our federal, state, and local policies and the systemic inequities that put so many of our families at risk of illness, job loss, deportation, homelessness, and even death. Despite our inability to meet in-person, thousands of PICO California grassroots leaders, clergy, and organizers have continued to meet online and take regular action to call for a government that #Cares4Us. As we continue to face down the health and economic threats of COVID-19, our moral voice matters more than ever.

By fighting to transform our law enforcement system, keep tenant families in their homes during the pandemic, and provide pathways to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants, we put our faith into action together. In 2021, people of faith & values across the PICO California network:

- **Made over 3,500 phone calls, emails, and texts to statewide elected officials, winning extended eviction protections & full rental debt relief**
- **Helped pass SB 2, protecting communities from abusive police officers by creating a statewide decertification process**
- **Helped pass AB 118, investing \$10 million in community-based alternatives to police response during local emergencies, such as mental health crises**
- **Hosted over 30 meetings with federal and state legislators & other public officials**
- **Led over 20 public actions across California - including a statewide prayer march - urging our elected officials to deliver pathways to citizenship this year**

But we won't stop until every family can live free of police violence, every child has a roof over their head, and every immigrant who calls our country home is protected. By joining together, we're building a California where all of us belong.

THE RENEWAL INITIATIVE: A NEW ERA FOR PICO CALIFORNIA

PICO California is now officially a **new California-based, independent, 501(c)3 non-profit organization**, a big milestone in our journey to build a more prophetic, powerful, accountable, and impactful network rooted in a culture of faith-based, spiritually-rooted organizing owned and led by a growing number of people in our congregations and communities.



In August, 200 stakeholders in PICO California's nine local affiliates voted to affirm a new mission, theory of change, and key shifts after receiving input from 400 California network leaders, clergy, tribal elders, and staff. This milestone is the result of an inspiring amount of hard work and commitment by countless individuals who have cast a **vision for a state where everyone can belong, thrive, and be authors of their own futures.**

LEADERSHIP ASSEMBLIES

Over 1,000 clergy, faith leaders, and tribal elders joined together to inspire, agitate, and learn with each other, launching our legislative work for 2021 and beyond.

Organized around our three pillars of **immigrant inclusion, law enforcement transformation, and housing access and affordability**, in our first of two leadership assemblies the PICO California network was joined by newly-appointed **Senator Alex Padilla** who discussed his commitment to creating a pathway to citizenship for immigrants, his efforts to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and the importance of the newly-passed \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill.



LEGISLATIVE WEEK OF ACTION

During the week of May 11th, leaders, clergy and organizers made nearly **one thousand calls** demanding our elected leaders pass a #MoralBudget providing full rent debt relief, investment in community-based alternatives to policing, and funded legal assistance for tenants.

Our four-day action resulted in the passage of three bills that address PICO California priorities in housing protection and policing reform.


PICO CA'S WEEK OF ACTION

VICTORY
Because of your calls

AB 118
The Crisis ACT

HAS PASSED

DON'T STOP
text **BELONG** to **40649**



PICO CA'S WEEK OF ACTION

VICTORY
Because of your calls

SB 2
Police Decertification

HAS PASSED

DON'T STOP
text **BELONG** to **40649**



PICO CA'S WEEK OF ACTION

VICTORY
Because of your calls

AB 1487
Eviction Legal Aid

HAS PASSED

DON'T STOP
text **BELONG** to **40649**



HOUSING JUSTICE FOR ALL

With the looming eviction and crushing rent debt crisis primed to affect tens of thousands of families, PICO California provided thought leadership to a statewide coalition of organizations fighting for the No Renter Left Behind Plan to ensure a just and debt free recovery for all Californians. We created a video about the looming eviction crisis that became the anchor of a statewide messaging campaign: [Stop Kicking the Can Down the Road](#).



In the weeks following the video and campaign launch, dozens of articles were published highlighting the need for comprehensive renter relief, and Governor Gavin Newsom announced an eviction moratorium extension and full relief for rent debt owed.

EMERGENCY ECONOMIC RELIEF

The CA COVID-19 Rent Relief Program pays eligible tenants and landlords 100% of a tenant's past-due rent and utilities going as far back as April 1, 2020, protecting hundreds of thousands from eviction and debt collection lawsuits.

EVICTION MORATORIUM

Extending the COVID-19 Tenant Relief Act and COVID-19 Rental Housing Recovery Act protected hundreds of thousands of tenants with a COVID-19-related financial impact from eviction for nonpayment of rent.

“The foundational faith tradition of jubilee calls on us today to act boldly together and inaugurate a reimagined vision of care for all Californians during this time of crisis.

Our longstanding moral practices model the way our elected representatives must care for tenants and renters across our state right now - the long-term forgiveness of rental debt.

Our faith communities bear witness to a world in need of jubilee, and demand our representatives make good on their professed commitments to protect the vulnerable among us.”

-Rev. Dr. Marilyn Bussey, Pastor of St. James AME Zion Church in San Mateo, Leader in Faith in Action Bay Area



REFORMING CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SAFETY SYSTEM

As police misconduct and violence continued to lead headlines across California and the entire country, PICO California drove thousands of emails, texts, and calls to key legislators in support of public safety reform efforts.

The Kenneth Ross Jr. Act permanently **strips away the badges of officers found to have committed serious misconduct** and ending the "wash, rinse and repeat cycle" of officers moving from department to department even if they have a questionable history. Forty-six states already have this law, which prevents officers from getting hired anywhere else, much like if a doctor loses is medical license. Now, state regulators can revoke the licenses of officers who commit "serious misconduct," including using excessive force, committing sexual assault, displaying bias, and participating in a law enforcement gang.



The CRISES Act promotes **community-based responses to local emergency situations** as an alternative to uniformed law enforcement officers, including mental health crises, homelessness, intimate partner violence, and substance abuse.

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

On Sept. 13, over 700 Catholic leaders & allies gathered from across the country to mobilize Catholic support for pathways to citizenship for millions - including Dreamers, TPS holders, farmworkers, and other essential workers - within the budget reconciliation bill.

PICO CA & Faith in Action hosted Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Archbishop John Wester, Bishop Mario Dorsonville, and Bishop John Stowe - we send deep gratitude for their full-throated, faithful support & statements for winning pathways to citizenship this year. CA bishops and the CA Catholic Conference also expressed support for immigration reform in a recent call for solidarity.



FAST FOR FREEDOM

Our undocumented brothers and sisters working on the frontlines during a pandemic to heal, feed, and nurse us back to health still don't have a pathway to citizenship.

Taking the fight to the Capitol, Leaders from Faith in the Valley and PACT went to Washington, D.C. to participate in the #FastForFreedom—where organizers are participating in a spiritual fast in solidarity. On Oct. 10, over 120 faith and lay leaders from 7 federations across the state gathered to hold a prayer march in Sacramento, urging the Biden-Harris administration and Congressional leadership to deliver pathways to citizenship this year.



“As immigrant communities of faith in California, we join undocumented families across the country in exhorting Vice President Harris to use her constitutional power right now to make a way for citizenship and praying she will summon the moral courage to do so.

We need the Vice President, our former Senator, to deliver for Californians and all immigrants this year. We are marching to the CA State Capitol, a symbol of Democratic majority, to make it clear we expect Democrats to use their majority to keep their promise to us of relief for millions of immigrant families. Millions of Californians can no longer wait.”

- Gabby Trejo, Executive Director of Sacramento Area Congregations Together

BELONG MOVEMENT

A statewide leadership development program to combat polarization and racial anxiety by bridging across differences of race, faith, and economic status



PICO California continued to **develop volunteer leaders who are deeply committed to understanding the structural drivers of exclusion and building lasting relationships.**

Participants learn to heal through storytelling and connection, think together about the practices that move us from fear to faith and connection, and create a community to build a new reality together.

In partnership with Vanderbilt University, we published a qualitative and quantitative study showing that the Belong Movement has increased the size and expanded the breadth of our leadership base, where **participants showed greater emotional and cognitive empowerment, political consciousness, and sense of inter-connectivity,**

PEACEMAKERS FELLOWSHIP

Building a supportive network of survivors and transforming them into leaders

PICO California finished the 4th year of our Peacemakers Fellowship, an initiative to provide emotional and psychological support to young men and women who have been the victims of violence and help them along the path to empowerment. Since 2018, over **60 fellows have been connected to healing mechanisms, support strategies, mentors, and a community of other survivors** working together in a supportive network.

Those closest to the pain are those closest to the solutions for their communities, and **Peacemakers have become leaders in PICO California's efforts to transform the state's public safety system** from punishment to rehabilitation, leading winning policy advocacy efforts to create non-police responses to certain emergency calls and establish a de-certification process for police officers who commit gross misconduct.



**WHAT WE
ACCOMPLISHED
TOGETHER:
OUR LOCAL FEDERATIONS AND
THEIR INSPIRING VICTORIES**

TRUE NORTH ORGANIZING NETWORK

After years of organizing work by True North Organizing Network, a California state park formerly known as Patrick's Point in Humboldt County will be renamed Sue-meg after the Indigenous Yurok tribe name for the area. The change is the first renaming of a California park as part of an initiative to identify and rectify derogatory names attached to state parks and transportation systems.

“I’m so overwhelmed,” [True North Board Member Skip] Lowry said following the vote, tearing up with joy. “My kids aren’t going to have to deal with the pain that I dealt with.”



The renaming after nearly a century comes after the indigenous language was nearly destroyed by genocide and forced boarding schools. Yurok language revival has been a resounding success and is held up as a national model by many. The language is taught in public high schools, and students can study the language for California college requirements.

FAITH IN ACTION BAY AREA

After 7 years of organizing, Faith in Action Bay Area was able to push out a luxury developer from the last piece of land connected to rapid transit in the Mission District of San Francisco and win the land to develop 100% truly affordable housing for the low-income community. It will be the only development of its kind in the county.

With a coalition of housing organizers, FIABA are leading the table of developers, funders, and the city to guide this project. This is a first of its kind community fight and victory, won through years of community organizing rather than by elected officials or negotiations.

"We know our fight with Maximus before the Planning Commission could be bruising. Maximus, after all, is known for its bullying tactics and has plenty of cash for glitzy media campaigns. But David had the same odds when he faced Goliath, and here in the Mission, we, like David, just happen to believe a Marvel can defeat a Monster."

- Rev. Joanna Schenck, Associate Pastor of First Mennonite Church in San Francisco; Father Richard Smith, Ph.D., Episcopal priest in San Francisco



FAITH IN ACTION EAST BAY

Faith in Action East Bay and community partners worked with Oakland Unified School District board members to **pass a resolution** prioritizing social-emotional well-being, mental health, and academic credit recovery.

The resolution directs at least \$9 million in OUSD's budget to be used to hire community school managers at every school, have teachers conduct home visits or check-ins for every student in the fall, hire more staff to support mental and emotional support, create student and staff retreats in the summer before going back to school, and provide interventions like Saturday school, summer school, and other programs to reach students who are not on track to graduate.



PACT SAN JOSE

When Google decided to build an 80-acre campus near Diridon Station, People Acting in Community Together San Jose **helped secure \$155 million** for a Community Stabilization and Opportunity Pathways fund and a committee to oversee it. San Jose now has extra money for eviction protection services, tenant education, and land trust pre-development.

PACT grassroots leader Susan Price is a member of the advisory committee established by the city to oversee the millions of dollars Google will pay out over the next decade, and will take time to recruit other members who understand the city and its many issues with affordable housing.

“This gentrification is a really big problem and displacement of people... that’s a real big problem and we need to figure out how to not allow that to happen.”

“A big part of preventing destabilization is ensuring there’s money for tenants to have lawyers and take their cases to court when the landlord tries to evade the law.”



SACRAMENTO ACT

In September, Sacramento ACT, CAIR, Voice of the Youth, South Sac Christian Center, Sacramento Immigration Coalition, Sacramento Poor People's Campaign, and other community organizations **joined together** to stand in solidarity with Haitian Refugees with a press conference outside the state capitol that called for immediate action to prevent the cruel border actions.

"Nations are judged by how they treat the most marginalized among them. We are judged by how our morality is connected to the least of these...God speaks to all nations and says 'when I was hungry you fed me, when I was thirsty you gave me drink, when I was a stranger you invited me in...! This is the temperature in which we must test who we are - hot or cold - right now.'"

- Dr. Efrem Smith, Co-lead Pastor, Midtown Church; Board President, Sacramento ACT



INLAND CONGREGATIONS UNITED FOR CHANGE

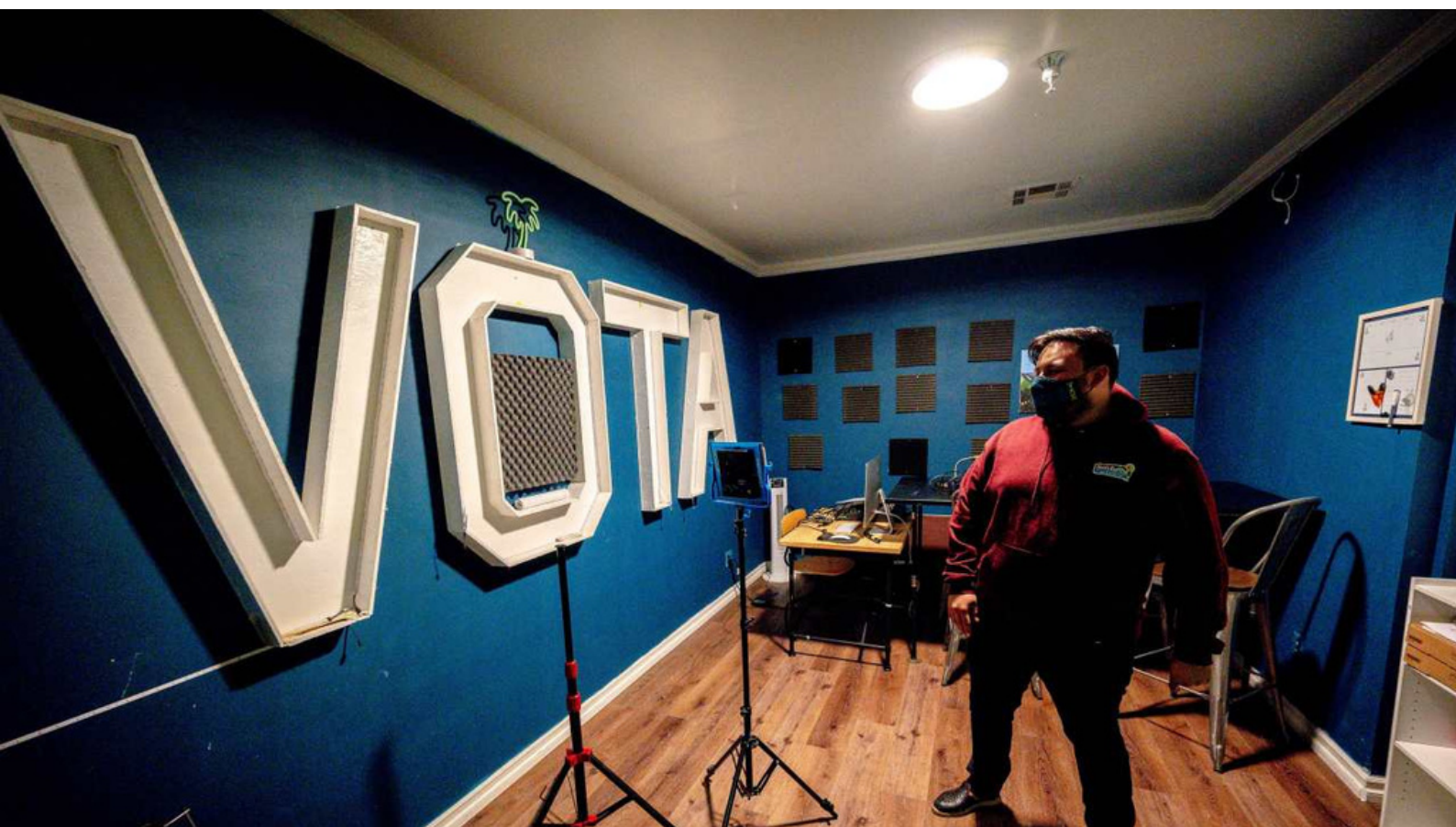
ICUC opened the Inland Empire Center for Community Organizing, a [space for community service organizations to collaborate](#) across the Inland Empire. The 17 distinct spaces inside the 10,000-square-foot building in San Bernardino are dedicated to providing residents education, leadership training, and a pathway to success.

During the pandemic, the Inland Empire Center for Community Organizing has been used to distribute more than 250,000 pounds of food and 200,000 face masks to residents of low-income communities. Voter registration drives were hosted there last year and visitors continue to be directed to housing services.

"It was a long process to get the space to what it is now. It's been an effort of all the organizations and community members who came to help..."

There's a revolution happening in San Bernardino. We're going to reclaim spaces because we want what's best for our communities. I don't think we'll stop till we have a San Bernardino that's great."

- Miguel Rivera, Events Coordinator, ICUC



LA VOICE

In a major victory for Los Angeles youth - which was years in the making - Mayor Eric Garcetti announced that he would propose **creating a Youth Development Department in the City of Los Angeles**. LA Voice has been supporting this multi-year effort as part of the Invest in Youth Coalition, and is incredibly proud of the hard work done by young leaders throughout our City.



#HERE2STAY: Ynes's Story

On October 29, 2021, PICO California, LA Voice, and #Here2Stay premiered a mini-documentary highlighting the incredible organizing work in Inglewood to save Ynes Torres' family home during the pandemic.



"I honestly didn't believe in the power of organizing... We have the power to change the system and that is what we did here in Inglewood..."

**I now believe in the power of organizing."
—Janeth Ayala, Leader, LA Voice**

SAN DIEGO ORGANIZING PROJECT

After years of organizing by SDOP and partners, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors created the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, serving as a centralized hub connecting individuals and families to services.

It will proactively engage with the community to provide information, educate on important topics and connect individuals and families to vital county and community resources. It will also create a link for referrals to the Immigrant Rights Legal Defense Program for detained immigrants facing deportation and can help connect individuals to trusted legal resources in the community.

"We are creating a framework for our future that ensures San Diego County is welcoming and everyone feels like they belong... Immigrants belong, and are a vital component of our region."



FAITH IN THE VALLEY

Faith in the Valley's participatory defense team, composed of Faith in the Valley grassroots leaders and congregations, works to accompany individuals facing criminal charges and their families. The team creates a "socio-bio packet" highlighting the stories gained from talking to the defendants and their communities. When submitted, the packet provides the court with a more humanizing picture of their life and circumstances.

During one hearing where a judge wanted to try a 16-year-old boy as an adult, the team collaborated to qualify Marcel Woodruff, a Faith in the Valley organizer, as a gang expert to present the socio-bio packet and report to the court during the hearing. Marcel's testimony was pivotal in convincing the judge that the young man deserved another chance. He was not transferred to adult court to face a potential of 40 years in prison, but was rather given a minimum sentence of three years on the condition that he works with Faith in the Valley and partners at Advance Peace upon release. Both organizations will provide support like peer mentorship and anger management counseling.



"We celebrate the role the community has played in walking alongside both youth and their families to create a more compassionate and restorative justice system."





WE ARE PICO CALIFORNIA.

