

# A JOURNEY FOR POLITICAL POWER:

An Evaluation Report of Bay Rising's First Five Years



**BAY  
RISING**

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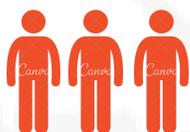
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# LETTER FROM KIMI LEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The past five years have just flown by! Within a few months of starting to work with Bay Rising, we had a historic national election that shifted our work drastically. A few years later, we are still facing a global pandemic which turned our work upside down even more. Organizing and building community has never been more important. Bay Rising has been a space to try new things and experiment. It has driven us to think outside of our usual boxes to connect artists to campaigns to help shift narratives all over the Bay. We knew we needed to think bigger, bring more people together, and find more ways to engage the community.

I am so grateful for the team that we have built and for the leaders that are doing the work every day. The last few years have been really tough on our communities, our families, and ourselves. We need to take a collective long and slow deep breath, to envision how our communities can come out stronger, bolder, and with more care for each other and the planet. What will it take for us to get there and what kind of leaders do we need to support and uplift? As we envision the next 5 years of Bay Rising, I am excited to keep pushing for investments in organizing, building power for our communities, changing the face of who gets elected, and pushing for change that embodies our social justice values.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere admiration and gratitude to the powerful Bay Rising members and partners whose work is reflected in this report. You are the backbone of our movement and we are grateful for the trust you place in us. We want to express our special thanks for the individuals who generously contributed their time and perspectives to this report through participation in interviews and surveys.

# MISSION



We are Bay Rising, a growing alliance of **community-led organizations** across the Bay Area.

We are the only regional civic engagement organization that organizes working-class people and people of color as voters in the Bay Area year-round. We believe that our journey towards racial, economic, and environmental justice is a journey for political power.

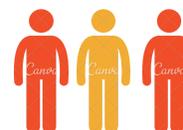
## WE KNOW THIS IN OUR BONES

because political power is about who represents us and the rules that govern us - it's about our future. We all have the right to decide on our future, no matter who we are, what we look like, or what's in our wallets.



Every day, we organize so that we'll have what it takes to shift the power back to our communities and become **co-creators of our future** alongside our elected officials.

We will always empower the people who are most marginalized in our Bay Area communities to lead the way for a government that centers racial, economic and environmental justice.





# BAY RISING MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



Bay Rising was driven by local organizing and formed by the groundbreaking local networks San Francisco Rising, Oakland Rising, and Silicon Valley Rising.

Together, Bay Rising and its members support each other to increase voter turnout, educate voters, build capacity to run electoral campaigns, and develop local leaders.

*Our member organizations include:*



# TIMELINE



# TIMELINE

## 2015

- Drafted foundational document with proposed membership structure and staffing plan

## 2016

- Hired Kimi Lee as Bay Rising's first Executive Director
- Bay Rising anchor organizations collectively ran the largest field campaigns in each of their cities — Oakland, San Francisco & San Jose — reaching 189,000 voters
- Helped to form and co-found Bay Resistance
- Published first regional voter guides
- Began trainings for Bay Rising members and partners
- Hosted regional funder briefings

## 2017

- Hired Irene Rojas-Carroll as first Communications Manager
- Started communications fellowship
- Continued with trainings, leadership retreats, and strategy spaces

## 2018

- Published a policy platform that stems from Bay Rising values and principles: community control, political power, right to our homes, work with dignity, sanctuary, just transition, and justice for young people and families
- Supported voter engagement experiments in mass texting

## 2019

- Launched a Census outreach strategy in five counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo)

## 2020

- Responded to the COVID-19 crisis by shifting Census outreach strategy to digital organizing and cultural interventions
- Launched Masks for the Movement—a project that addressed the need for masks by paying unemployed members to sew over 10,000 masks to sell to community members and provide to gig workers at no cost
- Supported members to adapt voter outreach to COVID-19 limitations through digital organizing, new canvassing protocols and strategies, and familiarity with all-mail ballot system
- Contracted with Parent Voices Action in Oakland to provide communications and digital organizing services to help pass a local ballot measure to fund early childhood education and health
- Coordinated regional organizing and narrative project with Defund police/ Refund community coalition.

## 2021

- Launched the Digital Organizing Training and Strategy (DOTS) Fellowship to develop digital organizing skills in young organizers
- Disseminated critical information on COVID worker safety and vaccinations in Oakland, San Jose, San Francisco, and beyond through door-knocking, texting, emails, and phone banking, reaching over 250,000 people



## CHANGES AND IMPACTS: COMMUNITY LEVEL



The five-year evaluation<sup>1</sup> revealed that Bay Rising has established a stronger foundation for the regional movement ecosystem and stronger regional communications work. Bay Rising has helped communities hone their stories to build a regional narrative of the issues affecting the Bay Area (e.g., housing, community safety; anti-Asian violence; election reform, etc.).

As a result of Bay Rising's work, there is a **stronger foundation for our regional movement ecosystem**. Bay Rising was able to deepen the organizing infrastructure through their communications work by facilitating collaboration across organizations (e.g, DOTS). They also provided various trainings to organizations (e.g., data, development, operations, communications strategy, etc.), regrants (e.g., census work, DOTS), and campaign technical support to deepen the organizing infrastructure. Partners shared that Bay Rising had regional presence and emphasized their regional power building efforts. Bay Rising was also successful in **strengthening the coordination among organizing efforts** in different parts of the Bay Area. In addition, Bay Rising **expanded its reach** to San Mateo, Vallejo, Contra Costa, Alameda, etc. and provided campaign support and strategy development to new member organizations in these areas.



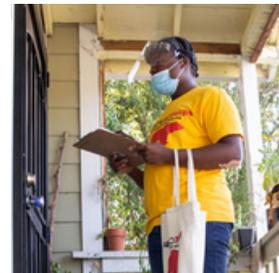
The following testimonies were shared by member organizations:

*"[Bay Rising has brought] absolutely stronger coordination amongst the groups... also statewide. Bay Rising has been a thread that can weave in and out on a bigger scale... Bay Rising gave us access to those spaces and those conversations [over] the last five years or so."*

*"[Bay Rising's regional coordination] gives us the edge on understanding [different campaigns.] Organizing in [a city] is really different than organizing in [our city]... we use some of the ways that [the other city] organizes to help ... transform the way we organize. So that's been a big, big help... the biggest [way Bay Rising has helped us] besides sharing tools and skills [has been] connecting us with different groups and different people that are doing that work."*

*"[I am celebrating Bay Rising's work in] holding the space... for the coordination that's happening among the groups... and then also the work Kimi has done to... build with groups beyond [San Francisco and Oakland] like in San Mateo and Vallejo and [I am also celebrating Bay Rising's work in] looking for new opportunities to bring more folks into the regional picture."*

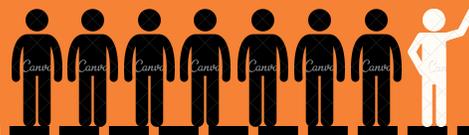
<sup>1</sup>For the five-year evaluation, reimagine collective reviewed Bay Rising's documents (e.g., staff reports, external reports, meeting minutes, etc.); conducted key informant interviews with staff (3), partners (6), consultants (3); and administered surveys to representatives of partner/member organizations. A total of 8 out of 30 organizations responded (27% response rate).





These views were shared by survey respondents. Almost all representatives that participated in the survey agreed that the following changes took place in the region as a result of Bay Rising:

- ☑ ***stronger leadership alignment in the region***
- ☑ ***stronger peer-to-peer support in the region***
- ☑ ***more effective regional work***
- ☑ ***better coordination of campaigns in the region***
- ☑ ***more aligned messaging in the region***
- ☑ ***shared narrative in the region***



Similarly, Bay Rising played a significant role in increasing the capacity of campaigns in the community by providing campaign technical support as well as working with new and existing member organizations to increase their capacity (e.g., texting support). Bay Rising's support has expanded its reach beyond San Francisco and Oakland to organizations in the following geographies:

- Alameda County (including Hayward and Union City)
- Contra Costa County
- San Mateo County (including Pacifica) and
- Solano County (Vallejo)

Almost all survey respondents also agreed that Bay Rising was successful in establishing stronger regional communications work, including:

- ☑ more coordinated communications in the region
- ☑ more effective communications work in the region
- ☑ stronger peer-to-peer support of communications in the region
- ☑ better alignment of communications strategy in the region



# Map of Bay Rising's Members & Partners



As a result of Bay Rising, there has been an increase in voter engagement in the region. Bay Rising engages over 189,000 voters year round.

- Supported organizations in calling and texting voters
- Collaborated with partners to publish voter guides in multiple languages (English, Chinese, Spanish)
- Sent out mailers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) voters

Bay Rising played a pivotal role in engaging voters through Census organizing and COVID-19 outreach.

- Launched a Census outreach strategy to reach over 500,000 people in eight languages and across five counties involving 15 partner organizations and nearly 50 organizers in 2019
- Provided over 250,000 people with critical information on COVID-19 safety and vaccination through door-knocking, texting, emails, and phone banking in 2020
- Re-granted to partner/member organizations and used communications and cultural strategies to support these activities in the region

Bay Rising increased support for local groups.

- Engaged funders (e.g., conducted funder convenings to share regional needs)
- Represented the Bay Area at statewide meetings (e.g., PIVOT, CDT, MVP, etc.)
- Provided capacity building opportunities (e.g., trainings) to partner/member organizations



**over  
500,000  
people**

engaged in Census organizing

**over  
250,000  
people**



received information on COVID-19  
worker safety and vaccinations

# CHANGES AND IMPACTS: PARTNER LEVEL

Partner organizations shared that Bay Rising’s work with them:

- ☑ Increased the skills among campaign managers and communications managers placed in strategic civic engagement campaigns
- ☑ Increased capacity of new member organizations as well as deepened organizing infrastructure among existing member organizations
- ☑ Provided increased campaign support that led to a higher number of campaigns as well as more impactful campaign strength and capacity in the region



Bay Rising partners shared that communications and campaign trainings were very useful and led to increased skills among campaign and communications managers. These included trainings in digital organizing (e.g., Social Movement Technology [SMT] training, DOTS, digital security training) and community organizing (e.g., campaign manager, compliance, and data management training; Bolder Advocacy training). Bay Rising’s various toolkits (e.g. communications toolkits) were also cited as useful. Organizations requested ongoing trainings for new staff and new partners as well as additional campaign manager trainings. The partners shared the following:



*“I’ve seen... [staff name] can now turn around toolkits for campaigns... putting together their whole entire social media campaigns, which [have] become... exponentially more relevant with COVID.”*

*“Compliance training [would be a good training for Bay Rising to offer again]. Because we do have new representation from... some of the coalition partners... I don’t think we’ve done it since I... got [here]. It was something I kind of just learned, like... going with the flow.”*

These views were shared by the survey respondents. Almost all of them identified that they have increased their skills in “development of campaign communications” and “framing, narrative, and messaging.”



# CHANGES AND IMPACTS: PARTNER LEVEL

In addition, the partners shared that Bay Rising made them more aware of other organizations in the region and helped them to develop relationships with each other. They were able to share ideas, experiences, and resources with other organizations doing similar work. Bay Rising also helped build the capacity of partners by providing:

- Retreat facilitation support
- Strategic planning
- Power mapping
- 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) compliance support
- Staffing (e.g., BR staff filling in, DOTS fellows, hiring support)



## PARTNERS SHARED:

*“[We attended] a session on office openings... and some of the best practices that were shared through that, and the information sharing from different organizations across the region about what they had been implementing... [these] actually have heavily informed our own initial reopening approach.”*



*“Technical capacity around... using the voter database and... communications... [and] Kimi has helped to facilitate a number of retreats... all of [this] capacity building [has] really been critical.”*



# CHANGES AND IMPACTS: PARTNER LEVEL



Partners named Bay Rising's campaign support as another important area of contribution. The partners specifically shared that **peer-to-peer texting** support and Bay Rising's support with **cultural strategy** (connecting art and culture to organizing) were very helpful in their campaign work. It was also noted that Bay Rising helped partners better **target voters through voter databases** and **understand 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) compliance**. Survey respondents also identified "participating in rapid response efforts" (6 out of 8 respondents) as one of the top five capacity building areas that Bay Rising provided. The following reflections were shared by the partners regarding Bay Rising's campaign support:

*"[Bay Rising] incorporate[s] culture strategy into their vision and political work. I think Bay Rising really thinks about the long term and creating a visual narrative for a long time... They are really creative and organizing and bringing together artists and cultural workers... I love that there's... momentum to rally artists together."*

*"The early arts and culture work... was really great for us because it led us to then partner with a local [organization]. ... We actually hired an artist in residence after that and now we still have an artist on staff. That has changed how we do the work. ... That was actually a powerful strategy."*

*"I think the most concrete example is what we did this summer... we [went] door-to-door and [conducted a] texting program.... The texting was really focused on voters... We wouldn't have been able to do texting without Bay Rising's program and their guidance for targeting."*

Bay Rising has provided spaces for community members to expand their leadership paths and engage in the political process. This can be seen in their work to engage young organizers and creatives.

# CHANGES AND IMPACTS: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

## ENGAGING WITH YOUNG ORGANIZERS

Bay Rising created the Digital Organizing and Training Strategy (DOTS) Fellowship to train young people in digital organizing and coordinate digital organizing work in the region. The fellowship placed young people in local grassroots organizations and provided them with the support and training they needed to make meaningful contributions to these organizations. The following reflections were shared by DOTS fellows and partners:



*"[The DOTS fellowship] allowed us to deploy new digital organization experiments and level up our comm[unication]s work. It was also deeply needed during a year filled with rapid response and crisis communications."*

- Partner Organization

*"Being in the 2021 DOTS Fellowship has been life changing. Definitely one of the most important stepping stones in my life as well as for the work I hope to accomplish and be a part of."*

- Fellow

View Bay Rising's report on the first year of the DOTS Fellowship [here](#).

## ENGAGING WITH CREATIVES

Believing that art is the heartbeat of our movements for freedom and justice, Bay Rising has engaged creatives (e.g. artists, musicians, writers, and performers) from all across the Bay Area to spread awareness and inspire powerful actions. The following were shared by the partners:

*"I think the most memorable [work was] earlier this year. We organized... within ... three days a giant mass rally... over 1,000 people came in response to the shooting out in Georgia. It was very powerful... We organized a rally centered around art and art creation. So we had painting[s] on the square... people paint[ed] on the square and [made] kites in response to [the mass shooting]... It [was during a Chinese] holiday where people usually fly kites... and we wrote love letters.... It was a very powerful experience even for myself. To see so many people come out... while we [were] really grieving and stressed and no one had [slept] that week... we just did [it] because... the moment... called for this kind of response."*



# HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES

Bay Rising's major contribution during the five years is that they were able to establish a stronger foundation for regional movement building. They were able to achieve this by providing support to member organizations in the region and by expanding their regional reach through building relationships with new member organizations. Key activities included:

## \* TRAININGS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- Voter organizing
- Corporate research
- Digital security
- Cultural strategies
- Leadership strategies
- Organizational development
- Office operations
- Communications planning
- Narrative power building
- Messaging
- Media relations
- Spokesperson skills
- Digital organizing

## \* OTHER COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

- Peer relationship-building
- Coordination
- Communications consultancy
- Shared resources (e.g. media contact database)



## CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

- Campaign leads management
- Volunteer management
- Voter lists and targeting
- P2P texting



## FUNDRAISING AND FUND REDISTRIBUTION

- Funder briefings
- Regranting for organizing and capacity building



# HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES



## \* REGIONAL RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND EXPANSION

- Power mapping
- Leadership retreats
- Research
- Strategy facilitation

## \* OTHER ADDITIONAL WORK

- 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 compliance
- Consultant management
- Recruitment and hiring of new staff

## COMMUNICATIONS

Bay Rising coordinated communications work in the region and provided support through trainings, shared resources, coaching, and professional development grants, as well as messaging and content guides. Bay Rising developed and implemented the Digital Organizing and Training Strategy (DOTS) Fellowship in 2021 to train young people in digital organizing and to coordinate communications work in the region. Another key contribution is that Bay Rising integrated cultural strategies into their work (e.g., cultural interventions and art).

## FUNDRAISING AND FUND REDISTRIBUTION

Bay Rising’s fundraising involves holding regular meetings with funder coalitions including Justice Funders (formerly BAJFN) and PIVOT, searching for new funding opportunities, making connections, and applying for funding. In addition, Bay Rising redistributed over \$2.4 million in regrants to their member organizations through programs such as Census outreach, COVID-19 outreach, and DOTS.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES



## TRAININGS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Bay Rising provided training to campaign managers and community leaders on the following topics: voter guides, rapid response, advanced campaigns, security, campaign planning, and campaign management. Bay Rising also offered a “Healing for Liberation” program in collaboration with Windcall to help community organizers and leaders deal with trauma and build resilient organizing practices. Trainings on direct action, organizing, voter organizing, and building sanctuary spaces were offered as well through Bay Resistance convenings. One Bay Resistance convening in 2017 trained approximately 1,000 people from across the Bay Area in one afternoon.



## CAMPAIGN SUPPORT

Bay Rising provided a peer-to-peer texting platform, voter lists to members (including CJC, APEN, MUA) and partners (Vallejo Housing Justice, Pacifica Progressive Alliance and Alameda Renters Coalition), and developed voter guides for the region. Bay Rising reviewed about 200 ballot measures and coordinated with multiple partners to create their 2020 voter guides. Bay Rising also provided campaign technical support to existing and new partners/members (phone bank support, developing/distributing mailers, door hangers, campaign coaching, compliance consultation).

# HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES

## REGIONAL RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND EXPANSION



Over the five years, Bay Rising met with numerous community organizations and leaders to find out how they could work together and support each other. As a result, Bay Rising was successful in engaging organizations beyond existing member organizations in South Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Solano counties. Bay Rising met with suburban organizers in San Mateo, Fremont, Hayward, Santa Clara, and Sonoma. They also engaged activists in Berkeley, and coordinated with local, regional, and statewide groups. For example, Bay Rising worked with member organizations to respond to the rise in violence against Asians through #LoveOurPeople vigils, and to address the violence of over policing against Black and Brown people through public education efforts and community safety narrative work across the region. In addition, Bay Rising is actively participating in statewide groups to align organizing work for greater impact across the state (e.g., Million Voters Project). Bay Rising's coordination of feedback on the statewide redistricting process is another example of Bay Rising's contribution to statewide coordination.



## OTHER ADDITIONAL WORK

Bay Rising convened Bay Resistance, a larger network directly organizing "resistance" activists to support long-term local organizing under the Trump administration.



# BAY RESISTANCE

After the 2016 presidential election, Bay Rising helped convene the rapid response network Bay Resistance. Bay Resistance was a mass mobilization vehicle focused on capturing the energy of the many communities across the Bay Area who wanted to fight back against the policies of the Trump administration.

Using this energy, Bay Resistance bolstered the long-term organizing efforts of existing grassroots organizations. At the peak of its activity, Bay Resistance had a 16,000 person rapid response text program and trained thousands of people in direct action, campaign development and civic engagement.

They also used this reach to amplify videos of mass mobilizations that collectively reached over a million people on social media. In 2020, the network organized workshops to prepare for the attacks on the election and held a “Count Every Vote” event that was an important space to bring people together during a difficult time.



# BAY RISING IMPACT

**\$2.4 M**

regrants to partners

**189,000**

voters continuously  
engaged year round

**200+**

ballot measure  
endorsements in 2020

**60+**

regional trainings  
and workshops

**34**

fellows trained and coached  
(communications & digital organizing)

**8**

digital organizing fellows hired  
as staff with organizations or  
campaigns

# PERSPECTIVES FROM BAY RISING'S MEMBERS AND CONSULTANTS

## *Bay Rising as the movement's connective tissue:*

"Bay Rising is this vehicle for really helping local organizations to be able to engage more in political power building, ... having the resources, infrastructure and [the] know-how to do that, so that we can be using political power building as a strategy alongside all the other strategies that we're using... There's also this piece of being this movement's connective tissue... It helps all of us to be able to do a little bit more in those critical moments of crisis and opportunity."

## *Bay Rising as a story of capacity building and coordinated strategy:*

"It's an alliance of movement building and power building groups seeking to co-govern in our region. It's the story of both building the institutional capacity and expertise [of members] to do their work at the subregional level, and to build a coordinated movement strategy... in the region."

## *Bay Rising connecting the dots:*

"Bay Rising has harnessed the power building that has been happening in certain cities in the Bay Area, and [has] really connected the dots and established a Bay Area presence for the value of the bottom up organizing, the ongoing integrated voter work that's happening in the Bay area, and has even grown beyond those core cities that help launch it."

## BAY RISING AS A MODEL OF WHAT POLITICS SHOULD BE:

***"I really am a person who believes that we need better community representation. And that we need more people involved in our systems, so that they can influence changes in the system, [are] better represented, [and are] better served by our government. And so when I think about what politics should be, I think about Bay Rising. That's what politics should be, right? It should be people figuring out what their communities need, then asking for it, demanding it and making it happen. And providing it for each other when possible and asking the people who represent them when not.***





# LOOKING FORWARD

In their first five years, Bay Rising has focused successfully on:

- 1) Building a stronger foundation for the regional movement ecosystem
- 2) Expanding organizing infrastructure in strategic outlying areas
- 3) Increasing campaign support.

With this strong infrastructure and community capacity built, Bay Rising is moving forward to work on its long-term outcomes of 1) increasing the electoral value of the Bay Area working-class vote and the vote of communities of color in state elections; 2) increasing influence on policy and decisions by electeds; and 3) growing the number and depth of alliances with elected officials to further member organizations' goals.

Specifically, Bay Rising will continue to organize to shift power back to the most marginalized in the Bay Area. Staffing and programs are already growing to support the activities needed to realize these outcomes. Future work includes:

## Putting Forward a Regional Policy Platform

Bay Rising will put forward its first shared regional policy platform that articulates key policies to pass in the Bay Area in 2022-2023. The purpose of this platform is to uplift a shared narrative that supports progressive policy interventions across the region.

## Building Power through Digital Organizing

Bay Rising will continue to build long-term digital organizing capacity of partner groups through the DOTS Fellowship. In 2022, the fellowship will expand the organizations in which fellows are placed, the regions of impact, and the duration and hours of fellowships.

## Supporting Increased, Sustainable Funding

Bay Rising will continue to provide a centralized organizing structure that allows for more opportunities for regranting, as well as funder briefings for funders and alliances to meet, get updates, and learn what is coming up in voter organizing on state level.

## Supporting a New Political Home for Working Families

Bay Rising Action will continue to support the introduction of the California Working Families Party into the state and development of the Bay Area Chapter. This includes helping to build opportunities for working-class people and people of color in the Bay Area can get involved.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

This report is only the beginning of Bay Rising's journey in building political power. We welcome a conversation about this report and our collective work towards community-driven governance that centers racial, economic, and environmental justice for all.





# BAY RISING



# END.

