Community Voices Heard mobilized in solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter in 2015 to ensure police & criminal justice system accountability.

In the Mid-Hudson Valley, Community Voices Heard organized a rally – with partners at Citizen Action NY and Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson - that resulted in a commitment to a federal investigation in the death of Samuel Harrell at the Fishkill Correctional Facility while in custody.

In the Mid-Hudson Valley, CVH partnered with the Regional Plan Association (RPA) to ensure that low-income residents' voices are incorporated into the 4th Regional Planning Process that is currently underway (a first effort at engagement by RPA in its 100-year history!). In turn, this helped us to identify new constituencies and new issues, like the growing immigrant base concerned with driver's licenses. RPA is an urban research and advocacy organization focused on infrastructure, sustainability, and quality of life in the NY-NJ-CT metro region.

In East Harlem, CVH stepped in as one of the key project partners in the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan process to ensure that community residents have a voice in the future of their community. Through this plan, we also want to ensure that any rezoning that comes about is driven by a community assessment and a community vision rather than a top down push from outside. We organized to get powerful recommendations focused on deeply affordable housing, public housing, and good union jobs into the neighborhood plan.

Over 1,000 people engaged with the process and CVH is poised to release the plan early in 2016 along with our project partners: the City Council Speaker’s Office, the Manhattan Borough President’s Office, Community Board 11, and a diverse Steering Committee.

Get Involved! Contact Us:
www.facebook.com/CVHaction
www.Twitter.com/CVHaction
www.CVHaction.org

CVH Chapter Locations:
NYC: 115 East 106th Street, 3rd Fl.
New York, NY 10029
212.860.6900
Westchester County: 28 N. Broadway, 2nd Fl.
Yonkers, NY 10701
914.731.2841
Orange County: 87 Ann St., Storefront
Newburgh, NY 12560
845.562.2020
Dutchess County: 29 North Hamilton St., Suite L17,
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
845.790.5945

Community Based Neighborhood Planning

In the Hudson Valley, CVH partnered with the Regional Plan Association (RPA) to ensure that low-income residents’ voices are incorporated into the 4th Regional Planning Process that is currently underway (a first effort at engagement by RPA in its 100-year history!). In turn, this helped us to identify new constituencies and new issues, like the growing immigrant base concerned with driver’s licenses.

RPA is an urban research and advocacy organization focused on infrastructure, sustainability, and quality of life in the NY-NJ-CT metro region.

In East Harlem, CVH stepped in as one of the key project partners in the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan process to ensure that community residents have a voice in the future of their community.

Through this plan, we also want to ensure that any rezoning that comes about is driven by a community assessment and a community vision rather than a top down push from outside. We organized to get powerful recommendations focused on deeply affordable housing, public housing, and good union jobs into the neighborhood plan.

Over 1,000 people engaged with the process and CVH is poised to release the plan early in 2016 along with our project partners: the City Council Speaker’s Office, the Manhattan Borough President’s Office, Community Board 11, and a diverse Steering Committee.
**Expanding Participatory Budgeting in NYC**

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a process through which ordinary people get to directly decide how public monies are spent. Participatory Budgeting NYC began in 2011 with four Council Members and $4 million. CVH has been the Lead Community Engagement partner, ensuring those most marginalized from governmental decision-making processes help lead this process and that principles of equity, inclusion, and empowerment are at its core.

By April 2015, PB had grown to 24 participating districts with more than 50,000 residents voting on how to spend over $30 million. By year-end, 28 City Council districts kicked off Cycle V with nearly $35 million at stake.

Participatory Budgeting NYC is successfully being institutionalized in New York City and CVH continues to support the transition of what once was an outside experiment into a staple for how government typically operates. As a result, in 2015, Participatory Budgeting NYC received the Innovations in Government Award from the Harvard Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation.

---

**Fighting Workfare & Revamping Employment Services**

CVH was originally founded around the fight to end workfare – the unpaid work mandate placed on welfare recipients.

In 2015, tremendous progress was made in the phasing out of New York City’s Work Experience Program (WEP)/workfare. By year-end, only 1,900 unpaid WEP positions remained in the City (down from a peak of 40,000 when we first started the campaign) and only nine agencies (down from 18 the prior year) continued to host the unpaid workers. Additionally, New York City’s welfare agency released new Concept Papers for how they will run their employment services programs (job readiness, job search, and job training) and incorporated many of the ideas CVH members had brought up for years.

At our annual Shirley Chisholm Lights of Freedom Awards, CVH honored a number of key partners for their support in ending WEP in New York City.

Partnerships with various labor unions – District Council 37, Transport Workers Union Local 100, and the Laborers Local 79 – helped to open up various new pathways and possibilities for welfare recipients to enter into good paying union jobs.

---

**Improving Public Housing in NYC**

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has been underfunded for years. Community Voices Heard’s NYC Public Housing Committee continues to be at the center of the fight to preserve and improve NYCHA. This year we were successful in securing $100 million from the State in capital funds (the first time in 20 years!) as well as winning a commitment of $300 million from the City over the next 3 years.

CVH also made progress in 2015 ensuring that funds get dedicated to core structural needs that get at the root causes of the toxic mold that surrounds our members in their homes. We won significant mold repairs in two developments and we’ve highlighted (to both NYCHA and public housing residents) the urgency for NYCHA to address more.

We expanded our leadership teams across NYC (The Rockaways, East Harlem, the South Bronx) to build the power we need to preserve and improve this stock for years to come.

---

**Access to Jobs & Housing in Westchester**

Our Westchester County Chapter continued to grow by leaps and bounds in 2015. Our Leadership Teams in six different cities – Yonkers, White Plains, Port Chester, Ossining, Peekskill, and Mount Vernon – expanded and positioned themselves to win more victories around our Anti-Poverty Agenda for the County.

We got Mayor Tom Roach and the White Plains City Council to vote to “Ban the Box” from City job applications - facilitating a second chance for people who have already served their sentences. And we now have legislation introduced in Westchester County!

At year-end, we were successful in securing $100,000 in the County budget to do a much-needed Housing Needs Assessment to lay the foundation for building affordable housing to meet the needs of the community.

---

Community Voices Heard (CVH) is a member-led multi-racial organization, principally women of color and low-income families in New York State that builds power to secure social, economic and racial justice for all. We accomplish this through grassroots organizing, leadership development, winning policy changes, and creating new models of direct democracy.