2022

YEAR IN REVIEW: A YEAR OF REBUILDING!

COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD
Welcome

A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2022 has been an incredible year at Community Voices Heard and Community Voices Heard Power. After working remotely for over two years due to the pandemic, we were eager to get back to building our bases and campaigns in NYC, Westchester, Orange, and Dutchess counties. This year, we were able to move 955 people to take action – through rallies, petitions, and more. Through our Follow Black Women project, we surveyed over 3,000 individuals; we created campaigns that focused on transparency of federal and city funding in Newburgh and Poughkeepsie; we mobilized Yonkers residents against undemocratic term limit extensions; and we are building a campaign to revitalize NYCHA.

While working with our coalition partners, we launched statewide campaigns to invest $40 billion in housing, childcare, and unemployment benefits for those excluded from receiving them. We also fought to protect tenants from crippling rental hikes and poor conditions.

Our sister organization, CVH Power, celebrated its 10th anniversary. Past and present endorsed candidates, members, and volunteers came to celebrate. We also launched the second phase of our Follow Black Women project and are poised to release our findings and agenda in 2023.

We’ve also been growing our staff to meet the needs of our membership and communities. And we centered our commitment to transformative leadership through our Ella Baker School of Organizing.

Needless to say, we have been busy, and we have no intention of slowing down. I am thankful for strong founders who laid an amazing infrastructure, and for members and staff who are up to the challenge of building an even stronger CVH and CVHP. I am thankful for donors who have invested in us and believe in the power of organizing to transform communities. I am excited and honored to lead this amazing organization into its next phase.

Thank you, and let’s continue fighting!

Juanita O. Lewis
Executive Director
Year in Review

**FOLLOW BLACK WOMEN**

For more than 100 years, Black women have led America’s progress on human rights, fairness, and empowerment.

Our Follow Black Women project seeks to move from the mere acknowledgment of Black women as the wheels for political movements, to Black women actually being the drivers of policy and governance.

This year, we launched the second phase of our Follow Black Women survey and engaged voters in necessary dialogue through our Follow Black Women panels.

Through this project, CVH is creating an infrastructure for deep organizing of Black women across the state to win policy reforms.

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**SUMMER OF POWER**

This summer, our organizing team was busy engaging new members!

By using a multi-issue, multi-generational, and multicultural base building approach, we actively increase the number of impacted community members joining the fight for social change for their community.

By the numbers:

- 8 ➞ Text/phone banks
- 10 ➞ Saturday door knocks
- 11 ➞ Canvass & tabling events
- 153 ➞ 1:1 meetings
- 213 ➞ Phone conversations
- 4,713 ➞ Doors knocked

Thank you for helping us make our Summer of Power a huge success!
Public money is OUR money!

Investing in people and communities is what creates a thriving economy because the economy is driven by people – our skills, our work, and our spending. We are working to ensure that public money – our tax dollars – are used to improve all of our lives and foster communities that are healthy and vibrant.

In Newburgh and Poughkeepsie, CVH is fighting to ensure that federal American Rescue Plan dollars go toward the needs identified by people most impacted by COVID-19 for an equitable recovery from the pandemic. In our Yonkers chapter, we launched the “Invest in Our New York” campaign to call on the state to fund $40 billion in new investments in public education, childcare, housing, workers, and climate change to make sure the ultra-rich pay what they owe.

Every person should be guaranteed safe, decent, and affordable housing.

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) houses over 400,000 low-income and working class New Yorkers – over 90% of whom are Black and Latinx – and CVH’s public housing members are fighting for their rights! We are demanding that government officials invest in NYCHA to make the massive repairs needed after years of disinvestment and hold NYCHA accountable for completing the work.

We have been leading regular teach-ins so residents can learn more about NYCHA Preservation Trust. Members provided active input into the development of the voting rules so that NYCHA residents will be able to make an informed choice about the future of their developments.

After knocking on doors, meeting with elected officials, and attending countless meetings, our members won Good Cause eviction protections in Beacon and Poughkeepsie. Our members are also leading the fight locally, statewide, and nationally for more tenant protections, opportunities for tenants to purchase homes, and access to housing for families impacted by mass incarceration.
PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

We believe an equitable New York State must be founded on participatory democracy.

This year, Yonkers City Council voted to extend their own term limits without engaging the voters of Yonkers. CVH Yonkers members and coalition partners mobilized to attend the public hearing and Council meeting, where they demanded that the proposal be brought to the people of Yonkers as a referendum.

Although we didn’t win this battle, our longer-term fight continues to create a truly open democracy.

ELLA BAKER SCHOOL OF ORGANIZING

We are developing the next generation of organizers!

Our Ella Baker School of Organizing is an intensive experience where participants learn about Power, Self-Interest, One-to-Ones, Base Building, and Campaign Development. Participants develop a deep analysis of the power they need to build to change unjust conditions.

We were proud to lead another successful Ella Baker School in September, and plan to lead more in 2023.
SPOTLIGHT: NEWBURGH & POUGHKEEPSIE ACTIONS

Immediately after our Ella Baker School of Organizing, our Newburgh members had the chance to put their training into action!

CVH members took over the Newburgh City Council meeting to demand Newburgh residents be meaningfully included in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding decisions. Newburgh received $21.8 million in public funds, but we have not seen the City of Newburgh engage in meaningful dialogues with our community. As a result of the takeover, CVH members got a meeting with the Mayor!

In Poughkeepsie, members also mobilized at City Hall to demand the Mayor use federal ARPA funds for rent relief and tenant protections. CVH engaged in over 700 conversations with tenants across the city about where they wanted the ARPA money to go; the overwhelming answer was to address the city’s housing crisis. Our campaigns for economic justice and equitable development are ongoing.
Our sister organization, CVHPower, seeks out, politically educates, trains, encourages, and supports aspiring candidates of color; as well as individuals who support our agenda to advance low-income communities of color across our four chapters.

This year was a busy election year – New York had two primaries and a general election! As a result, most of our CVHPower work was focused on necessary voter education. From canvassing to engaging voters through social media, we got out the vote for housing, healthcare, and education.

We're proud to say that eight of our member-endorsed candidates won their elections this year in local and statewide elections! CVHPower also has an offensive organizing game plan. Next year, we will be launching a Black Women’s Agenda to lead with the issues most important to Black women.
Celebrations

CVHPOWER
10-YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

So many thanks to everyone who joined us at Sofrito in Harlem to celebrate the anniversary of our sister organization, CVHPower! We celebrated 10 years of grassroots political organizing and empowering candidates of color.

At the celebration, we honored many partners – Congressman Jamaal Bowman, advocate Jennifer Jones Austin, Council Member Crystal Hudson, Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, advocate Maya Wiley, and CVH Board Member Joseph Mpa.

LIGHTS OF FREEDOM GALA

Our annual Lights of Freedom Gala was back in person this year for the first time since 2019!

We gathered at Riverside Church in Harlem where we remembered members we’ve lost over the past year, celebrated their legacy, and danced!

This year, we honored Maria Pacheco, longtime CVH member and NYCHA tenant leader; George Goehl, organizer and former Executive Director of People’s Action; and Westchester Community Foundation, our institutional partner.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in person and in spirit – we had such a wonderful time celebrating our honorees and marking 28 years of Community Voices Heard.
Member Spotlights

**MARGARETH MASSAC**
**MEMBER IN:** FAR ROCKAWAY • **MEMBER SINCE:** 2016

"I hate injustice, and I always said if I can do something about it, then I will. And CVH allowed me to speak for those who have experienced discrimination and injustice. I liked that I was involved with meetings with elected officials in the community and part of the Participatory Budgeting process for my neighborhood."

**DARRETT ROBERTS**
**MEMBER IN:** DUTCHESS COUNTY • **MEMBER SINCE:** 2012

"I was looking at different organizations in the Hudson Valley, and I was invited to a CVH meeting. I became a member because I want everyone to have a fair shake in this country. We all need to be together, we can’t do it alone."

**MARGARETH MASSAC**
**MEMBER IN:** FAR ROCKAWAY • **MEMBER SINCE:** 2016

"I believe that NYCHA is continuously disinvesting in our housing developments and I wanted to learn more about the ways I can change that and bring back NYCHA to the way it used to be. It was beautiful and was affordable. It allowed me to go to school and get a good job to provide and raise my family. It is no longer like that and I wanted to be around people that wanted to make positive changes in my community and in public housing."

**STEPHANIE SWANN**
**MEMBER IN:** WESTCHESTER COUNTY • **MEMBER SINCE:** 2013

"I believe I have a voice for the less fortunate or those who are afraid of retaliation when it comes to speaking up. I have no problem standing up for what is morally right.

Being a member of Community Voices Heard is like family. We all look out for one another. Now I am in a position to speak up for those who can not speak up for themselves and it is damn EXHILARATING!!!!"
Looking Ahead

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CVH?

In 2023, we will move from base building to action.

We have several key priorities in 2023, all driven by our members’ experiences and expertise. Our work will focus on housing justice, equitable development & economic justice, participatory democracy, and our Follow Black Women project.

We remain deeply committed to strengthening the power and civic engagement of people of color across New York State.

DONATE

We have many fierce battles ahead. Please invest in our grassroots organizing work!

Donations can be made online:
www.cvhaction.org/donatecvh

Donations can also be sent by mail to:
Community Voices Heard
115 E. 106th St., 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10029

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THANK YOU!