2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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In 2020, the pandemics of COVID-19 and gun violence exacerbated multiple public health crises. We saw that too often, our communities’ pain and stories don’t make headlines, but as an organization, we work every day to challenge that reality: building power for and with communities of color to end gun violence.

The Community Justice Action Fund (CJAF) is led by survivors and the voices of the people on the frontlines, and our goal is to change the conversation on gun violence prevention centering the people closest to the pain of everyday gun violence. CJAF has one of the largest networks of activists in America, with over 30,000 identified supporters. Every year, we empower new and existing leaders to reach their goals and full potential to advocate for gun violence prevention.

We are working to eliminate the gun violence epidemic by:

- Changing the narrative around gun violence in America.
- Building community amongst activists, policymakers, concerned citizens, and community leaders.
- Advancing bold policy agendas at the state, local, and federal levels.

This year, in response to unprecedented violence in our communities, our work was bolder, and bigger than ever before. We grew our staff by six people this year, bringing on Thia’a Rahman as Distributed Organizing Manager, Talib Hudson as Policy Director, Andrea Pino-Silva as Communications Director, and Irina Alejandro, Saloni Khushal, and Krunali Brahmbhatt as Organizing Fellows.

As we lean with grace into the fifth year of our work, we are grateful for the support of our partners, funders, and supporters. Thank you all for your courage and your resilience.

- Team CJAF
Our communities demand public policies to protect them from gun violence, whether from shootings in the streets or weapons used in the home. Amid COVID-19 and higher gun violence rates and police violence, people of color need investment now more than ever. At CJAF, we believe that it is critical that our elected leaders enact policies that refrain from constant over-policing, which drains funds from critical services, and leads to mass incarceration. Instead of using traditional crime control methods, lawmakers should invest in community-led policy interventions and support proven methods to reduce violence.

Peace is Essential
At the beginning of the national shut down due to COVID19, in partnership with March for Our Lives, CJAF advocated that states include violence intervention and prevention programs in their emergency funding and recovery efforts. We worked with over 700 volunteers for this campaign, made 25,985 calls, and hosted a youth-led rally with over 235 volunteer sign ups. We also donated over $40,000 in direct funding in May 2020 alone to frontline organizations working on COVID and gun violence.

Policy Makers for Peace
In January 2020, we launched Policymakers for Peace, a network of public officials that support the passage and implementation of community-informed gun violence prevention policies at the state and local levels. The nonpartisan network of state and local policymakers of color has grown to 22 members across 12 states, including Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Missouri, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.
NEW POLICY AGENDA

A Holistic Policy Pathway - Paved with Justice

We launched our new Policy Agenda, a comprehensive, holistic, and grassroots policy framework driven by communities of color directly impacted by violence. Our policy agenda is a community-led, public health, and ecological systems approach to ending gun violence. Successful gun violence prevention requires building and strengthening the systems that empower community leadership and protect marginalized people and reduce the factors and root causes that increase the risk of violence.

ANNOUNCING OUR NEW POLICY AGENDA

This year, we released a comprehensive, holistic, and grassroots-driven policy framework driven by communities impacted by everyday violence, and applies to every level of government.

OUR POLICY AGENDA IS BUILT ON THREE PILLARS:

1. INVEST IN PROVEN STRATEGIES TO PREVENT SHOOTINGS AND HOMICIDES.

2. DISMANTLE STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS THAT FUEL GUN VIOLENCE

3. END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
OUR FIRST POLICY DIRECTOR:
We expanded our team with our first Policy Director, bringing on the much-needed capacity for policy and legislative initiatives. Our first sample legislation - the Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Act (CVIP Act): we drafted sample legislation that legislators at all levels of government can adopt to create an office of violence prevention and grant programs. Drawing on successfully enacted and proposed legislation from across the country, the CVIP Act is a resource that policymakers can use immediately.

“A HUGE POLICY WIN FOR THE AUSTIN COMMUNITY:
After years of work with community leaders like Councilman Greg Casar, and social justice organizations Austin Justice Coalition, Texas Appleseed, and Grassroots Leadership, the Austin City Council voted to invest in us. The Austin City Council unanimously approved the $4.2 billion budget that includes $1.4 million a year to support a public health approach to gun violence, including an Office of Violence Prevention and a community mapping of what technical assistance is needed.

OUR FIRST POLICYMakers FOR PEACE TOWN HALL:
In partnership with Texas Rep. César Blanco, CJAF hosted a virtual town hall focused on gun violence in El Paso, bringing together local and national voices. The successful event is now a model for future virtual town halls for other Policymakers for Peace. We fought against “stand your ground” laws alongside local and national partners. Our “stand your ground” petition garnered 1072 signatures and 3034 views. Unfortunately, “stand your ground” bills are still moving in states across the country, so we’ll be continuing to fight against these dangerous laws going into 2021.

SPEAKERS BUREAU:
This year, we invited seven new members to the Speakers Bureau, our intersectional and intergenerational network of leaders which provides a space for rising speakers and leaders of color to learn the best practices of gun violence reduction strategies, and be trained to engage with media and policy makers. This was the third cohort of the program that now includes over 50 leaders and alumni in the network. Members were trained in media strategies to shift the narrative of gun violence and advance their advocate goals, wrote opinion pieces, and shared ideas and strategies with each other in monthly meetings.
WHAT’S NEXT

Moving forward in 2021, CJAF plans to build on the successes and lessons learned from 2020 to develop a more robust policy portfolio. The policy team will focus on the following three goals: Shift the Policy Framework: build and sustain a comprehensive policy agenda and view gun violence as a public health issue. Change Policy on the Ground: research, write and propose policies that make Black and brown communities safer through community-led solutions to violence. Organize Multi-Sector Leadership: build and sustain a

WE’RE FOCUSING ON A FEW KEY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN THE NEW YEAR, INCLUDING:

1. PASSING THE COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION ACT AT A LOCAL, STATE, OR THE FEDERAL LEVEL

2. REPEALING AND PREVENTING STAND YOUR GROUND LAWS IN STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

3. PASSING FEDERAL LEGISLATION HOLDING GUN OWNERS AND DEALERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR ILLEGAL FIREARMS THAT END UP IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

4. PASSING STATE-BASED LEGISLATION THAT PROHIBITS ACCESS TO FIREARMS FOR INDIVIDUALS CONVICTED OF DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE OFFENSES.
Key Accomplishments

Hired 5 new staffers, including a National Distributed Organizing Manager, and 4 organizing fellows. Hosted monthly advocacy calls with an average of over a thousand views online, and featured dozens of on the ground partners work each month through our bi-weekly newsletter.

Launched the Police Violence is Gun Violence campaign in response to the brutal police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor. Featured on MSNBC gained over 70 gun violence prevention organizations' support through a movement sign on letter. Collected 26,431 signatures to demand that Police Violence is Gun Violence in response to Jacob Blake’s shooting in Wisconsin in partnership with Color of Change.

Stood up the "This Is Our Ground" campaign in partnership with Amnesty International to elevate the destructive outcomes of Stand Your Ground laws across the country and how they fuel violence against Black and Latinx people across the country while increasing gun-related deaths in every state implemented.

Hosted nine By Design Webinars in partnership with Revolve Impact uplifting the Intersection of gun violence and other forms of violence in communities of color. Hosted an "Our Survival Stories" digital event uplifting the stories of those directly impacted by gun violence across the country.

Partnered with the Born This Way Foundation and Lady Gaga to share community-based solutions and tell survivors’ stories to over 45 million accounts on Instagram in response to acts of police violence across the country.

Co-organized the #SchoolsNotPrisons Stop the Violence Tour with Revolve Impact that received 1.2 million views featuring 30 performing artists and local activists in five digital tour stops to elevate the need to advance policy to end gun violence and mass incarceration in partnership with Revolve Impact.

Hosted three briefings with 13 Maryland legislators about the importance of investing in community-based solutions in the 2021 legislative session in partnership with Marylanders Against Gun Violence, ROCA Inc., and an entire coalition of local leaders in Maryland.

Organized "Invest In Us" coalitions in Maryland, Wisconsin, Texas, and North Carolina to assemble service providers, activists, local experts, nonprofits, and advocacy groups to work together towards achieving investments in community-based violence intervention and prevention programs.
WHAT’S NEXT

In 2020, we learned that we must continue to push out aggressive but consistent advocacy information to the general public while maintaining targeted advocacy on critical leaders in states. Our advocacy efforts effectively pushed out awareness campaigns and information to the concerned public every week throughout 2020 and organized surgical advocacy campaigns in crucial states that either achieved funding or laid a foundation for future investments. We also learned that many survivors, leaders, and experts in the gun violence prevention space have contributed to the movement to end gun violence but are underutilized and elevated.

In 2021, Community Justice Action Fund will continue the Invest In Us Campaign with the newly assembled state-based coalitions and a new federal coalition focused on prioritizing community-based solutions during the first 100 days of our new Presidential Administration and the opening of 2021 legislative sessions. In partnership with Cities United, CJAF will launch quarterly Justice Camps to train volunteers on policies, solutions, and tactics to end gun violence.

CJAF will continue the By Design campaign as a premier educational campaign to educate the general public about gun violence complexities and the solutions that exist. Lastly, CJAF will build on its partnerships to build targeted advocacy campaigns to address gender-based violence, violence against youth, hate-based violence, and other critical intersections of the gun violence crisis in our communities.
In October 2020, Community Justice Action Fund launched an electoral campaign Elect Justice Texas and Wisconsin. Community Justice Action Fund, Revolve Impact, and local organizations in Wisconsin and Texas joined forces to build political power through electoral participation in communities most impacted by gun violence and are critical to further efforts to end gun violence. Powered by thousands of volunteers, committed digital organizers, surgical targeting, and a unique digital team, the Elect Justice Campaign built tremendous political power while playing a significant part in securing victory in 2020 for our issues while uplifting community-based efforts to end gun violence.

Elect Justice was a successful campaign. CJAF, Revolve Impact, and local organizations exceeded our goals set in September 2020. The organizing team trained volunteers daily for six weeks. In total, the organizing team put on 32 Hustle text trainings and 20 Hubdialer phone banking training. CJAF partnered with local organizations Urban Triage in Wisconsin & Pure Justice in Texas. Both groups contributed to text and phone baking efforts to reach voters in their perspective states. Our collective efforts allowed us to reach out to 1.6 Million voters, text 1.4 Million voters & called 166k voters in Texas & Wisconsin. In addition, Elect Justice recruited & mobilized 1051 volunteers across the country. We also partnered with Revolve Impact and Impact Strategies for numerous in-person and digital national efforts, including a live event in LA that had 1.8 million views.

Recruiting and mobilizing 1051 volunteers across the country within six weeks is impressive and a victory for CJAF. However, the amount of training it took to train and mobilize those volunteers was underestimated as well. In the future, it is essential to identify volunteer leaders and volunteer trainers that can help take the weight off the organizing team to help with training. Cultivating volunteer leaders in the future and allowing them to train will help create the distributed organizing method we wish to sustain at CJAF.

With a victory from the Elect Justice campaign, CJAF is now rerouting the volunteers from the electoral campaign and asking that they begin helping us with coalition building in their perspective areas. We plan to implement our Elect Justice electoral program in the fall of 2021 and have been using our current political platform to amplify the actions volunteers can do to
Starting in January 2021, we are hosting monthly volunteer meetings in Maryland, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin & nationally. We will also launch an interactive map which is a platform to register volunteers to coalitions in various cities across the country. Coalition building is an essential component of building power in communities of color to end gun violence.