FREE BUS PASSES FOR YOUTH

On April 17, 2014, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency committed to indefinitely providing free transit passes to low and moderate-income youth. The free transit passes are crucial for poor and working class families battling with San Francisco’s increasing cost of living. The victory is due to a massive organizing effort led by People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER) with research support from DataCenter and Urban Habitat.

Together, POWER, DataCenter, and Urban Habitat released Next Stop: Justice – Race and Environment at the Center of Transit Planning which laid the groundwork for this landmark victory. The report includes the results of 700 surveys and analyzes public transit in San Francisco. It envisions a new transit policy that puts community experiences around race and environment at the center.

REPORT RELEASE JUNE 10TH
Building Safe Communities through Strong Partnerships in the Canal

“We are working hard but it’s difficult to get the better paying jobs because of our limited English or we don’t have the right experience.” — Darlin, Canal Resident

In 2012, resident leaders from the Canal community in San Rafael, California came together to form Voces del Canal to lead an unprecedented community-driven research project to help achieve their collective vision for social change.

Residents affirmed their role as authentic, local experts and gave power to the lived experiences of community residents. The Canal Alliance, DataCenter, Dominican University, and a network of community organizations in the Canal joined forces in this project.

DataCenter led a dedicated team of 13 resident leaders in training workshops so the residents could design and implement their own community survey project. Together, they conducted a total of 678 survey interviews documenting the residents’ personal stories, opinions, and visions for a healthier Canal.

Through this community-led project, Canal residents identified public safety as the most immediate issue preventing the community from thriving. They
Dear friend,

A new chapter is beginning here at DataCenter as we say goodbye to Miho after eleven years at DataCenter, five of them as Executive Director. Miho’s unique perspective and voice has helped transform DataCenter into what it is today. Miho helped develop the concept of Research Justice and shared it with so many people. Miho has collaborated on numerous projects over the years and developed new ways of training that help community members recognize themselves as experts and confident researchers. We are sad to see her go, but happy that she’s decided to pursue other things she loves! The current Board of Directors and staff, with a combined forty-four years at DataCenter, are excitedly embarking on our next phase. We warmly welcome Susan Mooney (see below) as Interim Executive Director to support board and staff in ensuring DataCenter’s sustainability.

In this time of transition, we deepen our commitment to creating change that lasts for our grassroots community partners and hundreds of other dedicated advocates of Research Justice. In this newsletter you’ll read about projects that are so much more than ‘just research’. On the cover, you’ll learn about the recent victory winning a permanent commitment to free transit passes for low-income youth in San Francisco. Also on the cover is the unique Voces del Canal project that created opportunities for residents to further develop as leaders, learn more about their community, and document the most pressing issues they are facing.

We’re proud to release our brand new Theory of Change (pg. 3) – a document that identifies how everything from individuals to systems can be changed through Research Justice. Read about DataCenter Intern Theo Gibbs (pg. 4) who made history with our first social fundraising campaign, raising $2,000 running a half marathon for Research Justice! Learn how we’re expanding the Research Justice network through symposiums at Universities (pg. 4) and Research Justice workshops for non-profit leaders (pg. 5). Finally, check out the back cover for some quick tips to ‘supercharge’ your own community-driven research project.

Thank you for your support and solidarity as we continue to grow and struggle to reclaim our destined roles as masters of our own inquiry – because lasting social change requires nothing less!

In community,

Celia Davis
Deputy Director
DataCenter

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DataCenter Welcomes Susan Mooney

DataCenter welcomes Interim Executive Director Susan Mooney to the Research Justice team! Susan has a track record of success in supporting progressive social change organizations during transitions in leadership. She has worked in partnership with boards and staff to ensure that a strong foundation for future success is in place prior to bringing in new leadership. Susan’s work is guided by the recognition that individual, group and social change are inter-dependent.

Susan believes that creating the conditions where social change is possible requires being reflective and intentional about the process of individual and group change. Susan’s experience will undoubtedly add depth and richness to DataCenter’s work. We’re honored to have Susan on the team!
ISSUE ADDRESSED

Research can be a powerful means to build political power. But when communities are denied access to research, and their voices are left out of that process, they can be silenced and disenfranchised, thus perpetuating systemic inequity and injustice.

PRIMARY STRATEGIES

MODEL & FACILITATE

community-driven research that elevates community expertise and supports self-determination.

PROMOTE

community-driven research as a critical component of social justice while challenging what knowledge is valued and listened to over others.

ALIGN

with organizations led by and working in marginalized communities to strengthen the strategic integration of research and grassroots organizing to build the capacity of those communities to cultivate their own recognized experts and leaders.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

- **Individuals** recognize themselves as experts and confident researchers of their own experiences and the issues they face.
- **Organizations** have integrated research strategies and built the capacity necessary to design and implement them to advance social justice.
- **Communities** have their own knowledge system and infrastructure. They are organized and well-informed so they are more strategic and impactful in shaping their strategies for change.
- **Research Justice Network**: There is a strong, vibrant, multi-sector community, network and infrastructure prepared to advance the practice of Research Justice towards a level information playing field.
- **Institutions**: Community knowledge has political legitimacy, and informs research design, evidence generation, and solutions to issues.
- **Systems**: Solutions identified by communities are implemented, changing material and social conditions.

About DataCenter’s Theory of Change

Learn about our work – what we do, why we do it, how we do it, and what we hope to achieve. DataCenter’s Theory of Change printed on this page appears static, but it’s actually a living document – ever-evolving as we learn and grow as an organization. Read DataCenter’s complete Theory of Change at datacenter.org/toc.
On April 24th, 2014, DataCenter co-hosted Research Justice: A Symposium Exploring Community Engaged Scholarship at UC Berkeley. The symposium featured a critical conversation on Research Justice and how it can be used to re-imagine partnerships between the university and community organizations. This kind of convening is fundamental to building a movement around Research Justice, especially when community members and university researchers have historically struggled to collaborate.

The symposium began with a panel featuring community organizers from Pesticide Action Network, Causa Justa::Just Cause (CJJC), and Project EAT, as well as institutional researchers from the UC Berkeley School of Law and the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD). The panel discussed case studies of successful partnerships between community organizers and institutional researchers, including the recent collaboration between CJJC and ACPHD on the health impacts of gentrification in Oakland, California.

The afternoon panel explored how Research Justice collaborations can further social justice. We heard from youth involved in the Healthy California Survey Project at the Dream Resource Center as well as researchers working at the intersections of gender justice, health, and decolonization.

The day concluded with a roundtable discussion where participants had the opportunity to meet each other, explore overlapping aspects of their work, and further build a network of Research Justice practitioners.

Special thanks to Cynthia Gordon da Cruz, Douglas Parada, and Victoria Robinson of ACES, and Mike Bishop and Suzan Akin of the UC Berkeley Public Service Center for all of their support and solidarity.

This past May, all-star intern Theo Gibbs spearheaded DataCenter’s first social fundraising campaign. Theo ran for Research Justice at Capitola’s Half Marathon. With help from friends and family, Theo was able to raise $2000!

“For me, running is a great way to create physical and mental health for me personally, and I also want to use it to create positive impact more broadly. By supporting the critical work that organizations like DataCenter do every day, I can connect the resources that I have access to with the change needed on the ground in Bay Area and beyond.”

— Theo Gibbs, DataCenter intern

Theo worked on a range of projects at DataCenter, such as CivicMaps, an online toolkit to show community organizers how to use maps for social change. Follow in Theo’s footsteps! Contact us – celia@datacenter.org – if you or someone you know is interested in running (or walking, swimming, rolling, biking, etc.) for Research Justice.
On April 18th, 2014, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and DataCenter teamed up to host the Nonprofit Research Justice Institute. DataCenter trainers Reem Assil and Jennifer Lee led participants from seven different nonprofits including Catholic Charities CYO, Edgewood Center for Children and Families, ACLU of Northern California, and the Rural Organizing Project to learn how they could better incorporate participatory research into their work.

First we asked “Why do participatory research?” This question is important for service providers to understand, especially when they are strapped for time and resources. A participatory research process takes longer and requires more intention but ultimately makes your research findings more accurate, your process more accountable to your clients, and it reveals the best ways to measure the success of your work.

Participants then worked through some of DataCenter’s tools and got a taste of popular education methods that bring community members into the research process in ways that are engaging and allow them to take ownership of the research. Finally, participants were able to brainstorm and troubleshoot some of their own research issues.

The Nonprofit Research Justice Institute was the first in what we hope will be an on-going series of trainings as part of our Meaningful Community Engagement Program. To learn more about this program or find out how DataCenter might work with your organization to make your research more participatory, contact Jay Donahue – jay@datacenter.org.

Thanks to the San Francisco Foundation for supporting the institute.

Reem Assil, DataCenter trainer, co-leads a day long participatory research workshop for San Francisco Bay Area nonprofit leaders.

Local Non-Profit Leaders Learn Participatory Research

Report Release June 10th: Voces del Canal

Continued from pg.1

understand that public safety is correlated with strong communities and social equality.

Canal residents offer recommendations to improve safety in the Canal: better quality education and after-school programming, more parent resources, and improved coordination and delivery of family services.

To achieve community transformation, residents are calling for more meaningful community engagement and collaboration with local institutions and agencies.

Residents want to work in partnership with key decision-makers and actively participate in the development of community-determined priorities and solutions.

They also seek to strengthen community cohesion within the Canal, empowering families to take a proactive role, becoming community social change agents.

For news of the release, be sure to join us online:

• datacenter.org/subscribe
• facebook.com/researchjustice

“Despite all of the challenges that we are facing in the Canal, there are still real people who are concerned and want to make a change.

— Jose, Canal Resident

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS:

60% reported not feeling safe in the Canal and said crime is easily visible in the streets

44% are not satisfied with local law enforcement for reasons including discrimination, poor police response, and mistrust

50% of surveyed families do not have their children enrolled in after-school, due to limited program capacity, wait lists, and lack of available information
The scenario: you’re a grassroots organization fighting for social justice and you know that conducting a community-driven research project and generating powerful data will support your cause. Here are some tips to ensure that your research is impactful, accessible, effective, and strategic.

1. Identify your audience(s)
Your audience should be the people you want to directly or indirectly move on an issue. Oftentimes, it will be a decision-maker, those who move your decision-maker, and your support base. You will want to target different audiences to achieve the various goals of your campaign.

2. Make a dissemination plan before you begin your research
Often, dissemination isn’t considered until after the research is finished. But we’ve found that the earlier you can plan your dissemination tactics, the better.

3. Be strategic when choosing research methods
Will you administer a survey? Conduct interviews? Facilitate focus groups? Each could be a tool to engage the community about the issue and move them into action. You must identify what information will most effectively advance the goals of your campaign and what research questions will lead you to that information.

4. Make your data ‘pop’
Consider creative ways to get your point across. Here’s a quick list of some things you can do to make your data more accessible; to give it some ‘pop’:

- host a mural painting party with your community and integrate some of your newly found data into the artwork;
- make an online, interactive website that features your findings;
- make a video about your report;
- make a Prezi (prezi.com);
- create a DataFeud (datafeud.org) game with your findings;
- or, if you’re really looking for something innovative, get a van and a projector and project your findings on the sides of buildings, like the Illuminator (thecommunity.org).

These are just a few tips that will help increase the impact of your research efforts. For a more in-depth guide to community-driven research, check out our free and comprehensive Research Justice toolkit:

datacenter.org/rjtoolkit

Or, if you’d like more hands-on assistance with planning or executing your research project, call or email us! 510-835-4692 | info@datacenter.org