
Chapter 2b:

Community Profile and CERP Development as Presented by the Community Co-Leads

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in Chapter 2b are those of the SLA community co-leads and/or community and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD).

Chapter 2b: Community Profile and CERP Development as Presented by the Community Co-Leads

Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed in Chapter 2b are those of the SLA community co-leads and/or community and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD).

Introduction

This chapter is primarily written by the community co-leads and describes their role in the development of this Community Emission Reduction Plan (CERP) and the characteristics of South Los Angeles (SLA) from the perspective of the community. Additionally, this chapter includes quotes from community members describing their perspective.

Community Co-Leads

For this community, South Coast AQMD used a community co-lead model to establish a shared leadership structure for development of this CERP. Co-leads worked with South Coast AQMD to plan agendas for the CSC meetings, develop the structure of the CSC meetings, develop and present materials at CSC meetings, and co-lead the CSC meetings with South Coast AQMD staff. This approach provided a community driven process and an opportunity to collaborate with community representatives in the planning and development of the CERP and Community Air Monitoring Plan (CAMP).

The three community co-lead organizations are: Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA), Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), and Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee (WCAEC). PSR-LA, SCOPE, and WCAEC's have a track record of success of over 20 years of experience in working in SLA organizing, building relationships, and advocating for solutions to the ongoing health threats linked to environmental justice issues in the community. Details of each community co-lead organization is provided in Chapter 3: Community Outreach, Community Steering Committee, Community Engagement, and Public Process.

AB 617 Program

AB 617 creates an additional opportunity for air districts to work closely with communities to better understand the air quality issues and the prioritization of those issues that are unique to their community. The co-lead process further allows for communities to be empowered and to lead and provide direct input and guidance on actions needed to address air quality issues. The program refocuses resources on improving air quality at the local level in environmental justice communities and creates a direct and streamlined process for regulatory agencies to work with communities to develop solutions. With respect to the program, the community co-leads listed the following challenges:

- organizational changes,
- constrained timeline and capacity gaps,
- communication and process transparency,
- accountability, and
- lack of resources that adequately supports community co-lead engagement.

CARB AB 617 Community Designation

After years of historical advocacy and recent organizing efforts led by PSR-LA and community-based organizations such as SCOPE and WCAEC through their Community Air Protection Project South Central Los Angeles Project to Understand the Sources and Health Impacts of Local Air Pollution (SCLA-PUSH), South Coast AQMD Governing Board approved the recommendation that SLA be selected for the AB 617 program. SLA was selected as an AB 617 community by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) at their meeting on February 25th, 2021, for both a CERP and a CAMP.

Through a community visioning and planning process, SCLA-PUSH project members, SLA organizations, and residents started working together to produce a roadmap for achieving the transformation of SLA's air, primarily through creative technology solutions and innovation rooted in a Just Transition framework.

This major success would not be possible without the support of our SCLA-PUSH project and their dedicated community-based organizations, experienced community members and air quality ambassadors, who are now leading and forming the SLA CSC.

Community Co-Leads and CERP Development

Formation of the CSC

At the first community meeting (Community Kickoff Meeting) held virtually on January 14, 2021, collectively the community co-leads organized a total of 50 community residents to attend this meeting, so community members could learn about the next steps in the SLA AB 617 official selection.

The community co-leads developed a community outreach strategy to recruit community members and establish the SLA CSC. The community co-leads brought a wealth of community contacts and active civic leadership to the outreach work and leveraged their existing relationships in the community.

PSR-LA's Community Air Protection SCLA-PUSH project in the community had already established community leaders, which ensured the outreach process was successful because of their reputations and hard work. Many of the SLACSC members are PSR-LA's SCLA-PUSH trained SLA air quality ambassadors.

Community co-leads also leveraged existing relationships within South LA to bring in community leaders to the CSC. Community partnerships to establish the CSC included:

- Esperanza Community Housing
- Standing Together Against Neighborhood Drilling-LA (STAND-LA)
- Watts Rising

- Brotherhood Crusades
- Slate Z
- Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE)
- Holman United Methodist Church
- Redeemer Community Partnership

Community co-leads know that the SLA community has a rich history of organizing and mobilizing for social justice and that collaborations among community-based organizations are imperative to ensure inclusivity of all what SLA is. These partnerships enabled expanded outreach and recruitment for the CSC. In addition, these organizations now have representatives in the SLA CSC and bring community expertise ranging from housing justice, transportation justice, environmental justice, community organizing, and civic leadership.

Community Boundary

It is important to note that SLA community boundaries have historically been established by city jurisdictions, and do not reflect the residents' own conception of their community. By community standards, SLA also includes the communities of Watts, Compton, Lynwood, Leimert Park, Crenshaw, Jefferson Park, West Adams, Athens, Westmont, and Willowbrook. The SLA community boundaries are intersected by high volume highways including the I-10, I-105, I-110, 405, and 91 Freeway. Additional details of the SLA community boundaries are discussed in Chapter 2a.

Community Co-Leads and Community Meetings

Community Meeting Challenges

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were held virtually via Zoom. For the community members, in addition to the ongoing pandemic impacts, these virtual meetings posed further challenges such as, digital divide, zoom fatigue, and South Coast AQMD organizational change. Co-leads and South Coast AQMD staff have discussed the challenges of meeting virtually and that in-person interactions provide greater opportunities to connect and communicate with each other. The South Coast AQMD staff appreciates and acknowledges the work with the co-leads and the community to have worked to continue to meet and to develop the CERP and CAMP recognizing the impacts and effects of the pandemic.

What's Up with the Air in South LA? An AB 617 Air Quality Virtual Conference¹

There were over 100 attendees which included more than 60 community members, academic partners, city officials from LA Sanitation, LA Department of Health, and LA planning department, regulatory agencies representatives and board members from CARB and South Coast AQMD. The conference was held so community members in SLA could learn about Air Quality in SLA and the opportunity that AB 617 brings to address air pollution and create spaces for meaningful community engagement. During this conference there was an opportunity for community members to directly ask questions to the

¹ PSR-LA, What's Up With the Air in South LA? An AB617 Air Quality Conference, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpSAvGSqpSY>

regulatory agencies CARB and South Coast AQMD. Additional details of this conference are in Chapter 3.

Community Engagement and Outreach

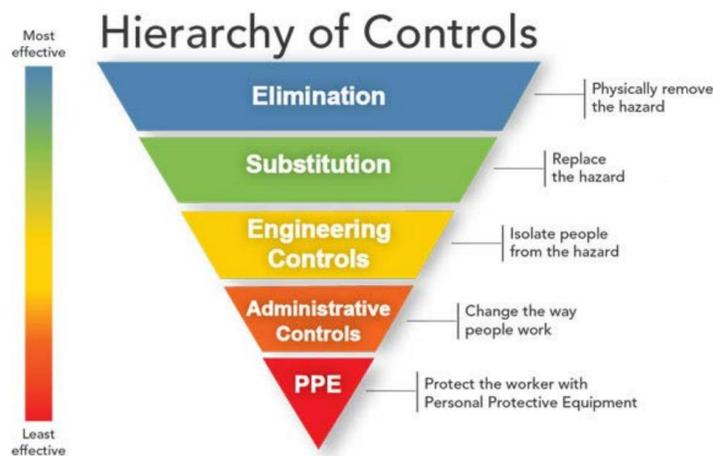
Through SCLA-PUSH training and outreach capacity, PSR-LA has outreached to at least 100 community members in addition to leveraging existing relationships with community-based organizations to keep them informed.

In addition to the SCLA-PUSH project, WCAEC has leveraged other work to represent the whole of community with relative items such as water, soil, agriculture, education and workforce development, capacity building, etc., to attempt an exhaustive effort of community engagement which covers the entire SLA CSC boundary.

Hierarchy of Controls

One of the tools that the community co-leads used to increase engagement was the Hierarchy of Controls. The Hierarchy of Controls is a strategy to determine control methods for mitigating exposure to hazards. The concept of this hierarchy is that the most effective controls are at the top and are in order of decreasing effectiveness.² The community co-leads used the Hierarchy of Controls (**Figure 2b-1**) to determine air pollution solutions effectiveness in terms of individual and community protection.³ **Table 2b-1** provides an overview of the hierarchy actions as described by the community co-leads. Additional community engagement tools used by South Coast AQMD and the community co-leads are discussed in Chapter 3.

Figure 2b-1: Hierarchy of Controls



² The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Hierarchy of Controls, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hierarchy/default.html>

³ South Coast AQMD, AB 617 South Los Angeles Community Steering Committee, December 2, 2021, <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ab-617-ab-134/steering-committees/south-la/presentation-dec2-2021.pdf>

Table 2b-1: Overview of the Hierarchy of Controls

Action	Description	Application
Elimination	Physically remove the hazard	The top of the pyramid is the most effective action we or an organization can take – removing the hazard or risk from the community. If we eliminate the hazard (for example, prevent industries from polluting), we don’t need any other actions to control that hazard.
Substitution	Replace the hazard	Substitution can also be highly effective – for example with cleaning products, replacing harsh chemicals with homemade solutions – but challenging to find an appropriate and safer alternative.
Engineering Controls	Isolate people from the hazard	As we go down the pyramid, the actions are less effective at controlling the hazard and preventing harm. Engineering controls are usually mechanical solutions to prevent the hazard or toxin from reaching people – in a workplace, this might be a physical barrier to keep chemicals away from workers. In a community setting, it could be a fence around a construction site or land use restrictions.
Administrative Controls	Change the way people work	The controls at the bottom of our pyramid are both the least effective actions and also put the most burden on the individual instead of the organization.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Protect the worker with PPE	Personal protective equipment might be a hard hat at a construction site or gloves in a laboratory.

Meeting Facilitator

The co-leads, in collaboration with South Coast AQMD, selected Castillo Consulting Partners (CCP) to support CSCs meetings. The facilitator is a neutral party that provides an essential role to help bring the community co-leads and the South Coast AQMD staff together ensuring all voices are heard and that both entities are sharing the leadership roles. Having neutral facilitation fostered inclusivity and full participation by community members. The facilitators also structured each meeting to include a question-and-answer period to encourage public comments throughout the planning process. In addition, the facilitators guided the CSC toward consensus on the CERP. The public voice should be recorded and considered whether a CSC member or not. CCP approaches all of the CSC meetings facilitation through a community-driven lens, which requires being prepared to engage in restorative

practices, as needed, and proactively seek out ways to minimize or prevent power imbalances and enhance community participation.

Air Quality Priorities

Chapter 5c: Auto Body Shops

PSR-LA through their ground-truthing efforts and community data collected suggested that facilities-of-concern may be underestimated because these facilities are at times misidentified, misclassified, or simply missing in official databases. To address this data set challenge, PSR-LA conducted a rigorous data vetting process that included a detailed review of the South Coast AQMD facilities classifications, virtual Ground-Truthing Walks, and google map searches of existing facilities to identify missing or misclassified facility data. The vetting process undertaken by PSR-LA revealed that approximately 20 facilities-of-concern that were classified under North American Industrial Classification Codes (NAICS) by South Coast AQMD that did not appear accurate. Out of the 11 “unclassified facilities,” three were undoubtedly auto body shops (i.e., Hello Auto Body, Jimenez Body Shop, and Fine Line Body Shop, INC). Data collected by SLA community co-leads also identified non-permitted auto body facilities. Please see Chapter 5c for more details on how South Coast AQMD staff classifies facility types.⁴

Chapter 5d: General Industrial Facilities

As perchloroethylene was being phased out based on South Coast AQMD and CARB regulatory programs, dry cleaners selected other dry cleaning alternatives. One of the options dry cleaners selected was hydrocarbons, which has VOC emissions. Many small dry cleaners owned by mostly immigrants and people of color have switched to this alternative. CARB has classified Professional Wet Cleaning and CO2 dry cleaning alternatives as meeting the criteria as non-toxic and non-smog forming alternatives based on their relatively benign human health, environmental, and physical property hazard profile. This was identified as a concern by the CSC. Details for this air quality priority can be found Chapter 5d and Appendix 5d.

Environmental Issues Outside of Scope of the CERP

The CSC identified sources of pollution and other environmental hazards that were outside the scope of the CERP because there was either not a nexus to an air quality issue or was outside of the purview of the South Coast AQMD’s authority. During the community boundary discussions, the CSC identified fireworks, airplane exhaust, worker exposure, noise pollution, illegal dumping, hazardous waste disposal, soil and water contamination, and chemical cargo transported on trains as some of the issues requested to be included in this CERP. Fireworks, noise violations, and illegal dumping are under the city and/or county Code Enforcement and/or Waste Management. The U.S. EPA sets emissions standards and the Federal Aviation Administration sets and administers certification requirements for

⁴ From Chapter 5c, “South Coast AQMD utilizes multiple methods to classify facility types including the NAICS, a key data source for the information in this CERP. South Coast AQMD inspection teams use a broader category, Technical Specialty Code (TS-Code), to categorize a facility, which does not detail industry type. Please refer to Appendix 4: Enforcement Overview and History for information on which team conducts the inspection for each facility, which is directly tied to the TS-Code.”

aircrafts and engines.⁵ Chemical cargo transported on trains is under the authority of the Federal Railroad Administration, where the Hazardous Materials Division administers a safety program to oversee the movement of hazardous materials.⁶ Soil contamination and hazardous waste disposal falls under the authority of the Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The South Coast AQMD staff recognizes the burdens that residents of SLA shoulder because of poverty, lack of economic and educational opportunities, illegal dumping, excessive noise, and the other concerns identified by the CSC. Although some of these current conditions are described in the Community Profile (Chapter 2a) and are part of the cumulative burden in the SLA community that are linked to air pollution, they are generally outside of the scope for the CERP. The details of the CSC identified air quality priorities are discussed in Chapter 5.

South Los Angeles History and Background

Air pollution in South Central Los Angeles emanates from a variety of sources, both stationary and mobile. Nestled among residential homes, schools, recreational facilities, houses of worship and commercial establishments are auto body shops, metal manufacturing facilities, oil and gas extraction sites, chemical plants and other industrial land sites. Freeways and high-volume thoroughfares surround and crisscross this urban landscape. These pollution sources regularly emit harmful air pollutants and particles, often above regulatory health standards, when combined with other socio-economic and environmental determinants of health, significantly impact the health and well-being of South Central Los Angeles residents.

SLA is the traditional land of the Tongva and Gabrielino peoples, original caretakers of the Tongva land (The LA Basin). SLA is a historic Black community that has a rich history shaped by immigration, shifts in labor markets, and housing policy that have led to economic displacement and gentrification. Social forces, discriminatory practices such as redlining and environmental racism, immigration, changing heritage, and community fights for justice have shaped the broader narrative of SLA. The SLA community is now predominantly Black and Brown and low-income with a variety of backgrounds and stories.

History of Redlining in South Los Angeles

Early 20th century: Discriminatory real estate practices such as redlining cemented a pattern of exclusionary development that allowed for White home ownership in suburban neighborhoods of Los Angeles, while concentrating industrial activity in non-White and immigrant neighborhoods, including in and around SLA (**Figure 2b-2**). During this time of rapid growth, several national firms established plants: Goodyear, Firestone, Phelps Dodge, and U.S. Steel.

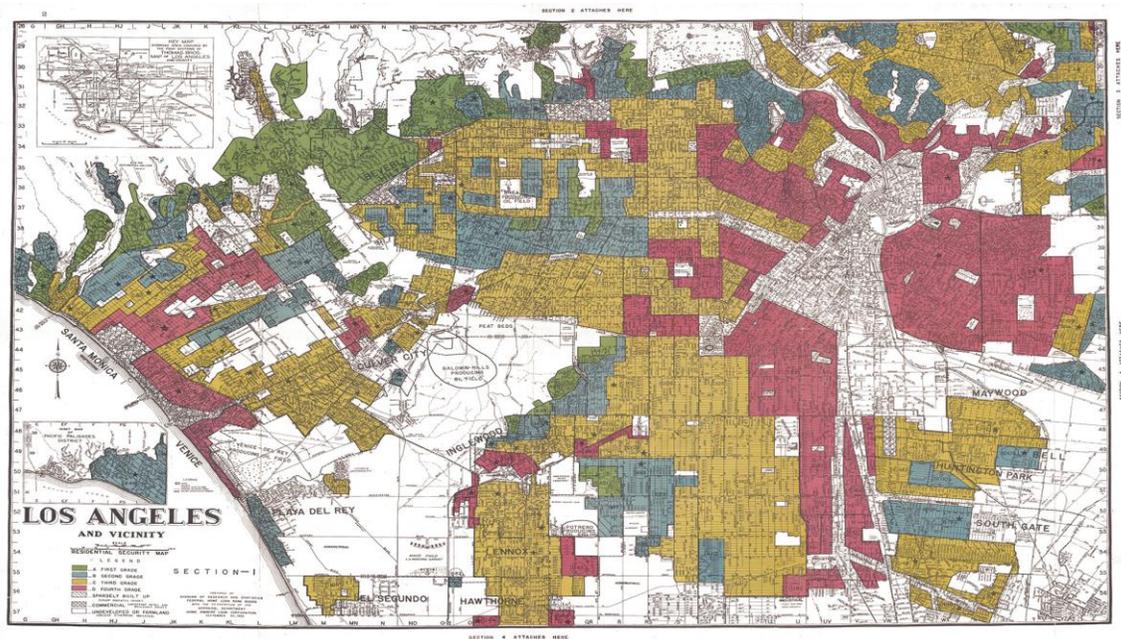
⁵ Federal Aviation Administration, Emissions, https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/certifications#:~:text=The%20EPA%20sets%20the%20Emissions,from%20setting%20their%20own%20standards

⁶ More information on the Hazardous Materials Division can be found here: <https://railroads.dot.gov/divisions/hazardous-materials/hazardous-materials#:~:text=Under%20authority%20delegated%20to%20FRA,the%20Nation's%20rail%20transportation%20system%2C>

These environmental racist planning practices left a legacy of staggering environmental health and justice problems that are impacting the community on a daily basis, including the co-location of industrial facilities, continued oil extraction, poor air, contaminated land, and poor urban infrastructure. Today, the SLA community continues to battle ongoing environmental injustices, while demonstrating tremendous power through impactful activism and community-wide mobilizations. The following timeline of the history that led up to the launch of AB 617 reflects the legacy of poor air quality and environmental racism and the energetic and impactful SLA movement

Please refer to Appendix 2b: Environmental Justice Timeline as Presented by the Community Co-Leads for a timeline that reflects the two sides of the environmental justice struggle: the legacy of poor air quality and environmental racism on the one hand, and energetic and impactful movement building on the other.⁷

Figure 2b-2: Consequences of Redlining in SLA



South Los Angeles Today

SLA is home to more than half a million people in about 30 square miles of land. These communities face multiple, synergistic and cumulative stressors, and hazardous exposures that, when combined with existing vulnerability, lead to adverse health consequences.

Population Characteristics⁸

Approximately 40% Black or African American and 60% Non-Black and Black Hispanic or Latino live in this predominantly low-income community.

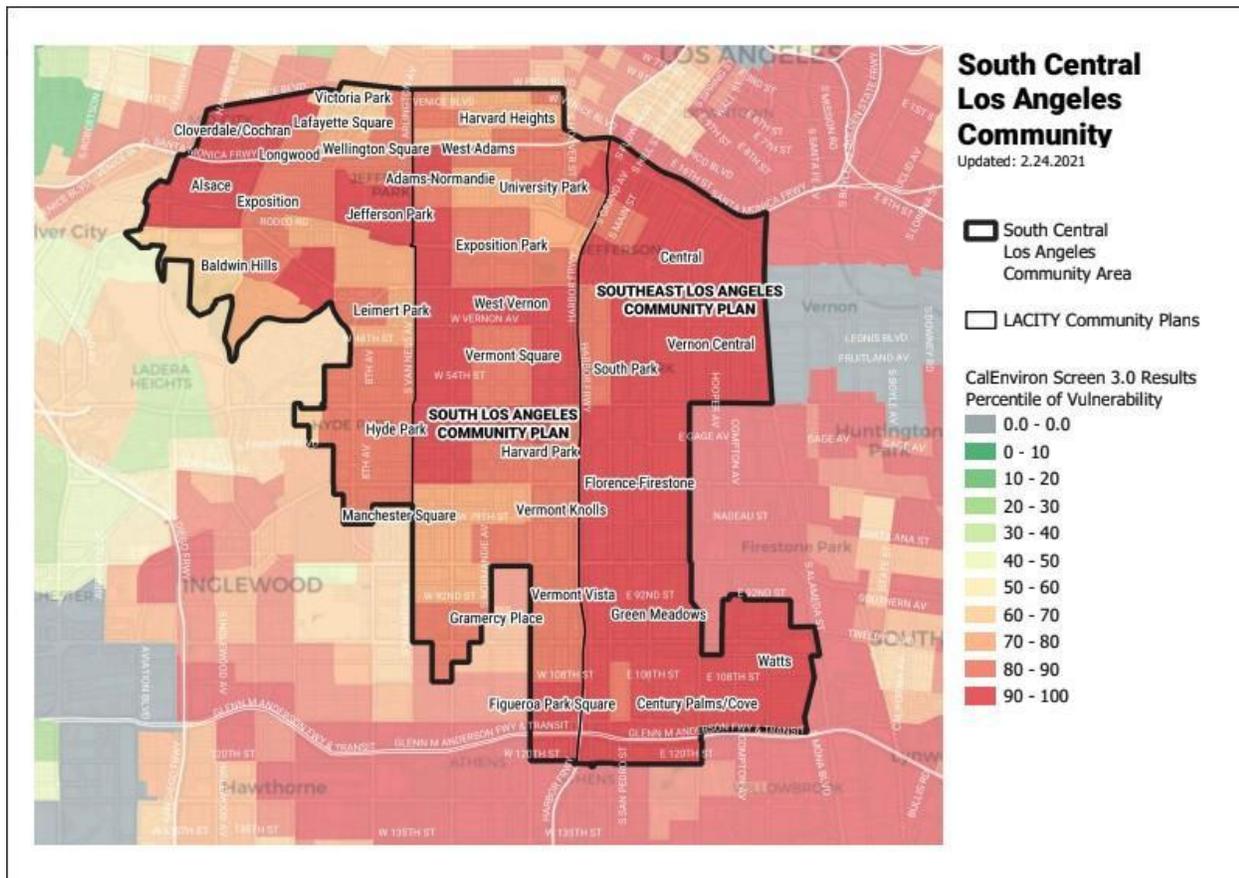
⁷ SCLA-PUSH, A Report on the First Phase of Air Quality Assessment in South Central Los Angeles, 2019-2020, <https://www.psr-la.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SCLA-PUSH-Final-Report-2019-2020.pdf>

⁸ City of Los Angeles - Department of City Planning, South Los Angeles Demographic Profile, https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/40f63808-92b4-4c1e-8a10-ed1d46a37ae5/2017_demo_profile_south_la.pdf

Air Quality Profile

South Central Los Angeles communities are breathing some of the most polluted air in California and the country (**Figure 2b-3**). Approximately half of census tracts in the community score in the 93rd percentile for Particulate Matter 2.5, and the remaining score in the 82nd percentile. The majority of the community scores in the 79th percentile for diesel and 53rd percentile for ozone.⁹ While state databases, alongside numerous studies, reveal the presence of all six criteria air pollutants regulated by the U.S. EPA in South Central LA (i.e., particulate pollution, ground-level ozone, lead, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides). SLA census tracts consistently and overwhelmingly score in the top 5-10% of the most vulnerable communities, according to CalEnviroScreen 3.0.

Figure 2b-3: SCLA-PUSH CalEnviroScreen 3.0



Community Land Use Profile

Air quality is intrinsically linked to land-use patterns where the designation of land often dictates the type of industry located there. Historically, city planning did not prioritize the separation of hazardous land uses from sensitive populations. As such, the result is clusters of incompatible land uses that are disproportionately concentrated in South LA. In 2013, more than 21,000 SLA residents lived within 500 feet of a major truck route and other unwanted land uses, such as manufacturing, oil refining and chemical plants.

⁹ California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, CalEnviroScreen, Indicators Overview, <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/indicators>

Community Voices

Below are several quotes from community co-leads and CSC members:

“To transform the legacy environmental racism in the community of SLA, we must focus on delivering real emissions reductions and aim at moving upstream policy solutions that prioritize improving the quality of lives for South Los Angeles residents, we must also transform the practices of the agencies meant to clean our air.

- Martha Dina Arguello, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA)

“Climate change is real and the sooner we incorporate citizen science and engagement, coordinated strategies and inclusive timelines and efforts across intergovernmental relations and communication, and fill the gaps of process, technology and access to ground truthing and resources that mirror best practice, only then will communities become a healthy biodiverse ecosystem where the human right to breath air can live and increase the quality of life for residents.”

- Jacquelyn Badejo, Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee

“My community is in jeopardy of extinction. Our children are experiencing health disparities at an alarming rate. Governmental agencies are always testing, running experiments in our neighborhoods, and not providing solutions to the issues that are discovered. Just giving themselves ammunition for the next grant opportunity. Our lives are not valued. It's always about the quick fix or finding room for the next band aid. Environmental Justice advocacy has turned into one big joke for the systemic systems that are ingrained into society. Lord help us! Just tired of our community being lab rats.”

- Linda Cleveland, Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee

“The South Los Angeles community should have the opportunity to breathe clean free air. So as a resident, a business, and a church, we have the responsibility to clear the air. Let's live futuristic in a healthier and safe environment.”

- Pastor Patricia Strong-Fargas, Resident of South Los Angeles

“SLA communities continue to experience the health impacts of legacy air pollution and cannot wait any longer for real solutions that tackle the root causes of pollution burden and get to tangible emissions reduction. We need to start moving community driven solutions that are rooted in the Environmental Justice and precautionary principles and can support a just transition towards clean production for a thriving and healthier SLA”

- Paula Torrado Plazas, PSR-LA