



TISHMAN CENTER · JULY 31, 2024

Celebrating Environmental Justice and Resilience: EJ Communities Defeat Big Oil!

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Fellowship*



EJ Communities Defeat Big Oil!

Tishman Environment and Design Center



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In light of recent disheartening news, the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the Chevron Doctrine—severely restricting the EPA and other federal agencies from protecting our environment and public health—it's essential to find and share stories of hope and resilience. One such story comes from Darryl Molina Sarmiento, the 2024-2026 EJ Disrupt Design Fellow and Executive Director of Communities for a Better Environment (CBE).

Darryl's journey with CBE began in her youth, attending toxic tours and witnessing firsthand the environmental injustices in her community. Her dedication and hard work have led her to become the first organizer to rise to the position of Executive Director at CBE. Her story is a testament to the power of community-based

organizing and the critical role it plays, especially now, as federal policy safeguards are under threat and fossil fuel companies push for further deregulation.

A landmark victory came on June 26th, 2024, when Californians for Energy Independence pulled their referendum seeking to overturn SB1137 in the November 2024 election. This significant win is the result of decades of organizing to protect neighborhoods and communities, in solidarity with organizations like CEJA, CEJA Action, Working Families for a Healthy California, CRPE, PSR-LA, APEN Action, Black Women for Wellness Action, VISION, CCEJN, and the Central California Asthma Collaborative.

The recent victory against oil drilling in California, exemplified by the passage of the 2022-SB1137 law, underscores the impact of persistent and strategic organizing. Vivian Huang, Co-Director of APEN Action and a 2024-2026 EJ Disrupt Design Fellow captured the significance of this achievement perfectly: *"Our spectacular victory to put an end to oil drilling in our backyards shows that Big Oil doesn't run California, we do! Frontline communities have been building power for decades to make*

*California a place where all of us
can live full and healthy lives."*

Despite the challenges posed by the Supreme Court's decision and the ongoing pressure from the fossil fuel industry, CBE remains steadfast in its mission. As they look ahead to 2025, CBE is planning significant leaps forward and needs \$5 million to support their initiatives, including:

1. Promoting Equitable Clean Energy Policies: Building new energy and infrastructure projects across California to ensure a just transition to clean energy.

2. Strengthening Data and Research: Developing projects that benefit California and the broader region, providing critical insights to support environmental justice.

3. Continuing Legislative Fights: Contesting power and providing robust legislative defenses against polluting industries, especially in light of the Chevron Doctrine overruling.

4. Designing and Growing

Leadership: Fostering inclusive leadership within CBE, involving women, youth, and multi-sector partners to ensure diverse voices are heard and empowered.

These goals reflect CBE's unwavering commitment to fighting for Environmental Justice and protecting communities from harmful industrial practices. Their resilience and determination are a beacon of hope in these challenging times.

As a former Executive Director of [Climate Justice Alliance](#), I know that grounded leadership changes everything. I've been working with Darryl and all the EJ Fellows to grow their leadership resource circle and I am asking that you join me in helping Darryl get to a 5 million dollar leap for CBE, while the winning can be scaled.

For more information on CBE's work and their recent victory against drilling near communities in California, visit their [website](#). If you are an individual donor or someone interested in supporting this critical work, consider donating to CBE and becoming part of this vital movement for Environmental Justice.

Together, we can continue to build power, contest unjust policies, and create a healthier, more equitable future for all.

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