Fighting for the Heart of the Mission District: Multiracial Community Organizing and Anti-Displacement Movements

AnaChristina Arana
University of San Francisco, aarana2@usfca.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.usfca.edu/capstone

Part of the Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, Social Justice Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Recommended Citation

This Project/Capstone - Global access is brought to you for free and open access by the All Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Projects and Capstones by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.
Fighting for the Heart of the Mission District: Multiracial Community Organizing and Anti-Displacement Movements

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the
MASTER OF ARTS IN URBAN & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

by

AnaChristina Arana

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

May 2023

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Tim Redmond

Rachel Brahinsky
Author Release/Non-Release Form

The University of San Francisco and the College of Arts and Sciences have permission to use my M.A. Capstone Paper project as an example of acceptable work. This permission includes the right to duplicate the manuscript and allows the project to be checked out from the College Library.

Print Name: AnaChristina Arana

Signature: ___________________________ Date: May 2, 2023

The University of San Francisco and the College of Arts and Sciences may not use my M.A. Capstone Paper project as an example of acceptable work. Duplication of the manuscript as well as circulation of the work is prohibited.

Printed Name: __________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements** .............................................................................................................. 5

**Abstract** .............................................................................................................................. 6

**Introduction** .......................................................................................................................... 7

**Literature Review** ................................................................................................................. 27

*History of Multiracial Coalition Building & Community Organizing in U.S. Cities* ................ 27
*Gentrification & Displacement of BIPOC Communities in the Mission* ................................. 30
*Community Organizing in the Mission: Resistance & Anti-Displacement Strategies* ............ 33

**Research Methods** ............................................................................................................... 42

**Community History** ............................................................................................................. 47

*Community-Based Organizations & Coalitions* .................................................................... 47
*Case Study: The Fight to Stop the Monster in the Mission* ...................................................... 53

**Positionality Statement** ....................................................................................................... 56

**Data Analysis** ....................................................................................................................... 60

*Theme 1: Why Multiracial Community Organizing Matters* .................................................. 62
*Theme 2: How Organizations & Coalitions Define Success* .................................................... 66
*Theme 3: Case Study: The Marvel in the Mission* ................................................................... 78

A. *Other Community Organizing Case Studies* ...................................................................... 89

*Theme 4: How CBOs Engage in Anti-Displacement Coalitions* ............................................. 94
*Theme 5: Resources Needed to Support CBOs & Coalitions* ................................................ 99

**Conclusions & Policy Recommendations** ........................................................................... 104

*Community Organizing Best Practices & Strategies* .............................................................. 106
*Public Policy Recommendations* .......................................................................................... 108

**Bibliography** ......................................................................................................................... 115

**Appendix** ............................................................................................................................. 124

A. *Methodology Instruments* ................................................................................................. 124
B. *Interview Participants* ......................................................................................................... 129
C. *Figures: Maps & Images* .................................................................................................... 130
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the nine community organizers and coalition leaders who kindly participated in interviews for my capstone project. I appreciate each of you for taking the time to share your knowledge, stories, and experiences with me. Thank you for the work you do every day to support community members impacted by the issues of gentrification and displacement in the Mission District. Thank you for your dedication to the multiracial, multicultural, multilingual movement needed to achieve housing justice in San Francisco.

- Erick Arguello, President, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District
- Molly Goldberg, Director, San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition
- Brad Hirn, Lead Organizer, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
- Jeantelle Laberinto, Community Organizer, [people. power. media] and the Race & Equity in all Planning Coalition
- Fernando Martí, Co-director, Council of Community Housing Organizations (2011-2022)
- Allyn Mejia, Lead Organizer, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
- Charlie Sciammas, Policy Director, Council of Community Housing Organizations
- Joseph Smooke, Co-founder, People Power Media and Organizer, Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition
- Maria I Zamudio, Organizing Director, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco

I would also like to thank my first capstone reader, Professor Timothy Redmond and my second reader, Dr. Rachel Brahinsky, for their guidance throughout the process of shaping and conducting my research project. Thank you for being generous with your time, encouraging me to ask deep systemic questions, and working with me to envision a better future for our city.

Thank you to Professors Sarah Burgess and Patrick Murphy for their leadership in the University of San Francisco Urban and Public Affairs Program. And thank you to all of the USF UPA faculty for supporting and inspiring me throughout this program.

As a first-generation student and the daughter of Nicaraguan immigrants, I’m proud to dedicate my capstone thesis to my parents and family. Thank you for your endless love and support. Thank you for always believing in me.
Abstract

My research discusses the history of gentrification and displacement in San Francisco, which has been created through a legacy of intentional policymaking, city planning, and land-use decision-making across the city and state. This study centers the collective power and expertise of multiracial, multicultural community-based organizations and coalitions dedicated to the work of tackling these systemic issues in the Mission District of San Francisco. To learn about the impact of multiracial community organizing, I pose the following research question: How do multiracial community-based organizations work to disrupt gentrification and displacement, and create meaningful change to support impacted community members in the Mission?

Through the methodology of semi-structured interviews and snowball sampling, I engaged in conversations with nine community organizers and coalition leaders working to improve living conditions for people in the Mission District through three citywide coalitions – the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC), the Race and Equity in Planning Coalition (REP-SF), and the Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO). To contextualize my research, I provide a literature review focused on the history of gentrification, displacement, and multiracial coalition building and community organizing as a form of resistance. I also share an overview of the community history of the multiracial CBOs and coalitions I interviewed.

In my data analysis, I present the key findings of my research, which focus on why multiracial community organizing is valuable, how multiracial CBOs and coalitions define success, and how they work toward the deep systemic changes needed to achieve housing justice for communities of color. My research discusses how three citywide coalitions, SFADC, REP-SF, and CCHO are working toward the collective vision of housing justice for BIPOC communities and approaching the problem of displacement through the following strategies: (1) tenant organizing and advocacy, (2) land-use and planning, (3) nonprofit affordable housing and community development, and (4) policymaking.

Through my data analysis, I closely examine a powerful case study of an effective community organizing campaign: the fight to stop a proposed luxury housing development, which became known as “the Monster in the Mission,” that would have further gentrified the neighborhood. Thanks to the leadership of community organizations and advocates, the Monster in the Mission was defeated in favor of a community-based alternative vision for a 100% affordable housing development called the “The Marvel in the Mission.” By studying these efforts, we can learn how to apply and adapt these strategies to address future struggles.

I conclude my capstone thesis with an overview of community organizing best practices and strategies championed by multiracial community organizers, followed by public policy recommendations informed by my research findings. Policy recommendations include advancing anti-displacement efforts and tenant-protection policies, as well as expanding resources and funding to support multiracial CBOs and coalitions dedicated to this critical work.
Introduction

The current waves of gentrification and the housing crisis we are experiencing in San Francisco were created through a legacy of intentional policymaking, city planning, and land-use decision-making that have fueled displacement, rent increases, and evictions for decades, primarily impacting communities of color and low-income communities. To learn about how communities of color and long-term residents are engaging in movements to address these issues, I pose the following research question for my capstone project: *How do multiracial community-driven organizations work to disrupt gentrification and displacement and create meaningful change to support impacted community members in the Mission?* To contextualize my research, I understand these key terms in the following ways. **Gentrification**, as defined by the UC Berkeley Urban Displacement Project, is “a process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood – by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in – as well as demographic change – not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial make-up of residents,” (Chapple, Thomas, Zuk, 2021). A harmful consequence of gentrification is **displacement**, which refers to a process in which residents are forced to move out of their homes against their will to make way for wealthier tenants (Chapple, Thomas, Zuk, 2021). Due to displacement, long-term residents are not able to stay in their community to experience the positive benefits of new investments in the neighborhood, such as better access to food, health care, and other essential services. Commercial displacement also impacts small businesses owned by and for community members.

Gentrification has been impacting the Mission District of San Francisco for decades. The most recent waves of gentrification that have occurred within the past 15 years are the direct
result of policy decisions, primarily by former Mayor Ed Lee (2011-2017), who attracted the tech industry to San Francisco during his time in office. Mayor Ed Lee’s pro-industry policy agenda was an extension of a long history of policy decisions going back to Mayor Dianne Feinstein and earlier in the post-WWII era, when powerful interests from the business association, the SF Bay Area Council planned the future of San Francisco, envisioning the city as the new Manhattan, and encouraging the expansion of the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate industries downtown (Redmond, 2014). This construction of large skyscrapers in San Francisco’s Financial District in the 1970s was referred to as “Manhattanization.”

During the postwar era, the Mayor of San Francisco, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) intentionally enacted policies with the goal of attracting big companies and their wealthy, mostly white employees to the city, while displacing longtime residents, who were disproportionately people of color. Beginning in the late 1940s and into the 1950s, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, formed by the Board of Supervisors, was responsible for implementing plans to “revitalize” neighborhoods across the city (Rubin, 1997). As redevelopment began, “part of its aggressive strategy included redeveloping the South of Market and Western Addition neighborhoods of San Francisco, using rhetoric like ‘blighted’ and ‘slum clearance’ to morally justify areas rich with culture and community and degrading the worth of these neighborhoods” (Chu, 2018). In the South of Market (SoMa) this included demolishing 10,000 single-room occupancy (SRO) hotel rooms, causing these 10,000 people to lose their homes (Redmond, 2014). The Redevelopment Agency cleared out “thousands of people, mostly retired single men and immigrants – to make room for new hotels, offices, a convention center, and a ballpark” (Brahinsky, Feldman, Kramer, 2000). In the Western Addition, this included demolishing and
displacing Black-owned businesses and forcing out the majority Black population of the neighborhood. In the Mission District, the Latino community experienced significant rent increases, as tens of thousands of new workers moved to the neighborhood to work in the city’s downtown offices. This urban renewal was advanced through false promises of improving neighborhood conditions for residents, while prioritizing the establishment of attractive neighborhoods to maximize industry profits through racist policy. “Historical documents reveal that ‘slum clearance’ was coded in the removal of residents of color” (Chu, 2018). In 1966, a planning document from SPUR called “Prologue for Action” urged politicians to move toward making the city’s population more white, in order to compete with other major cities:

If San Francisco decides to compete effectively with other cities for new ‘clean’ industries and new corporate power, its population will move closer to standard white Anglo-Saxon Protestant characteristics. Selection of a population's composition might be undemocratic. Influence on it, however, is legal and desirable for the health of a city (Meronek, 2015).

This highlights an important part of the problem, which one of my interviewees discussed:

“Gentrification is incredibly unjust, and it is a violence on our communities, but it’s not illegal” (Zamudio, 2023). In fact, as reflected in the SPUR quote above, racist policies fueling gentrification and displacement of people of color are advanced through urban planning and codified in our state and city laws.

This legacy of racist policy and urban renewal continued through the decades. Dianne Feinstein became Mayor in 1978, following the assassination of Mayor George Moscone, when former city supervisor Dan White assassinated Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California and one of the first in the nation. Just prior to his assassination, Supervisor Milk proposed an anti-speculation tax, legislation designed to stabilize the housing market in the city and address the problem of real estate speculation (SFADC: “Our
Mission + Coalition,” 2023). **Real estate speculation** refers to the practice in which housing is treated primarily as a market investment, rather than a human right, with the goal of buying, selling, and flipping to maximize profits (University of Minnesota, 2020). According to researchers, “through deregulation, corporate consolidation, and technological innovation, the practice of real estate speculation has a growing stake in the housing market” (University of Minnesota, 2020). An anti-speculation tax is a “transfer tax levied on a property when it is sold within a certain time period after purchase to discourage property flipping” (University of Minnesota, 2020). Supervisor Milk’s proposed tax aimed to make the housing market more affordable for people looking to stay in the city and make it their home, rather than an investment tool of bankers and speculators who are driving up prices for both prospective homeowners and renters” (“Our Mission + Coalition,” 2023). However, following the assassination of Supervisor Milk and Mayor Moscone, “Feinstein’s friendlier stance toward development was reflected in an unprecedented building boom and in a marked increase in the pace of urban renewal in the South of Market” (Rubin, 1997). Therefore, cultural anthropologist and activist Gayle S. Rubin argues, “Among Dan White’s legacies is a measure of responsibility for the accelerated Manhattanization of San Francisco in the 1980s” (Rubin, 1997). This history contributes to the ongoing community mistrust, gentrification, and displacement of communities of color across the city today.

Moving forward, the first tech boom (Dot-Com Boom) occurred during Willie Brown’s two terms as Mayor (1996–2004). During this time, the 1997-2001 Dot-Com Boom caused an extreme affordability crisis and led to the first wave of housing displacement caused by real estate speculation in neighborhoods across the city, including the Mission District. Much like today, displacement of long-time residents occurred through no-fault evictions and steep rent
increases. Researchers at UC Berkeley’s Urban Displacement Project argue that “the dot-com boom at the turn of the century foreshadowed (and set the stage for) many of the changes facing it today” (Kwak, 2018). They emphasize that “the changes experienced by the Mission during the dot-com boom are those typically associated with the traditional conception of gentrification—increase in the cost of living and a rise in the cost of housing in the Mission, which led to the displacement of longtime residents” (Kwak, 2018). Additionally, “unable to secure housing near their jobs—South Bay cities used ‘local control’ to stop new housing—these high-wage workers moved to the Mission, Noe Valley, and other San Francisco neighborhoods (Shaw, 2019).

Drawing parallels between the Dot-Com Boom and Tech Boom 2.0, Randy Shaw, director of San Francisco’s Tenderloin Housing Clinic and author of the book Generation Priced Out: Who Gets to Live in the New Urban America, argues that the dot-com boom “proved that not adding jobs and not building market-rate housing does not improve San Francisco’s affordability. To the contrary, the city’s failure to build housing in response to the Silicon Valley boom proved catastrophic for the city’s low-income, working, and middle-class” (Shaw, 2019).

In 2011, following the recession, Mayor Ed Lee helped incite the second tech boom (Tech Boom 2.0) by implementing a payroll tax break for tech corporations, which became known as the “Twitter Tax Break.” This brought in 10,000 mostly white male tech workers from Silicon Valley to San Francisco – without building any new housing for them to live in (Redmond, 2014). Bay Area cities like Mountain View that were now home to these tech corporations were able to outsource their own housing problem to San Francisco. For example, Mayor Ed Lee allowed tech companies on the Peninsula to run illegal luxury buses into neighborhoods like the Mission District, making it easy for tech workers to live in San Francisco and commute to tech company campuses in Silicon Valley (Redmond, 2014). These policies
drove a new wave of gentrification by wealthy tech workers and displacement of residents across San Francisco neighborhoods like the Mission. In addition to allowing rich tech workers to displace low-income residents across the city, the private bus system also harmed public transport infrastructure (Edwards, 2014). According to Erin McElroy, leader of the nonprofit Anti-Eviction Mapping Project and one of the main activists leading the anti-tech gentrification protests in 2014, “Thirty to 40% of tech workers would not live in San Francisco if buses were not there to bring them to work.” Additionally, during this time, she stated that “69% of no-fault evictions now happen within four blocks of tech bus stops. Rents have gone up 20% in proximity to tech bus stops” (Edwards, 2014).

Another problem that occurs through gentrification is the commercial aspects of the issue, including displacement of small businesses. New wealthy residents devastated the historically Latino neighborhood of the Mission District, driving out community-owned small businesses, in addition to forcing longtime residents out of their homes. This wave of gentrification had a significant impact on Latino-owned businesses in the neighborhood, as many were forced out of the Mission in favor of new luxury businesses who could pay higher rent for their spaces and who catered to these wealthier newcomers. A policy problem driving this issue is that the state of California prohibits commercial rent control, which is an important tool needed to combat this problem and stabilize rent to support community-owned businesses (L.A. Times Archives, 1987). Senate Bill 692, passed in 1987, enacted a “permanent statewide ban against imposition of rent controls on any type of commercial (non-residential) property” (L.A. Times Archives, 1987). In the face of gentrification, small businesses are often told to raise their prices to keep up with steep rent increases, as many are rent burdened and struggle to make ends meet.
Regarding residential displacement, landlords continue to use multiple strategies to force tenants out and replace them with wealthier tenants. They often put pressure on tenants to move out through “soft evictions,” in which they create inhospitable environments by engaging in harassment, cutting off utilities, removing parking, ignoring maintenance requests, or failing to address other conditions that threaten the health and safety of tenants. However, the most common form of displacement is eviction, which has become a national epidemic, as millions of Americans are evicted every year (Chapple, Thomas, and Zuk, 2021).

Across California, the **Ellis Act** (1985) and the **Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act** (1995) are two state laws that have significantly hindered our ability to fight gentrification and contributed to mass displacement of our communities. By imposing limitations on rent control, which aims to stabilize and make rent more affordable, the state has removed important tools in the fight against gentrification. Additionally, the state has not provided enough funding to develop affordable housing to support low-income people most impacted by gentrification and displacement across California. In San Francisco in particular, insufficient affordable housing creates a major barrier to the city for working-class people. Housing costs for San Francisco renters are among the highest in the world, and only 9% of current units in the city are affordable, according to early documentation of the city’s housing needs assessment (Rezal and Caughey, 2022). According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing is considered “affordable” when it is within budget for households making low to moderate incomes. In San Francisco, for a four-person household, a “moderate income” is defined as anything less than about $146,500 per year (Rezal and Caughey, 2022). From 2018 to 2021, San Francisco permit data from the California Department of Housing and Community Development shows that about 35% of all units permitted were “affordable,” or “very low to
moderate income.” This portion of affordable housing is considered mid-tier compared with other major cities in California (Rezal and Caughey, 2022). The lack of affordable housing for low-income renters contributes to the problems of homelessness, gentrification, and displacement of long-time residents. \textbf{This is why community organizing is critical.}

The Ellis Act is a powerful driver of the city’s eviction crisis, as the law allows landlords to evict entire buildings of tenants in rent-controlled units so that they can “go out of business” and evict all the tenants before selling a property (“Ellis Act Evictions,” 2022). This act has led to the mass displacement of existing residents because “with rental prices sky-high, it’s likely many of those evicted from rent-protected apartments leave the city completely or become homeless” (Moskowitz, 2018, 131). The Ellis Act has been widely abused in the San Francisco housing market. According to data from the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, which tracks evictions citywide, a total of \textbf{5,549 San Francisco households} were forced out of their homes due to Ellis Act evictions between January 1994 and February 2022 (“Ellis Act Evictions,” 2022). \textbf{Figure 1} on the next page provides a map of citywide evictions during this time. Additionally, the Ellis Act is most often used to convert rent-controlled units to group-owned tenancies-in-common flats (TICs) or condos, which then become exempt from rent control. To make matters worse, there is no limit to the number of times a building owner can “go out of business” by evicting tenants via the Ellis Act (“Ellis Act Evictions,” 2022). This contributes to the severe housing crisis in San Francisco and has accelerated the problem of displacement in recent years.
According to a report by the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC), the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act “limits local municipalities from passing certain kinds of rent control and ensures that landlords can set any initial rent when a new tenancy is established” (Golberg, 2018, 1). Costa-Hawkins: (1) Prohibits rent control on single family homes and condos, (2) Prohibits rent control on buildings built after 1995, and (3) Mandates vacancy decontrol, which prohibits laws that regulate an owner’s ability to increase rent on vacant units when new tenants move in. Vacancy decontrol limits the power of rent control and creates an incentive for landlords to force out long-term tenants from rent-stabilized units to raise the rent for the next tenant. The legal right for a landlord to raise rents on vacant units continues to deplete the already limited stock of affordable rental units across the state. (Goldberg, 2018, 1). SFADC’s report concludes: “We need to return control to cities and towns, where local governments should be able to implement policies to regulate speculation, stabilize rents, and keep people housed” (Goldberg, 2018, 29). The coalition’s policy recommendations include a
full repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act, as well as support of local and regional rent control efforts (Golberg, 2018, 30).

Other housing policies contributing to the displacement of long-time San Francisco residents include no-fault evictions and tenant buyouts. No-fault evictions, versus at-fault evictions, refer to situations in which there is not a justifiable reason for a tenant to be evicted. Ellis Act evictions are an example of no-fault evictions. Tenant buyouts are another strategy landlords use to attempt to lure current tenants out of their homes with cash, to increase rent for wealthier residents. Landlords often offer tenant buyouts as alternatives to eviction: “The nonprofit San Francisco Tenants Union estimates that for every Ellis Act eviction there are about three buyout offers” (Moskowitz, 2018, 131). Through various forms of forced evictions, including harassment and violations of tenants’ rights, long-time residents are being driven away from their communities, in favor of wealthier residents with no ties to the community.

Tenant advocates continue to face the major challenge of real estate speculation in San Francisco, which is fueling the current eviction crisis. In a speculative housing market, real estate speculators take advantage of the Ellis Act and target rent-controlled buildings to flip for profit. Property owners carry out “no-fault evictions on all of the buildings’ existing tenants. Once the tenants are evicted, the owners sell the units for ownership…Many of these speculators repeat this process with multiple buildings and use the Ellis Act to enable their serial evicting, contrary to the intent of the law” (Ruiz, 2014). **As of 2014, at least 10,000 San Francisco tenants have been displaced through the Ellis Act.** The rent-controlled tenants most impacted by displacement through speculation include seniors and other low-income residents who have lived in their homes for decades and have little or no other options to remain in the city after eviction (Ruiz, 2014). In addition to causing mass displacement, speculation “removes the limited stock
of rent-controlled units from San Francisco” (Ruiz, 2014). Housing justice and tenant advocates strongly oppose speculation. For example, the following statement is one of SFADC’s core beliefs as a coalition: “We believe that real estate speculation destabilizes neighborhoods, communities, and economies. We support regulation and controls on such speculation” (“Our Mission + Coalition,” 2023).

We are currently facing the problems of gentrification and displacement in San Francisco because:

1. The U.S. economy treats housing as a commodity that can be bought and sold for profit, rather than a human right and a public amenity that exists to provide people with a place to live. This creates an incentive for real estate speculators to try to make money from housing. In fact, there are companies in cities like San Francisco that exist for the sole purpose of buying, evicting, and flipping for profit.

2. The state has taken away the tools that cities can use to fight displacement and gentrification. This includes through policies including the Ellis Act, the Costa-Hawkins Rental Act, and by refusing to allow commercial rent control.

In a sense, activists on the ground tackling this problem are fighting with their hands tied behind their backs. For this reason, advocates face the challenge of addressing the root causes, as well as the symptoms, of gentrification. For example, anti-speculation and tenant protection laws are guardrails that are necessary because we live in an economy that refuses to treat housing as a human right.

One of the thousands of community members that have been displaced in recent years through speculation is Oscar Perdomo. His story is shared in the book How to Kill a City by Peter Moskowitz. Oscar is a 45-year-old gay Latino who was raised in the Mission District of
San Francisco and lived with his mother in the same apartment for 25 years. It was a two-bedroom in an old Victorian, but several of the rooms had black mold, and the landlord refused to repair anything. The landlord later threatened eviction – displacing Oscar and his mother – and renovated the apartment into a modern one-bedroom, raising the rent nearly four times for the next tenant (Moskowitz, 2018, 148–149). Oscar now lives in the suburbs of Concord, but he misses the feeling of community he once felt in the Mission District: “I was raised there. I wanted to stay there, that’s all I know. It was a bunch of brown faces. It was a community. Everyone knew everyone.” Oscar said he “felt at home in the Mission when people would wave to him on the street. He felt at home in the gay bars, in his church. He does not feel that in Concord” (Moskowitz, 2018, 148).

Oscar’s story is among many experiences shared by people of color and other marginalized groups who have deep community ties in the city and have been displaced from their homes in recent years. Moskowitz explains that it may be hard for people to understand what is at stake in the city of San Francisco, but for long-time residents embedded in the community, it’s everything. In the Mission, for example, you may not understand the neighborhood’s rich cultural history, or the issues of serious inequality residents are facing due to the city’s affordability crisis:

You might walk through the Mission, eat some tacos, and think it’s a cute neighborhood. You might not know that right above the taco shop is an apartment building where families are paying $1,000 a month for a room that’s ten feet by ten feet. You might not know that activist artist collectives such as Las Mujeres Muralistas painted vibrant portraits of working-class struggles and working-class beauty in the 1970s and that many of those artists have now left (Moskowitz, 2018, 128).

The **roots of community-based organizing in San Francisco** can be traced back to these battles over gentrification and displacement of long-time residents. In response to the “Manhattanization of San Francisco” in the post-war era, Black residents, Latino residents in the
Mission, college students at San Francisco State University (SFSU) living in the Haight District, and other groups, came together to organize against these harmful changes in their city that were enacted without community input. In 1968, the first community group that attempted to reclaim control of their neighborhood was the Mission Coalition Organization, which was comprised of over 100 local organizations: “Fearing that ‘urban renewal’ [would] soon destroy the Mission District…the group convinced [Mayor] Alioto to let it control a multimillion-dollar federal Model Cities Program grant to improve the area” (Brahinsky, Feldman, Kramer, 2000). This was the first time a community group was able to redirect funds that once went to City Hall to improve living conditions in their neighborhood (Brahinsky, Feldman, Kramer, 2000). In the 1970s, the rent control movement succeeded in establishing rent control (rent stabilization) in 1979, on all buildings built as of that year, to protect tenants from steep rent increases, evictions, and displacement.

Today, San Francisco continues to face a serious housing affordability crisis: rising rent prices, skyrocketing cost of living, and limited job opportunities for long-time residents are gradually destroying the cultural and social fabric of the city. As of 2021, the median rent in San Francisco was $2,167, which was “higher than any other American city with more than 500,000 residents, except for San Jose,” another Bay Area city, according to recent U.S. Census Bureau data (Baustin and Crane, 2022). But while San Francisco is now home to some of the richest renters in the nation, the city is also home to many people struggling to stay afloat in an incredibly expensive real estate market. The median household income of renters was $98,000 in 2021. However, “nearly half of residents in the city are burdened with what housing researchers consider to be unaffordable rent” – paying more than 30% of their income for rent – and “more
than a third of city residents live with an annual household income under $75,000” (Baustin and Crane, 2022).

The problem of gentrification disproportionately impacts communities of color, working-class communities, and immigrants. San Francisco has experienced major changes in demographics, reflecting the **loss of our Black and Latino communities**. According to data from 2018: “The black population of San Francisco is down to 5.8 percent of the city, less than half of what it was in 1970. The majority of that change took place in the last twenty years…The Hispanic population of the Mission, San Francisco’s historically Latino neighborhood…dropped from 60 percent to 48 percent since 2000. If the trend continues, Latinos could make up less than a third of the neighborhood by 2025” (Moskowitz, 2018, 126). These trends recorded in 2018 have continued, and BIPOC populations (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) have continued to drop. This loss of diversity is significant because “San Francisco was one the most diverse counties in the region, but now it is the only county that is losing diversity, while every other surrounding county (the suburbs) is making gains. [If this trend continues], the city will be majority white by 2040” (Moskowitz, 2018, 126). This is devastating because it means that San Francisco is losing the communities of color who made the city what it is known for today – and people of color who have lived here for decades are losing their communities and support systems.

Research shows that high rent, unstable housing, and displacement can have serious **impacts on health and well-being**. Cost-burdened and displaced renters are more likely to experience homelessness; be pushed into substandard housing conditions; struggle with access to healthcare and experience food insecurity and childhood nutritional deficiencies; face an increased risk of anxiety, depression, and chronic stress; and experience exposure to mold, pests,
lead paint, and overcrowding which increase the risk of respiratory illness, asthma, lead poisoning, and other chronic health problems (Goldberg, 2018, 7). According to the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition, when renters are displaced, they often relocate to communities far from their families, friends, and social networks, as well as fewer job opportunities, fewer healthcare facilities, and less access to public transportation. Children must also change schools, which disrupts their education and can lead to significantly reduced educational outcomes. The San Francisco housing and racial justice nonprofit Causa Justa :: Just Cause argues that “when residents are forced to relocate, it is not just the physical environment that changes but the social and cultural environment as well…At the community level, displacement can result in severe social, economic, and political fragmentation” (Goldberg, 2018, 7). These social and political changes impact communities’ ability to fight back against gentrification as well.

Continuing to live in a gentrified neighborhood can lead long-time residents to feel out of place in their own homes, as their neighborhood loses its cultural identity to accommodate new, wealthier residents. Small businesses owned by and for community members, including stores, cafes, and restaurants, get displaced and replaced by luxury businesses catering to new, wealthy residents. People of color navigating this rapidly changing city as it becomes increasingly white and wealthy can clearly see and feel their neighborhoods being swept out from under them. New York-based writer and activist Sarah Schulman discusses in her work a consequence of this demographic and commercial shift, which she calls “the gentrification of the mind,” in which “the elimination of diversity that comes with gentrification—among people, businesses, cultural spaces, and so on—tends to also wipe the consciousness as well, crushing creative thinking” (Brahinsky, 2020, 851). This means that not only are we physically losing diversity as people of
color are leaving our city, but through the homogenization of city life, we are also losing the vibrant culture and creativity of our city.

Community organizing on these issues continues today. Through my research, I studied three citywide coalitions comprised of dozens of community-based organizations dedicated to anti-displacement work – the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC), the Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF), and the Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO) – who are contributing to the legacy of multiracial, multicultural organizing against gentrification and displacement of people of color in San Francisco. One of my interviewees, Charlie Sciammas, Policy Director at CCHO discussed how an important piece of community organizing is making the connection between “individual stories of families fighting against evictions to stay in their homes to the relationship of larger economic forces causing these issues, as well as the legacy of decision-making the city has been a part of, including planning, land-use decision-making, and development projects, that have been fueling gentrification and displacement in San Francisco” (Sciammas, 2023). Understanding the history and the complexities of these issues can help us better understand how we can fight back and change these harmful systems.

To learn more about the complex issue of gentrification, I turn to focus on the Mission District, one San Francisco neighborhood that has been battling the problem of gentrification for many years. This majority-family and Latino neighborhood has served for decades as an important center for Latino arts and culture movements and a central hub for the community. The Mission has historically been home to Mexican, Central American, and other Latino immigrants and families primarily living in smaller apartments, narrow Victorians, and older buildings. For my capstone research, the Mission provides an important case study of a community
experiencing the problem of gentrification – and engaging in movements to fight for their home, as community activists have been organizing for decades to combat gentrification in the neighborhood. The Mission has experienced many recurring waves of development and gentrification, and the problem has increased in recent years due to the impact of the tech industry and the housing affordability crisis. “While gentrification has been a long-standing issue in the Mission, it now seems to be accelerating in its pace and scope” (Pogash, 2015).

While community members in the Mission are facing serious threats to their livelihood, they are fighting back – demonstrating great resilience and resistance against the problem of gentrification in various ways. “The Mission is ground zero for the fight for the future of San Francisco,” according to former city supervisor David Campos (Pogash, 2015). With support from community-based organizations, long-time residents are fighting for their homes, fighting against evictions, and fighting to stay in their communities. Some examples of anti-gentrification policies and efforts to prevent displacement include tenant protection policies (including rent control, just-evictions clause, and eviction bans); public and subsidized housing; affordable housing production and preservation; and nonprofit advocacy. These efforts led by community activists have been instrumental in maintaining affordable housing and businesses owned by people of color in the neighborhood.

Through my capstone research, I examine community-driven efforts to address gentrification and displacement in the Mission District of San Francisco, with a focus on multiracial coalition building and community organizing. There is a rich history of Black, Latino, and other communities of color organizing together in solidarity to fight against gentrification and displacement in their neighborhoods, in cities like Los Angeles, New York, and in the San Francisco Bay Area. Within San Francisco, there are currently many multiracial community-
based organizations and coalitions working to fight evictions, keep people in their homes, and inform policy on these issues. This thesis discusses my study of multiracial organizing as a form of resistance against displacement in the Mission District, community resilience, the power of organizing, and solidarity forged through shared struggles. I strongly believe that the people closest to the problem are the closest to the solution. People of color who have been harmed by the impacts of gentrification in their neighborhoods understand best what is needed to support their community and are best positioned to work on implementing solutions.

One community organizing campaign that I examine closely in my research is the fight against the “Monster in the Mission,” a proposed luxury housing project by a corporate developer called Maximus Real Estate Partners that would have further gentrified the neighborhood. Led by the Plaza 16 Coalition, community advocates and organizations, including members of SFADC and CCHO, strongly opposed and defeated the project proposed for 1979 Mission Street at the 16th & Mission BART Station Plaza. In a major victory for the community, this site will now be used for 100% affordable housing (Redmond, 2022). In addition to the “Monster in the Mission,” through my conversations with community organizers, I learned about other campaigns and case studies that demonstrate how and why community organizing matters. My capstone thesis discusses how community members are engaging diverse, community-driven organizations to make a meaningful difference in their neighborhood and inform policy on this critical issue. In my study of these multiracial, community-led coalitions, I discuss how anti-displacement advocacy operates and how communities of color are working in solidarity to create change. Through my research, I had the privilege of hearing firsthand stories from community organizers fighting for place and space and advancing toward important solutions to the housing crisis.
In pursuit of better understanding the power of multiracial community organizing on these issues, I develop my capstone thesis in the following parts. (1) I provide a literature review that discusses the scholarly conversations taking place around issues of multiracial coalition building and community organizing, gentrification and displacement of BIPOC communities in the Mission, and community organizing and activism as a form of resistance against displacement. (2) I argue that my research question is best answered through the methodology of semi-structured interviews, which allowed me to connect with community organizations and coalition leaders in the Mission. (3) I provide a community history, which contextualizes my data by providing a historical overview of the community I am studying and background information about the multiracial organizations I interviewed. To position myself in relation to the community members and organizations I am studying, I provide a positionality statement, in which I discuss my identity, subjectivity, personal connection, and understanding of displacement in the Mission District. (4) I present my data analysis and discuss the key findings of my research based on conversations with community leaders and organizers. (5) I conclude my capstone thesis with best practices and strategies for community organizing, followed by public policy recommendations informed by my research findings. (6) The Appendix provides more information about my methodology instruments and interview participants, as well as figures, including maps and images.
Significance

My research examines how multiracial community organizing can offer tools to combat gentrification in cities and work to create stronger, more equitable communities. I aim to demonstrate the power of narrative and community resilience through stories and experiences that center Black and Latino communities and activists in the Mission District fighting for the place they call home. Through my thesis, I discuss what it means to engage in community-led, multiracial organizations and why it is important that community organizing operates in a culturally specific way, with the goal of advancing racial equity. This study sheds light on the value of community-driven solutions and grassroots organizing as a form of resistance.

For the field of urban and public affairs, I hope that my research increases support for community-based organizations and movements in the Mission District of San Francisco and beyond. My research examines current and viable strategies employed by people of color working in solidarity to combat the negative effects of gentrification and displacement. I aim to counter the narrative of gentrification as an inevitable consequence of urban planning in U.S. cities.
Literature Review

My research question seeks to understand how multiracial community-based organizations are currently working to disrupt the issues of gentrification and displacement in the Mission District and create meaningful change to support impacted community members. To understand the scholarly conversations around these issues, I provide the context of the existing landscape and discourse around multiracial community organizing in San Francisco and discuss how my research engages with and contributes to these conversations. This literature review focuses on three significant bodies of literature: (1) history of multiracial coalition building and community organizing in U.S. cities, (2) gentrification and displacement of Black and Latino communities in the Mission District of San Francisco, and (3) community organizing and activism as a form of resistance against displacement in the Mission. These three bodies of literature demonstrate how the problem of displacement impacts communities of color in the Mission and discuss how multiracial community organizing operates as a solution to address issues of displacement and contributes to the greater movement for housing justice.

History of Multiracial Coalition Building & Community Organizing in U.S. Cities

This body of literature focuses on the history of multiracial organizing and resistance through an overview of how cross-racial, cross-cultural solidarity has been forced through decades of social injustice and systemic oppression of Black, Latino, and other communities of color. Laura Pulido provides a comparative study of Black, Chicano/a, and Japanese American movements in the 1960s and 1970s, including a focus on multiracial activism and alliances in Los Angeles and Southern California more broadly. Pulido traces the roots of third world radicalism, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of their movement strategies, as well as how
“differential racialization led to distinct forms of racial politics” (Pulido, 2006). Focusing on the Black Panther Party, El Centro de Acción Social y Autónomo (CASA), and East Wind, a Japanese American collective, Pulido discusses how these groups organized to realize their ideas about race and class, gender relations, and multiracial alliances to challenge capitalism and racism. Pulido’s book examines “how class consciousness could potentially bring various racial/ethnic groups together and contribute to a larger movement for social and economic justice” (Pulido, 2006, 1). She grapples with issues and questions including: “How do we mobilize to create a more socially just world? How do we overcome racial tensions to build a stronger movement? How can we mobilize around a specific class of politics?” (Pulido, 2006, 11).

With a similar focus on multiracial organizing, George Sánchez focuses on the history of Los Angeles’ Boyle Heights as a multiracial and multicultural neighborhood. Sánchez discusses the topic of multiracial governance and coalition building through cross-racial and cross-class solidarity. He also examines community resiliency through efforts to defend the neighborhood from gentrification and displacement. Sánchez discusses the history of social movements, including the Chicano Student Movement in East Los Angeles and Black and Brown power in the barrio. Sánchez argues that “the multiracial history of Boyle Heights must continue to play a role in the development of the neighborhood” and serve as a “blueprint amid a drastically changing Los Angeles and a model of hope for a present and future city that includes new multiracial communities” (Sánchez, 2021, 263). By sharing the history of Boyle Heights as a multiracial neighborhood, Sánchez discusses how the neighborhood’s past can inform and serve as a model for the multiracial future of the community. He discusses how multiracial solidarity is
forged, how multiracial organizing operates in practice, and how it can make a real difference for people of color working to challenge harsh inequities and displacement in their cities.

Thomas Summers Sandoval’s work focuses on the history of Latino communities engaging in political activism and resistance in the Mission District and San Francisco more broadly (Summers Sandoval Jr., 2013). Sandoval’s book *Latinos at the Golden Gate* traces the history of how Latino identity was forced through shared struggle in San Francisco’s diverse community of Latin American immigrants. He discusses how Latinos built political power through community organizing and became a major force for social and political activism and cultural production in California and beyond. Building on these themes, Cary Cordova’s book *The Heart of the Mission* (2017) also focuses on Latino art, culture, and urban political history in the Mission District of San Francisco from the 1950s to the present. Cordova discusses how Latino artists engaged in counterculture in the city in the 1950s and 1960s, with a focus on the Third World Strike and the globalization of Chicago art, as well as the history of muralists in the Mission District engaging in political activism and painting Latino identities in the 1970s. This book provides a history of the making of the Mission through stories focused on how Latino community and culture were created in a neighborhood of diverse Latin American immigrants (Cordova, 2017). Cordova discusses how community struggles, including gentrification and displacement, were reflected and brought to light through art and activism.

Building on this history of the Mission District, Mike Miller, the lead organizer of the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO) from 1968 to 1971 discusses how the MCO came to be an important organization in the history of the Mission District and the city, beginning with its response to the city’s urban renewal plan for the Mission. MCO’s accomplishments include its efforts toward “defeating urban renewal—known in the Mission as Latino removal—program’
This article provides a history of community organizing in the Mission and demonstrates how MCO built people power in the city: “Forty years after its birth, the MCO is still seen as one of San Francisco’s most powerful ‘people power’ organizations” (Miller, 2008, 67). MCO forged unity through diversity of membership, diversity in leadership, a multi-issue approach with a strategic concentration on its big campaigns, and mass participation in various committees. In the article, Miller notes that “In the City and the Grassroots (University of California Press, 1984), radical sociologist Manuel Castells called MCO ‘…the largest urban popular mobilization in San Francisco’s recent history...showing a remarkable capacity to combine grassroots organization with institutional social reform’” (Miller, 2008, 66). MCO is one of many examples of community-based organizations leading the way in organizing and advocacy for social justice in the Mission District.

**Gentrification & Displacement of Black & Latino Communities in the Mission District**

Focusing on the neighborhood that will serve as my case study, this body of literature discusses the ways in which gentrification and displacement have impacted Black and Latino communities in the Mission District. In his book How to Kill a City (2018), Peter Moskowitz discusses the problem of gentrification in the United States, through case studies of gentrification in four cities: New Orleans, Detroit, San Francisco, and New York. Moskowitz’s discussion of San Francisco includes a focus on the displacement of Black and Latino communities from neighborhoods such as the Mission. The book includes stories of current and former residents, as well as recent statistics that demonstrate the effects of gentrification in cities, including the drastic demographic shifts, loss of diversity, loss of community and culture, and the decreased affordability and quality of life residents experience. Moskowitz argues that gentrification is
caused by “systemic violence based on decades of racist housing policy in the United States…Gentrification cannot happen without this deeply rooted inequality” (Moskowitz, 2018, 5). Additionally, as a result of these policies, Moskowitz argues that gentrification creates “a void in a neighborhood, in a city, in a culture. In that way, gentrification is a trauma, one caused by the influx of massive amounts of capital into a city and the consequent destruction following in its wake” (Moskowitz, 2018, 5).

Nancy Mirabal discusses the history of displacement of Latinos in the Mission District of San Francisco, through oral histories and a culturally specific lens from the perspective of the Latino community (Mirabal, 2009). Mirabal discusses that in the 1900s and 2000s, working-class and poor neighborhoods, primarily home to people of color, underwent gentrification that left Latino residents of the Mission District vulnerable to eviction and displacement. She discusses how gentrification was framed as a positive economic process within the larger public discourse on space and access at the time. Through oral history and ethnography, Mirabal sheds light on the Latino communities who were evicted from their homes during the dot-com boom and shares their stories. Mirabal demonstrates how Latinos in the Mission District were impacted by gentrification, real estate speculation, and development, as well as the dominant social, cultural, and political narratives around these issues during this period.

Regarding the relationship between gentrification, urban planning, and real estate capital, I turn to Stein and Lees et al. Lees, Slater, and Wyly define gentrification as “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use” (Lees et al., 2007, xv). The authors discuss the ways in which urban policy creates the problem of gentrification. They outline the theories and concepts of gentrification and tell the story of the issue from the neighborhood level to the global scale of the problem.
Through case studies of efforts to resist gentrification, the authors look toward the future of gentrification through a social justice lens and highlight strategies that low-income communities have developed to gain more control and ownership of housing (Lees et al., 2007, xxviii).

For additional background on the close relationship between gentrification and urban planning, Samuel Stein’s book *Capital City* explores the question of how we can improve our cities without inducing gentrification and displacement. Stein discusses the close relationship between urban planning and gentrification, arguing that gentrification is “planned by the state as much as it is produced by developers and consumed by the condo crowd” (Stein, 2019, 43). Stein argues that due to the power of real estate capital over our politics, “Ultimately, we cannot resolve the paradoxes of planning, land, and labor with a different kind of capitalism…If we want to deal with the fundamental problems of capitalist urban planning, we have to move beyond the systems we are familiar with and fight for an anti-capitalist city” (Stein, 2019, 169).

Stein advocates for solutions toward housing justice and on a practical level, he argues in support of rent control policies: “Strengthening rent controls – eliminating the loopholes and making the protections permanent and universal – would be one of the most important ways to halt housing inflation and cut the cord that so clearly connects planning to gentrification” (Stein, 2019, 162).

Maria Poblet discusses how Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC) works to counter dominant narratives about gentrification and displacement and push for policy recommendations and solutions for housing justice. Poblet has two decades of community organizing experience and helped build CJJC as its first executive director. In this 2014 article, she discusses how the affordability crisis and gentrification in San Francisco reached a new extreme and how community organizations are fighting back against the tech industry, real estate industry, and local government. In 2013, “Causa Justa :: Just Cause led an effort to win a ‘hassle-free’ housing
law penalizing landlords who harass, making it harder for them to push working-class people out and double the rents in gentrifying San Francisco. We also won a subjective battle. We proved to ourselves, to elected officials, and to our communities who are under attack that displacement is not inevitable, that regulations in market housing can curb displacement, and that impacted communities can lead the fight to build a different kind of San Francisco – one that holds community at its heart” (Poblet, 2014). Poblet discusses the power of community organizing and argues: “Gentrification is not natural. Displacement is not inevitable. Everyday people, when we come together, can change the course of history” (Poblet, 2014). “Today, we have citywide organizations like San Francisco Rising and the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition, poised to fight the battle for the heart of San Francisco. If local government isn’t representing us well, then we can make ourselves heard – at the ballot box, in the streets, at corporate headquarters and bus stops, in church halls and city hall” (Poblet, 2014).

**Community Organizing in the Mission: Resistance & Anti-Displacement Strategies**

The third body of literature provides an overview of the landscape of community-based organizations and activists who have been key players in the fight against gentrification and displacement, as well as existing solutions and efforts to address the problem. The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP) Atlas, which includes countless community partners, volunteers, activists, cartographers, artists, storytellers, ethnographers, historians, journalists, and scholars, is an “archive of numerous voices and perspectives, all of which align with our project’s politics of centering community knowledge, as well as an anti-racist, decolonial, feminist, and anti-capitalist politics” (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2021, xxiii). AEMP advocates for the
support of BIPOC community activists and leaders that have been working for decades to organize for a more equitable future in the San Francisco Bay Area:

“If Bay Area residents wish to build a more holistic urban future for this place we know and love, grassroots organizing led by Black, Indigenous, and communities of color (BIPOC) are already imagining autonomous futures. How might Bay Area residents funnel resources and labor to work in constellation with the futures being envisioned and put into practice by BIPOC organizers? Perhaps to build sustainable Bay Area futures, following the leadership of long-term Bay Area Black and Indigenous organizers, also involves a rejection of notions of private property” (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2021, 394).

The AEMP atlas aims to highlight stories of resistance and to learn from the ongoing resistance work. As I am hoping to do with my own capstone project, this atlas works to counter dominant narratives about gentrification: “Gentrification in the Bay Area can feel bleak as if nothing can possibly stop it or change its dystopian trajectory. This atlas is also aimed at providing a counterpoint to this perspective, and it is a testimony to what we have learned from the resistance work that we have been a part of, as well as the longer histories of resistance upon whose shoulders we stand. We argue that urban space is shaped not only by dynamics of racial capitalism and violence but also by resistance, solidarity, and community” (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2021).

Joshua Baltodano’s work provides an overview of history and lessons learned from community organizers in the Mission. Baltodano argues that “Despite [significant] challenges, the Mission District and the people of San Francisco have demonstrated a resiliency that has generated pioneering practices and policies to combat gentrification” (Baltodano, 2020, 114). Baltodano writes about lessons to combat housing displacement, based on efforts in the Mission focused on expanding nonprofit development, gaining recognition as a cultural district, and bolstering local housing and purchasing policies.
A report authored by the housing justice coalition CJJC contributes to the shared vision of housing justice and anti-displacement movements in the San Francisco Bay Area. CJJC’s report, *Development Without Displacement*, aims to “offer an alternative vision of community development that centralizes the interest and needs of working-class communities of color” (CJJC, 2014, 6). This vision includes development, housing, and tenant-related policy recommendations and organizing strategies. The report begins by providing a comprehensive, shared definition of gentrification (CJJC, 8) and a history of political economy and gentrification in the Bay Area (CJJC, 16). The report concludes with proposed policy solutions, including legislation and practices local governments can adopt to prevent or lessen the impacts of gentrification (CJJC, 2014, 55).

An article in Mission Local, a local bilingual independent news organization covering the Mission District, discusses one of the first uses of a new law that allows tenants to form a union to negotiate with landlords (Jiang, 2022). Renters at 140 Julian Avenue have formed a union to save a Latinx family from being evicted after they’ve lived in the building for 27 years. Allyn Mejia, lead organizer of the Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco, argues that without the new law, “a tenant facing this type of eviction would be faced to meet with their landlord alone (Jiang, 2022). This article demonstrates how organizing through tenant associations is an important solution in the movement for housing justice. An article in the *San Francisco Examiner*, which engages in conversation with local organizer Fernando Martí, also focuses on the importance and power of organizing through tenant associations and unions in a city like San Francisco (Ralda Diaz, 2022).

Fernando Martí is a progressive political activist and architect who has been organizing against displacement for three decades and has written extensively on these issues. In a piece
written for the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC), Martí traces 230 years of history in the Mission District, beginning with the first displacements of the Ohlone people in the Mission and the first anti-displacement movement in the neighborhood, followed by a history of how the neighborhood became home to immigrants and working-class families. Martí discusses how the Latino community in the Mission District developed its own culture and forged solidarity through shared struggle, including by resisting gentrification and displacement: “Developing our own cultura has been not only an act of affirmation but also an act of resistance” (Martí, 2006, 6). Martí notes that community members in the Mission organized to resist the state’s efforts of redevelopment and urban renewal, which Martí argues that “Redevelopment was the most visible tool of Capital’s assault on the working class” (Martí, 2006, 7). This connects to the history of community organizers and coalitions working on resisting displacement in the Mission for decades. Martí discusses the creation of community-based organizations and coalitions like MAC during the first wave of speculative displacement in the Mission: “The Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC) came together in 2000 at the height of the dot-com boom, bringing together Mission residents, Latinos, immigrants, day laborers, nonprofits, business owners, artists, and activists” (Martí, 2006, 9). He concludes by arguing that “the challenge remains, of how to confront the state and the developers to ensure that there is still a place for the Mission’s residents while trying to engage more of the base in determining their own future. As in the first displacements of 230 years ago, the struggle continues to be about land, and about people’s right to live in their own communities” (Martí, 2006, 10).

In a podcast, Alexis Terrazas, Editor-in-Chief of the Bay Area bilingual Latino newspaper El Tecolote, engages in conversation with Fernando Martí, who at the time served as co-director of CCHO. In the podcast, Terrazas and Martí discuss the history of gentrification in
Black and Brown neighborhoods, as well as Martí’s community organizing experience and his personal experience facing eviction with his family. CCHO is a coalition of 21 community-based affordable housing developers and tenant advocacy organizations. The coalition has been around for 45 years, working on affordable housing issues primarily in San Francisco as well as other parts of the Bay Area. In the podcast, Martí discusses how this work involves fighting back against urban renewal led by the local government facilitating change in the city’s neighborhoods.

This podcast discusses the history of housing justice and anti-displacement movements in San Francisco. Martí states, “our roots are in institutions that came out of those fights,” including community organizations such as the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition in the 1990s, and this work continues today with coalitions like CCHO (Terrazas, 2022). Martí shares that through his personal experience with eviction, he learned about the importance of community, knowledge, and the role of media like El Tecolote in creating awareness and solidarity in the fight against displacement. He says, “Part of the strength of a place like San Francisco is the ability to organize together, to create tenants’ associations, to create unions, and to fight back” (Terrazas, 2022).

In an article in the San Francisco Examiner, Ana Lucía Ralda Diaz engages in conversation with Fernando Martí. Martí explains that “to reclaim the land and create a new vision for the future of our communities, we need protective legislation, collaborative organizations, and united neighborhoods” (Ralda Diaz, 2022). Martí shares that one of his proudest achievements at CCHO was establishing COPA, the Common Opportunity Purchase Act, which was passed in 2019 and “gives qualified nonprofit organizations first right to purchase residential buildings for sale in San Francisco” (Ralda Diaz, 2022). Regarding the
vision he works toward, Martí argues, “We must invest public funds into creating affordable and integrated housing plans for the future. The resources exist; what we need is the political will to do it. As a country, if we put the money that we give to the military, police, and prisons into helping people in need, everyone could have a safe place to live” (Ralda Diaz, 2022). Martí brings a unique perspective to approach these issues as a political activist and architect. Martí argues that “This way of thinking about architecture and urban planning is built upon the idea of intersectionality. Upon integrating who we are and our history into what we make. For me, this is about philosophy, but it’s also about politics. It’s about protecting the agency of people” (Ralda Diaz, 2022).

Community land trusts (CLTs) are an important solution in this fight, as they focus on permanently taking land and buildings out of the speculative housing market. This is what building preservation programs like COPA are all about. The San Francisco Community Land Trust defines a CLT as follows:

A Community Land Trust is a membership-based, nonprofit organization whose mission is to create permanently affordable, resident-owned housing for low- and moderate-income people. Resident ownership of multi-family properties through the Community Land Trust model is one means of stabilizing affordable housing, in perpetuity, for low-income and working-class residents.

CLTs can preserve San Francisco’s diminishing affordable housing stock by acquiring and converting endangered rental buildings into permanently affordable, limited equity housing cooperatives—an alternative form of homeownership—through which the current residents become owners of the building. The Land Trust maintains ownership of the land and separates the building from the land, the units become affordable and can be maintained as affordable forever.

Guided by the principles of anti-displacement and racial justice, SFCLT stabilizes neighborhoods, and creates greater access to housing and homeownership opportunities with a focus on BIPOC communities previously excluded from access to wealth, and in particular, access to homeownership opportunities (SFCLT, 2023).
In recent years, organizers have turned to building preservation programs as a key policy approach in this fight, as they say repealing policies like the Ellis Act may not be feasible due to the power of the real estate lobby (Bowlin, 2020). The Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA), a long-time Bay Area nonprofit recently emerged as a leader in an anti-gentrification effort, known as a “right-to-purchase” policy, where local nonprofits obtain residential buildings to prevent development and displacement (Bowlin, 2020). Introduced by District 1 Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer, COPA passed in 2019 and gives local nonprofits like MEDA five days to send notice of interest to a seller before a property goes on the open market and becomes available to private developers. The building-acquisition program requires that all residents of a property favor the purchase (Bowlin, 2020). According to data from 2020, MEDA provides over 1,000 spaces for residents in 27 affordable housing complexes. It now oversees hundreds of public housing units and multi-unit apartment buildings and acts as a developer for over 600 below-market-rate units (Bowlin, 2020). An organizer described MEDA’s work as “reversing gentrification in the Mission District” by keeping people in their homes through building acquisition programs like COPA (Bowlin, 2020). Their work is critical to addressing the enormous loss of wealth for, and displacement of, low-income and Black and Latino families in the Mission caused by recurring waves of gentrification. The average income of residents in properties acquired by MEDA is more than 30% lower than the area’s median income (Bowlin, 2020).

Nancy Kwak’s research focuses on anti-gentrification campaigns in California cities, including San Francisco, and argues that anti-gentrification movements aim to restore political power to the grassroots and support community members. “In a larger historical context, anti-gentrification campaigns can be thought of as part of a much longer struggle to secure affordable,
decent shelter and halt involuntary displacement” (Kwak, 2018, 11). Some examples of anti-gentrification policies and efforts include tenant-protection policies, public and subsidized housing, affordable housing production preservation, and other nonprofit advocacy efforts. In this article, Kwak cites research from UC Berkeley's Urban Displacement Project (2015), whose case study on the San Francisco Bay Area found that the Mission District is currently facing gentrification at an “advanced stage” due to its “location and cultural richness,” as shown in Figure 2 below (Kwak, 2018, 17). This research found that the cultural wealth of the Latino community became part of the appeal of the Mission for white and wealthy gentrifiers in the dot-com boom of the 1990s to 2002 and then again after the housing market crash in the late 2000s. This has contributed to the “significant decrease in the number of families and Latino residents in the historically majority family and Latino neighborhood” (Kwak, 2018).

Figure 2: Mission District Facing Advanced Gentrification. UC Berkeley Urban Displacement Project, 2015 SF Bay Area Case Study (Kwak, 2018).

The UC Berkeley Urban Displacement Project case study on community organizing and resistance in the Mission District of San Francisco shares an overview of changes and trends in
the Mission from 1980 to 2013, including a focus on housing, gentrification, and displacement effects in the neighborhood during this period (Zuk et al, 2015). It discusses housing policies driving gentrification, including the Ellis Act, no-fault evictions, tenant buyouts, and vacancy decontrol. Anti-gentrification policies and efforts include tenant-protection policies such as eviction bans, rent control, and just-cause evictions clause; public and subsidized housing; and affordable housing production and preservation. This connects to the significance of my capstone project, as I am hoping to counter the narrative that gentrification is an inevitable consequence of urban planning. A community-based stakeholder in the Mission argues: “Contestation for place and the right to stay is still going on” (Zuk, 2015, 40).

**Conclusion**

Given these three bodies of literature, I bring these topics together to study the intersection of multiracial organizing and anti-displacement movements in the Mission District. Through my research, I center the perspectives of Black and Latino community activists to learn more about these ongoing organizing efforts to fight against displacement and keep residents of color in their homes and in their neighborhoods. Through my case studies focused on community-based organizations and citywide coalitions, I aim to introduce a community-centered perspective on the topic of gentrification by highlighting the resiliency of communities of color in the Mission and demonstrating how multiracial organizations are addressing challenges through strategies including rights-based services, policy campaigns, civic engagement, and direct action.
Research Methods

To build on the existing bodies of literature and answer my research question to gain a better understanding of multiracial organizing as a tool to fight displacement in the Mission, I engaged in semi-structured interviews as my methodology. By conducting semi-structured interviews and analyzing my data, I seek to answer my research question: *How do multiracial community-driven organizations work to disrupt gentrification and displacement, and create meaningful change to support impacted community members in the Mission?* Semi-structured interviews are designed to “incorporate both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions, eliciting data grounded in the experience of the participant as well as data guided by existing constructs in the particular discipline within one is conducting research” (Galletta and Cross, 2013, 45). By engaging in conversation with organizational leaders and local activists, I learned how multiracial community organizations are disrupting the issue of gentrification and displacement in the Mission. My interview questions focused on their organizational and coalition structures, multiracial organizing strategies, anti-displacement movement principles, and the impact of community-driven solutions.

Conducting semi-structured interviews was the best approach to help me understand my research question because this method allowed me to learn about the lived experiences of community members and organizers in the Mission, engage diverse perspectives, and help to put a human face on this serious issue. By engaging with leaders at three citywide coalitions fighting displacement – SFADC, REP-SF, and CCHO – I learned about a variety of life experiences from community leaders working to inform policy on this issue and fighting to help community members stay in their homes. Building on the existing bodies of literature, my research brings the value of diverse community voices that are working closely and care deeply about these
issues that impact them and their community. Through semi-structured interviews, I also learned important information about the history of the organizations and coalitions I am engaging with, as well as background information about the problem of displacement impacting communities of color in the Mission.

The method of semi-structured interviews was supportive in helping me answer my research question because according to Galletta and Cross, “the questions are open-ended in order to create space for participants to narrate their experiences; however, the focus of the questions is very deliberate and carefully tied to your research topic” (Galletta and Cross, 2013, 47). By posing follow-up questions in my interviews, I was able to engage in deep and authentic conversations with community activists and organizers and adapt my approach throughout the conversation to learn more about their work and individual expertise in fighting against displacement in the neighborhood. These interviews helped me answer my research question, learn about the work that community-based organizations (CBOs) are doing to address the problem, and add to the existing conversation and literature about gentrification and displacement.

Methods Detailed Plan

As outlined above, I gathered data to answer my research question through semi-structured interviews with **nine community organizers and coalition leaders** involved with the following organizations and coalitions in the fight for housing justice: the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC), the Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO), and the Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF), People Power Media, the Housing Rights Committee (HRCSF), and Calle 24 Latino Cultural District. To secure interview participants for my study, I conducted outreach to dozens of potential interviewees by reaching
out to several coalitions and organizations in the housing justice and anti-displacement movement. I conducted outreach via email and then used snowball sampling during interviews to get in touch with other community leaders and organizers.

For example, SFADC is a coalition of nearly 30 organizations and volunteers from all walks of life. A majority of the coalition members provide direct services and assistance to tenants and unhoused people in San Francisco. I recruited interviewees from the coalition by reaching out to the general email address on the SFADC website and asking them to connect me with key leaders and members of the coalition, ideally from a few different organizations to engage with a range of perspectives. Once I connected with community organizers and interviewed coalition leaders involved in SFADC, I used snowball sampling by asking them to connect me with other community members and leaders that they work with in the Mission who may be willing to engage in an interview.

My goal was to interview 10–15 people to gain a variety of perspectives from organizational leaders, coalition leaders, and community members. I was able to connect with nine community organizers and leaders who have experience working with several community-based organizations and coalitions in the Mission District and San Francisco more broadly. One limitation was timing and scheduling, as I was working to complete my capstone research within the spring semester of the second year in my graduate program, and there were a few additional organizational leaders and community organizers who were interested in participating in my research, but we were unable to connect during this time. Appendix B on page 129 provides a list of the nine interview participants I connected with through my research, organized alphabetically by last name and including their title and organization. Each of my interview participants signed a consent form for research provided by the USF Urban and Public Affairs
Program prior to engaging in an interview. While the consent form provided an option for participants to remain anonymous, all nine interviewees gave informed consent to use their names and titles in my capstone research. Between December 2022 and February 2023, I conducted interviews with 8 participants on video via Zoom and with one participant on the phone. My conversations with these community leaders lasted between 45 to 75 minutes.

**Background: Interview Participants**

My interview data comes from conversations with nine community organizers and leaders currently working with the following multiracial community-based organizations and coalitions.

- San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC)
- Race & Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF)
- Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO)
- Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco (HRCSF)
  - Southeast Tenants Association (SETA)
  - Veritas Tenants Association (VTA)
- People Power Media
- Calle 24 Latino Cultural District

These community organizers and leaders that I interviewed also have experience working with other organizations and coalitions doing housing justice and tenant advocacy work, including the following.

- Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC)
- Communities United for Health and Justice (CUHJ)
- Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC)
Mission Housing Development Corporation

Plaza 16 Coalition / La Coalición Plaza 16

People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER)

SOMA Pilipinas Filipino Heritage District

South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN)

Tenderloin Housing Clinic (THC)

One potential limitation of my research methods was that I was unable to connect with community members or local organizers outside of the organizations and coalitions I have chosen to study, as I had hoped to gain community members’ perspectives on these issues. However, many of the interview participants who participated in my research are long-time residents of the Mission District and/or San Francisco. As long-time residents, they bring a community-centered perspective and lived experience as tenants, in addition to their knowledge and expertise as seasoned community organizers. A few interviewees also have the lived experience of personally facing or supporting family members in facing evictions and other forms of displacement discussed in this research. This perspective is valuable in helping me bridge that gap, as these organizers truly understand what is at stake and why this work matters.
Community History

To provide the necessary background for the data analysis of my capstone project, I provide a historical overview of the communities and coalitions that I engaged with through my research. I contextualize my data, which includes interviews with community organizers and coalition leaders, by providing background information about each community-based organization that I studied. This includes a history of each organization, including their mission, vision, and organizing approach. This overview helps illustrate how these multiracial community organizations are structured to fight against gentrification and displacement impacting people of color in San Francisco. This section also includes a historical overview of the community organizing campaign against the Monster in the Mission, which serves as a case study that demonstrates the power of multiracial community organizing.

Community-Based Organizations and Coalitions

San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC)

According to SFADC’s website, “The San Francisco Anti Displacement Coalition is a group of [nearly 30] tenant organizations and allies who organize against the soaring evictions and rent increases in our city, which have resulted in the displacement of thousands of San Franciscans” (“Our Mission + Coalition,” 2023). SFADC was formed in 2013 “to address the wave of evictions and landlord harassment forcing thousands from their homes and neighborhoods.” The coalition supported a “ballot measure that would tax the ‘flipping’ of apartment buildings that was fueling and exploiting our housing crisis. The speculator tax, inspired by legislation originally proposed by Harvey Milk just prior to his assassination, was designed to stabilize the housing market in our city” (“Our Mission + Coalition,” 2023).
As activists called for the revival of the late Supervisor Harvey Milk’s anti-speculation proposal, SFADC filed an anti-speculation tax ballot initiative in 2014, to address the housing affordability crisis impacting long-time and working-class residents (Szeto, 2014). The ballot initiative aimed to combat the loss of affordable and rent controlled housing in the city due to real estate speculation (Szeto, 2014). The “Stop the Flip” anti-speculation measure grew from strong community organizing and tenant conventions in neighborhoods across the city as well as a citywide convention focused on tenants’ rights (Szeto, 2014). Supervisors Eric Mar, John Avalos, David Campos, and Jane Kim supported the ballot initiative, but it was unfortunately rejected by SF voters. The proposed legislation included the following:

The anti-speculation tax will impose a graduated real estate transfer tax on short-term flips, or apartment buildings sold within the first five years of purchase. If the sale of a building occurs within the first year of ownership, the tax would be 24% and decreases to 14% by the fifth year. The tax would not affect single family homes, condos and owner-occupied tenancy in common, new construction, buildings sold at a loss, buildings sold to converted to affordable housing, and buildings with over 30 units (Szeto, 2014).

Today, SFADC’s core beliefs as a coalition include the following:

We believe that all tenants have a right to safe, secure, and affordable places to live. We support strong public policies that protect these rights.

We believe that real estate speculation destabilizes neighborhoods, communities, and economies. We support regulation and controls on such speculation.

We believe that the future of San Francisco as a culturally diverse, vibrant, and creative city depends on its capacity to protect tenants from displacement and neighborhoods from losing their character and their social and economic diversity.

We are committed to building a democratic and inclusive movement for social change to advance these values and policies (“Our Mission + Coalition,” 2023).

The Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC) was the predecessor to SFADC in many ways. Community organizers formed the coalition in 2000 with the goal of “fighting for our right to the city” (Pagoulatos, 2009). MAC is a group of community organizations and individuals
“whose goal is to stop the displacement of working peoples from the Mission District and San Francisco” (Pagoulatos, 2009). Its collective vision includes the following:

We envision and organize for affordable, healthy, culturally vibrant, and politically engaged communities. We believe that everyday peoples, not corporate developers, and sell-out politicians, should be planning the future of our neighborhoods. We do this by advocating for a set of urban reform demands created by the very people who live, work, pray and play in the community (Pagoulatos, 2009).

**Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO)**

The Council of Community Housing Organizations, known as “choo choo,” is a nonprofit of 21 community-based housing developers and tenant advocates. For more than four decades, “CCHO has been at the forefront of local and regional affordable housing advocacy, organizing, and coalition building a more affordable city” (“CCHO: History,” 2023). CCHO’s long-standing mission is “to foster the development of permanently affordable low-income housing in San Francisco, under community control and through non-speculative means of ownership, with adequate provisions for tenant services and empowerment” (“CCHO: History,” 2023). CCHO represents a coalition of member organizations employing over 3,000 people in the affordable housing workforce. “Over the past 43 years the policies, initiatives, and legislation produced and championed by CCHO have led to at least $6.5 billion in funding for over 30,000 units of affordable housing…Many of these achievements have become national models emulated by other American cities” (“CCHO: History,” 2023).

**Race & Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF)**

The Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF) is a coalition of nearly three dozen grassroots organizations from across San Francisco coming together “with one major purpose: to ensure a future with diverse communities, stable, affordable housing and equitable access to resources and opportunities” (REP-SF, 2023). Community leaders formed REP-SF in
August 2020 to address urgent community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. REP-SF works to advance racial and social equity in city planning and land-use to address issues including gentrification and displacement. Regarding its collective vision, the REP-SF website states the following.

REP-SF envisions a San Francisco that empowers historically marginalized communities – American Indian, Black, and other Communities of color, immigrant, low-income and no-income residents, seniors, and people with disabilities – to determine our futures. We envision planning that puts the expertise of our communities at the forefront to solve issues of displacement, unaffordability, and inequality. We envision housing that we can afford, close to where we work, beautiful and culturally responsive design, and community and public land ownership. We envision new systems that prioritize the dignity, health, stability, and aspirations of our communities, and place the needs of the people over profit (REP-SF, 2023).

Regarding community-based participatory planning processes, the REP-SF coalition recently developed a “Citywide People’s Plan for Equity in Land Use,” which combines community development plans that REP-SF members have written for decades. “These plans are rooted in community, in people, in identity, in culture, in principles of inclusive and holistic planning and in racial, social and economic equity, and reflect the expertise and experience of our communities” (“Citywide People’s Plan,” 2023). The coalition describes the Citywide People’s Plan as “an ambitious, visionary, and practical Plan with an extensive ‘Action Plan.’ The Citywide People’s Plan is REP-SF’s blueprint for creating new systems for housing and land use that will ensure an equitable San Francisco for our communities now and for generations to come” (“Citywide People’s Plan,” 2023).

Other Housing Justice and Anti-Displacement CBOs

Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco (HRCSF)

The Housing Rights Committee “has fought for tenants’ rights since 1979, when a group of seniors at Old St. Mary’s Church came together to organize against condo conversions
displacing the elderly” (“About Housing Rights Committee,” 2023). HRC is a membership organization that works to support renters by providing the following services to address tenant issues, including evictions, illegal rent increases, repair problems, security deposit returns.

- Free counseling for San Francisco tenants in all types of housing: rent-controlled units, SROs, public housing, and Section 8, serving over 5,000 tenants a year.
- Organize entire buildings to fight against displacement and evictions
- Successfully change and support housing-related laws for a fairer San Francisco
- Help create building and community-wide tenants’ groups
- Coordinate, plan and mobilize protests, actions, and housing justice demonstrations
- Advocate for tenants in Section 8 and public housing
- Sponsor workshops, community meetings and other events
- Work with the Anti-Displacement Coalition, a network of tenant organizations and allies to organize against the soaring evictions and rent increases in our city (“About Housing Rights Committee,” 2023).

**People Power Media [people. power. media]**

[people. power. media] is a nonprofit multimedia journalism organization working toward the mission of “broadcasting efforts and perspectives from marginalized communities where grassroots organizations are working to change public policy,” with a current focus on land-use issues (“About People Power Media,” 2018). [people. power. media]’s vision includes creating a “broader base of support for policy solutions that result in greater equality for poor, racialized and working-class communities” (“About People Power Media,” 2018). The organization is working to address the following problem.

Racial and class inequality in the U.S. is driven by how land is controlled. Grassroots groups struggle to win on critical issues such as affordable housing, segregation, and environmental justice. Through our compelling multimedia journalism, we build broad-based understanding and urgency on land use issues causing a groundswell of people to take action for systemic change (“About People Power Media,” 2018).

**Calle 24 Latino Cultural District (Calle 24)**

Calle 24’s mission is to “preserve, enhance and advocate for Latino cultural continuity, vitality, and community in San Francisco’s touchstone Latino Cultural District and the greater

The Latino Cultural District will be an economically vibrant community that is inclusive of diverse income households and businesses that together compassionately embrace the unique Latino heritage and cultures of 24th Street and that celebrate Latino cultural events, foods, businesses, activities, art, and music (“About Calle 24 Latino Cultural District,” 2021).

**Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC)**

Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC) is a “multi-racial, multi-generational grassroots organization building community leadership to achieve housing justice and immigrant rights for low-income San Francisco and Oakland residents” (Poblet and Phillips, 2012, 6). The organization CJJC was founded in 2010 as a strategic merger of Just Cause Oakland and St. Peter’s Housing Committee – two organizations that “represent more than 30 years of combined experience working toward housing and racial justice for African Americans and Latinos” in Oakland and San Francisco, respectively. Both organizations had an active base of community residents who played key roles in developing and directing the work of the organizations. CJJC is committed to building multiracial alliances and solidarity between these two communities of color fighting for the shared goal of housing justice. While systemic racism has created many divisions between Black and Latino communities, CJJC’s organizational leaders believe “an equally strong basis and need for unity exists. Building a multi-racial organizing model is about
answering the question of how to simultaneously build the strength and position of each group while advancing an agenda of mutual interest” (Poblet and Phillips, 2012, 8). In its work, CJJC focuses on supporting Black and Latino communities to understand the specific conditions impacting their individual community, as well as their shared struggle, and to develop campaigns that speak to both specific community interests and the shared interest of both groups. CJJC is working to build the foundation of a vibrant national grassroots movement to address inequity and injustice. CJJC believes that “multi-racial alliances are foundational to movement-building, and our experience has shown that unity can’t be built in the abstract. It has to be forged through real relationships and shared work. Through our work, we are committed to building on and creating a truly multi-racial organization and movement” (Poblet and Phillips, 2012, 8–9).

Case Study: The Fight to Stop the Monster in the Mission

Through my capstone research, I am studying the community-led fight against the Monster in the Mission as one of the primary case studies to examine an effective community organizing campaign. Interviewees discussed how the campaign was successful in mobilizing a broad base of constituents to defeat a proposed 10-storey luxury housing development in favor of an alternative, community-led vision for a 100% affordable housing called the Marvel in the Mission. The work continues today on implementation of this community vision. The site for the proposed development at 1979 Mission Street on the 16th & Mission BART Station Plaza is also significant because the location presents a rare opportunity to develop on public land.

About the Plaza 16 Coalition / La Coalición Plaza 16

Community organizers in the Mission started the Plaza 16 Coalition to fight the proposed housing development that became known as the Monster in the Mission. The Plaza 16 Coalition /
La Coalición Plaza 16 is a grassroots alliance supported by over 100 organizations, including Faith in Action, Housing Rights Committee, The Women’s Building, MEDA, and Mission Housing. The coalition describes its vision as follows.

We build the power of communities most impacted by the gentrification crisis in the Mission, and support planning processes that assert grassroots decision-making, and the right of people to demand urban policies and practices which support their own security and existence in the neighborhood (Plaza 16 Coalition, 2021).

**About the Fight to Stop the Monster**

One of the reasons that the community fight against the Monster in the Mission is such a powerful case study is that in the early days, at the first community meeting, the developer Maximus insisted that the site at the plaza would never be used for 100% affordable housing. But after seven years of dedicated organizing, community members proved the developers wrong (Redmond, 2019). After protests involving hundreds of community activists, the developer realized that the city would not approve the project, and it folded (Redmond, 2015). Led by the Plaza 16 Coalition, community members put forth their own community vision for the site at the plaza through a community-based planning process, and they succeeded in securing 100% affordable housing (Redmond, 2022). **Appendix C** on page 130 provides photos taken by Tim Redmond and provided by the Plaza 16 Coalition, which capture key moments from the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission and demonstrate community power in this important campaign.

In this major community organizing victory, the Monster in the Mission was officially defeated in February 2020, when the land at 1979 Mission first went on the market (Plaza 16 Coalition, 2021). “As a result of the pressure from neighbors, community members, tenants, families, and students, Maximus Real Estate Partners was forced to sell the site at 1979 Mission Street” (Plaza 16 Coalition, 2020). Moving one step closer to building the Marvel in the Mission, another developer called “Crescent Heights purchased the site, and it has officially been handed
over to the city to construct affordable housing developers, MEDA and Mission Housing with the guidance of the community to construct the Marvel in the Mission” (Plaza 16 Coalition, 2020).

The work continues today to build the Marvel and make this community-led vision a reality of 100% affordable housing on the Plaza. A press release from the Plaza 16 Coalition on November 17, 2021 announced that the land transfer is in motion: “After 7 years of community organizing and fierce struggle, the site at 1979 Mission Street is set to officially transfer to the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development for the development of 100% affordable housing following a decision by the SF Board of Supervisors Budget and Finance committee” (Plaza 16 Coalition, 2021). This transfer of land marks another significant victory for community organizers in the Mission. However, the Plaza 16 Coalition is still fighting to ensure the city accepts this land and continues to partner with the community. Organizers are working to keep the pressure on creating subsidies to make the Marvel in the Mission accessible and affordable: “Our work is not over, and we step into the next stage of ensuring that the ‘Marvel in the Mission’ is a deeply affordable community developed project knowing we have already made impossible things possible” (Plaza 16 Coalition, 2021).
Positionality Statement

To conduct my research in an ethical and intentional way, I describe my own subjectivity and positionality and the ways in which they may have influenced the approach to my project. In this section, I discuss my cultural identity, my relationship to the topic of gentrification, and my relationship to Black, Latino, and other communities of color in the Mission District, who are impacted by the issue that I am studying.

I am a first-generation Nicaraguan American, born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. As the daughter of Nicaraguan immigrants, I have seen firsthand the physical and emotional impacts of my family being displaced from their homes. During the Nicaraguan Revolution in the 1970s when my parents were children, my mother moved to Los Angeles, and my father moved to Costa Rica, both in search of safety and security. Understanding my parents’ experiences as immigrants, I knew from a young age the toll that it takes on families when people must leave their homes, their family members, their neighbors, and their support systems, and move to start a new life somewhere where they may not feel they belong. For this reason, I have always been concerned about and interested in addressing the issue of gentrification and displacement in the Bay Area, where long-time residents are being forced out of their homes.

I feel connected to the community of the Mission District because, for decades, my aunt and uncle owned and operated a Nicaraguan restaurant called El Trebol on Mission and 24th Street, which my family often visited throughout my childhood. In 1979, when El Trebol Restaurant opened, my Tia Ivania and Tio Rolando paid $375 per month to rent a small space with just five tables. In an interview with the Mission Economic Development Agency, my aunt Ivania shared, “Customers had to go through the kitchen to get to the bathroom. Rolando and I worked 14 hours a day, seven days a week. We were determined to make our business work. We
never had any employees – it was just the two of us” (Cgil, 2015). Over the years, El Trebol grew into a thriving community, as my Tia Ivania describes: “Our customer base steadily increased. People who came to El Trebol with their parents later brought in their own children. My customers were like family.” My aunt and uncle retired after 34 years of business, in 2013 when their rent increased to $4,500 per month. This is an example of commercial displacement of a Latino-owned business, which comes along with residential displacement of long-time residents. While my aunt and uncle no longer live or work in the neighborhood, they still look back fondly on the community that they worked for decades to build at El Trebol. My Tia Ivania says, “The Mission will always be home” (Cgil, 2015).

While so much of the neighborhood has changed, the Mission continues to serve as an important center for the Latino community and I strongly support efforts to maintain that community and help keep Latino residents in their homes. Seeing how much the social and cultural landscape of the Mission has changed in my lifetime – let alone in the past eight years since I moved to San Francisco – sparked my interest in studying community-driven efforts to address the problem of gentrification and displacement in the neighborhood. I moved to the city in 2015 from the East Bay for my undergraduate studies at the University of San Francisco, and as a renter, I have experienced firsthand the housing affordability crisis and the impact of the tech industry on the city. I am passionate about the issues of gentrification and displacement because, throughout my life, I have seen and felt the loss of community and culture in the city and in the Bay Area as a whole, as many of us have seen friends and family being priced out of the area. Through my coursework in the Urban and Public Affairs Graduate Program, I learned more about the history of multiracial coalition building through cross-racial and cross-class solidarity, including how Black and Brown communities have organized together in resistance
against gentrification and displacement in cities like Los Angeles, New York, and the Bay Area. Studying these intersectional movements helped me become interested in researching multiracial coalition building and community organizing as a form of resistance in the Mission District.

Another perspective that informs my research is my experience working in strategic communication. I earned my Bachelor of Arts in communication studies and public relations at USF, and prior to beginning my graduate program, I worked for three years in strategic communication in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, and other advocacy organizations across issue areas, including environmental justice, civil rights, criminal legal reform, education equity, and other racial and social justice issues. I provided strategic communication counsel, messaging, and narrative support with the goal of helping organizations achieve their organizational goals and advance meaningful social change. As I am passionate about using strategic communication to advocate for a more just and equitable world, I bring a strategic communication perspective to my research, and I aim to learn more about the power of community-centered narrative and communication strategies in advancing anti-displacement policy and working toward the vision of housing justice.

My lived experience, cultural identity, education, and professional experience inform my perspectives and serve as a lens for my capstone research because I understand the issue of gentrification and displacement on a personal level, and I resonate with the struggles of people of color, immigrants, and working-class communities who have been impacted by the problem I am researching. As I study multiracial community organizations, I employ an intersectional framework focused on housing justice, racial justice, and anti-displacement movements – which believe in housing as a human right and envision a future without displacement. I believe that this lens is critical to my capstone project as I maintain a focus on equity and prioritize
community-driven solutions that positively impact BIPOC communities in the city. My experiences have supported my work of gathering and analyzing data by helping me engage and center diverse community voices in my research.

One potential limitation I anticipate is that I am not a part of the community that I am studying, as I have personally never lived or worked in the Mission District. I am positioning myself as one person with a particular lived experience as a Latina, who was born and raised in the Bay Area, and who does not have the same lived experiences as BIPOC communities living in the Mission District. Therefore, I may have different perspectives and limited knowledge of the issues impacting the neighborhood. This may have impacted the way in which I conducted my research or interpreted data as I may not have the full cultural or community context as someone who has lived and/or worked in the neighborhood. However, I care very deeply about the community of the Mission and the ways in which gentrification and displacement have harmed long-time community members.

To make this form of community care ethical, particularly as I seek to learn about multiracial organizing, I am committed to the work of anti-racism and decolonization in my research. I am consistently working to critically analyze and understand my position as a researcher in this field, to best support BIPOC communities in the Mission, who are most impacted by this issue. As my research seeks to better understand multiracial community organizing and learn best practices from long-time organizers, I hope that my project may serve as a supportive resource for community activists and organizations in the Mission District and for Black, Indigenous, Latino, and other people of color fighting against gentrification and displacement more broadly.
Data Analysis

My interview data comes from conversations with the following nine community organizers and leaders currently working with multiracial community-based organizations and coalitions focused on housing justice and anti-displacement efforts.

- Erick Arguello, President, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District
- Molly Goldberg, Director, San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition
- Brad Hirn, Lead Organizer, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
- Jeantelle Laberinto, Community Organizer, [people. power. media] and the Race & Equity in all Planning Coalition
- Fernando Martí, Co-director, Council of Community Housing Organizations (2011-2022)
- Allyn Mejia, Lead Organizer, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
- Charlie Sciammas, Policy Director, Council of Community Housing Organizations
- Joseph Smooke, Co-founder, People Power Media and Organizer, Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition
- Maria I Zamudio, Organizing Director, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco

Key Players in the Housing Justice Space

According to one of my interviewees, Charlie Sciammas, Policy Director at CCHO, who was formerly an organizer at the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC), “there are three city-wide coalitions that are now real players in a lot of these discussions around housing justice” – SFADC, REP-SF, and CCHO. Based on my interviews, I learned that these three coalitions are employing the following organizing strategies and approaches to the problem of displacement: (1) tenant organizing and advocacy, (2) land-use and city planning, (3)
nonprofit affordable housing and community development, (4) creating and informing policy.

The San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition (SFADC) has been working for nearly a decade on approaching this work from a “tenant-centered framework” (Sciammas, 2023). The Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF) is focusing on “the relationship of planning processes and land-use, and how they impact affordability and community stability” (Sciammas, 2023). The Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO) is a coalition of nonprofit tenant advocates and affordable housing developers.

It came out of the struggles to oppose the harm that came with the redevelopment efforts in the 1960s and 70s, which gave birth to the grassroots movements of community development organizations. We’re thinking about all the tools that we have in our toolbox: the organizing and advocacy work, building resident leadership, and creating opportunities for committee members to flex their power in public decision-making spaces” (Sciammas, 2023).

According to Charlie Sciammas, the three coalitions SFADC, REP-SF and CCHO work together in solidarity in the following ways.

All three coalitions are really trying to move in step with each other and then also recognize that each of the coalitions can play unique roles and lean more deeply into specific areas of policy…Different coalitions are going to be prioritizing and uplifting different things. And then we're hopefully doing our best to make sure that we can negotiate across differences when there are differences. We step up to be supportive of each other's efforts and act very much in solidarity as much as possible” (Sciammas, 2023).

Regarding the impact these coalitions have had on the issues of gentrification and displacement in the Mission, Charlie Sciammas says “There’s a long legacy of impact” (Sciammas, 2023). There is a long history of community-based organizations working for decades in the Mission District, with “many legacy institutions that have been there [in the neighborhood] for 40 plus years” (Sciammas, 2023). Through their involvement in these three citywide coalitions, community-based organizations are contributing to this rich history of
multiracial, multicultural organizations and coalitions focused on fighting gentrification and the displacement of people of color in San Francisco.

My data analysis explores why multiracial community organizing is valuable, how multiracial CBOs and coalitions define success, and how they work toward the deep systemic changes needed to achieve housing justice for communities of color. These coalitions and CBOs are focused on making the incremental changes that it will require to dismantle racist and capitalist systems. In my data analysis, I discuss five key themes:

1. Why Multiracial Community Organizing Matters
2. How Organizations and Coalitions Define Success
3. Case Study: The Marvel in the Mission
   A. Other Community Organizing Case Studies
4. How CBOs Engage in Anti-Displacement Coalitions
5. Resources Needed to Support CBOs and Coalitions

Key Themes from Interviews with Community Organizers and Coalition Leaders:

Theme 1: Why Multiracial Community Organizing Matters & What it Looks Like in Practice

The community organizers I interviewed spoke about the promise of multiracial organizing and the need for cross-racial solidarity in the housing justice movement. Organizers stated that the challenges we are facing in the housing space are systemic, racialized challenges. Therefore, organizing against racist systems requires intentional solidarity and unity across racial and ethnic boundaries. Interviewees described the various constituencies that they work with, how they work to improve housing conditions for these groups, and how organizers engage with one another through the various coalitions they are a part of to advance their work toward a shared vision.

Interviewees stated that some of the strengths of coalitions include bringing together different groups of people, building solidarity over common experiences, and uniting over a
collective vision of housing justice – while also acknowledging racialized differences in lived experiences and perspectives across consistencies. Participants emphasized that because we are working to address inherently racist systems, it is important to acknowledge differences felt across race and recognize the nuanced ways that issues of economic and housing justice impact specific racial and ethnic groups throughout the city.

Maria I Zamudio, who currently serves as Organizing Director at HRCSF, formerly worked as a Community Organizer at Causa Justa (CJJC), as well as Campaign Director for the Plaza 16 Coalition during the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission. She discussed the various constituencies that HRC and CJJC work with and how this impacts their daily work to achieve housing justice for these communities.

Causa Justa is a multinational organization, with a specific focus around building the leadership of Black and Latinx communities particularly and then building their connection to each other. At Housing Rights, our orientation to multiracial organizing is much broader. Our primary base is Black tenants living in public housing (HUD) and private housing; immigrant tenants living in subsidized and private housing, primarily Chinese-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Latino, and Indigenous immigrant tenants; and tenants living in corporate landlord-owned buildings.

The basis of unity for our organization is that we understand that housing is a racialized system. Because we live in America. And in the United States, the way capitalism is felt is through race. And so, we can’t take on an unjust economic system – which is what the housing crisis is built on – without recognizing the ways in which racism and race particularly impact it – from redlining to redevelopment to the gentrification of the Mission and the Excelsior to the centralizing of AAPI communities in SROs. All of that is racialized (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio discusses the challenges of building multiracial alliances and describes her approach to building cross-racial solidarity. She discusses how the basis of unity needs to go beyond the shared assertion that housing needs to be a human right. She argues that the real way we work toward changing the system to achieve this vision is understanding the specificities and
nuanced ways in which individuals across racial and ethnic identities are impacted by housing issues and the power of the real estate industry (Zamudio, 2023).

The challenge we face in building a multiracial base is that sometimes folks don’t know how to talk to each other. And part of our work as organizers is not flattening the basis of unity to just an economic one and being like ‘well we’re all tenants, and we’re all trying to fight corporations and landlords, and that’s all we’ve got.’ We can’t flatten it. Because if we miss the nuance and if we miss the ways in which, even in the same building, Black tenants’ or Latino or white tenants’ experience is different, we lose people, and people don’t actually believe the work we’re doing impacts them, which is the opposite of what we want…[To achieve housing as a human right], we need to make sure that we’re being specific about how that shows up in different communities and how our identities impact these issues (Zamudio, 2023).

When I asked my interviewees why they believe in the value of multiracial CBOs and coalitions, they discussed different reasons why multiracial community organizing is critical to the housing justice and anti-displacement movement.

Fernando Martí, Co-Director of CCHO (2011-2022), discussed how multiracial organizing helps community organizers build relationships and have deeper conversations focused on addressing the root causes of these systemic issues. Martí said:

I think your question leads to thinking about organizing as not just an issue-based approach. So, in the tradition of Saul Alinsky types of organizing, there is an issue and there is a community that is trying to make redress for the particular oppression that they are facing. The limitation of that is that you’re not really addressing the bigger issues in society that created that. And so, I think that's where the promise of multiracial organizing is that you're organizing, not only across constituencies and nationalities, but that you're also getting at some of those deeper questions.

As tenants, we form part of a social class that is different from the owning landlord class, and that class includes white tenants, Black tenants, Asian American tenants…And if we want to make a change around the relationship of the owning class to the tenant class, we have to build those relationships. We have to start organizing across race, which means across issues, because those issues are often very specific to the experience that a public housing tenant is facing, an SRO tenant is facing, single immigrant men are facing, immigrant families are facing, etc. And then it complicates things. But it also allows for some deeper conversations (Martí, 2023).
Martí discussed how this informs his own work on organizing and communication strategies with SFADC, with the larger goal of deeper systemic change.

That was what we were attempting to do last summer. This was an art project that I was involved in with the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition that is going to result in these bus ads that are basically tenants’ rights ads providing information about the new Right to Organize legislation…But we used that process to bring together tenants from public housing in Chinatown, Latinx tenants in the Mission District, and white and Black tenants from Veritas, which is a huge corporate landlord, and have those conversations together, around the commonalities that folks are facing as tenants. Even though they’re each working with very specific issues, and even though they’re different landlords, the owning class was creating these conditions. To me, that's what's really promising. That's where we get to at least starting to talk about larger social changes (Martí, 2023).

Brad Hirn, Lead Organizer at HRC stated that multiracial organizing is necessary to fight white supremacy in the United States:

I think it's existential in a way when it comes to the U.S…Multiracial organizing is how we defeat right-wing organizing, fascist organizing, neo-Nazi organizing, and white supremacist organizing. There are so many examples over the decades in the U.S. of effective multiracial organizations. They become, in practice, anti-racism and anti-sexism as they go. It's not to say they're perfect, and there are many examples of them struggling, but there are so many examples of workers uniting or people uniting over a cause. So, I think at the end of the day, when we see the history of white supremacy in the United States, it makes a lot of sense, then that multiracial working-class organizing is one of the only viable ways to fight white supremacy that has been at the root of this country since the very beginning (Hirn, 2023).

In response to my question about the value of multiracial organizing, Molly Goldberg, Director of SFADC, argues that we need multiracial coalitions to win. She discusses the value of people with different lived experiences and perspectives coming together to work in coalition. Goldberg emphasizes the need to create space for conversations about racialized experiences of the housing crisis because these perspectives are critical to informing organizing strategies to fight this problem (Goldberg, 2023).

Because we need them [multiracial coalitions] to win. I think that's a large part of it: we cannot win alone. There's something in the structure of a coalition that acknowledges that we're putting things down to be there together. Everyone is coming with the specificity of their experiences and the specificity of the ways that the inherent racism of the
speculative housing system is particularly impacting them. Knowing the different ways that that happens helps us understand what we're up against better. And we need to be able to clearly name the different ways that racial capitalism impacts us to understand what we're fighting. Being able to name those differences is part of our strength. But it also requires people that put things down to be there. We can't do that unless we have a lot of clarity about where we're headed and what our vision is, because otherwise, it's not worth it if it's not part of a plan to win.

Having people understand and respect the many different points of view that are coming from the different racialized experiences of the housing crisis that our members are experiencing is one of the things that we are constantly trying to build space for. That's part of the function of the coalition is remembering each other's value in this, both in terms of strategies and perspectives (Goldberg, 2023).

Goldberg discussed a speech that she often turns to by movement thinker Bernice Johnson Reagon about coalition politics, which was anthologized in a book called Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology. Goldberg highlights the value of coalitions and shared connections:

[Bernice Johnson Reagon] talks about coalition, and the difference between coalition space and home space, and about the value of home space, and also the limitations of it and why we need coalitions for our survival. I think it speaks to the challenges of holding coalitions together really well. One of my big lessons from it is that I work for a coalition instead of one organization because I believe that the struggle of trying to find those shared connections is important. And part of it involves constantly re-grounding in the value of all of those specific spaces” (Goldberg, 2023).

Theme 2: How Organizations & Coalitions Define or Measure Success of Political Organizing Against Gentrification & Displacement

Interviewees shared how they define or measure success when it comes to political organizing against gentrification and displacement. According to several organizers I spoke with, success occurs at different levels and there are different types of wins when it comes to anti-displacement work, particularly as various organizations and coalitions are addressing the displacement problem through a range of strategies. Interviewees recognized that because we are fighting against racist and capitalist systems, as we work toward the long-term vision of housing justice, change will need to occur incrementally. Interviewees described different types and
levels of “wins” that occur through tenant association building, movement and base-building, policymaking, land-use changes, landlord concessions, affordable housing development and preservation, and narrative change.

Maria I Zamudio emphasizes that deep systemic change is required to achieve housing justice for HRC’s consistencies. And in achieving justice for these groups of people, these systemic changes would make all of our lives better:

For us, if those categories of tenants feel real housing justice, which is that they do not fear eviction, they’re not being harassed, their homes are deeply affordable, they're paying 30% or maybe less of their income in rent – 15% would be great; and their homes are places of dignity. For all those things to happen for these groups of tenants, specifically, the systemic changes that would need to occur are deep. And so, for us, these tenants are our NorthStar. Because to ensure that these tenants have what they need in terms of housing being a human right, housing for people not profit, to materialize that demand for this group of tenants would require the deep systemic changes that would actually make all of our lives better, even if we don't fall into this category of tenants.

If we win for these tenants, the level of systemic change that would need to happen in the city and in the state is so deep that we would achieve our demand of housing being a human right for all. We would actually win that. So that's why we organize these tenants. And that's why multiracial organizing (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio discusses HRC’s long-term vision of decommodifying housing: “Our long-term vision is that we live in a system where housing isn't commodified, and it's produced for social good and not for profit” (Zamudio, 2023). As it works to achieve this long-term vision, there are different levels of success for HRC, including tenant association building and organizing, policymaking, landlord concessions, and internal organizational success. Zamudio also notes how passing laws can be a “double-edged sword,” due to the challenges of implementation.

There are different scales of success. At Housing Rights, we do a lot of tenant association building…A lot of what an organizer’s role is to unlock the power and the capacity of everyday folks to exert power, and to support them in developing new facets of that power. That's a huge win.
When we pass a big law, that’s also nice, but **passing laws is a double-edged sword**, because then you have to implement the law and implementation is a whole different story. And it's so hard.

Another huge win is when landlords have to pay up: when they have to decrease rents or make big concessions, I think that's huge (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio noted that another metric for success is **evaluating the health of an organization and employee satisfaction**: “The other way that we measure success is by how our people are doing – how our organization is functioning, how folks are able to really feel both purpose and also have space to live their lives as well as the people in our organization” (Zamudio, 2023).

Jeantelle Laberinto, Community Organizer with [people. power. media] and the Race & Equity in all Planning Coalition, discussed how she evaluates REP-SF’s progress toward its goals as a coalition and how these serve as important metrics of success.

REP has specifically created a list of three big goals we have as a coalition. I use that as a metric to evaluate if what we're doing is moving us there. It's one of those things we constantly go back and reevaluate: Are we being successful in getting there? Are we getting better? It’s a way for us to define success and see if we’re moving towards these **three major goals**:

1) We want to **redistribute power and decision-making**, overlaying use of housing to our communities, by putting the expertise of our communities at the forefront to solve issues of displacement on affordability and inequality.

2) We want to **reclaim the narrative** development used to focus on racial, social, and economic equity.

3) We want to **build REP’s organizing and community voice** by empowering our base to fight for systems that prioritize the dignity, health, stability, and aspirations of our communities, and place the needs of the people over profit (Laberinto, 2022).

Joseph Smooke, Co-founder of People Power Media and Organizer, Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF), stated that the work toward **REP’s vision will occur through incremental changes in land-use, housing, and planning**.
When we look at land-use and housing, we look at systems that have intentional prejudice or bias for certain people over others. And what that means is that the land no longer provides for people's basic needs, and that's intentional as well. So, when we look at what success looks like, we know that it's going to be difficult to take land from those who are in power and from those who profit from controlling the land. So, we know that it's going to be incremental, and we know that it's going to take time (Smooke, 2022).

Smooke discussed how working with the REP Coalition has been inspirational. He shared an example of REP’s first big action in February 2022, in which he expected coalition members to be disappointed due to the lack of media coverage the coalition generated. However, coalition members were most motivated about building the coalition’s base and presence, strengthening alliances, and moving its messaging through social media. Smooke also emphasizes the power of coalitions, in supporting individual organizations in making progress collectively toward their shared goals.

What they [coalition members] were most motivated about was being able to build our base, build our presence, move our messaging, and we were in control of that because we did it through social media, through our channels. Really fronting the community expertise and leadership and making that really visible and giving speaking roles and visibility to all the member organizations in REP. And really strengthening our alliances, and really coming together as a coalition marked deep success for the coalition.

And so those are the things that we keep evaluating every time we have an action, every time we publish, or submit something to the city. We’re always looking at all of those different factors and seeing if we’ve moved the needle on those things. We know we're not necessarily going to win, but we'll get there, and we will win eventually.

These are the things we value, and it's been so hard to win on any of these things for any single group that I think they feel like the REP Coalition hopes to move this effort significantly in this direction (Smooke, 2022).

Goldberg (SFADC) discusses the importance of decommodified housing models and regulations, including rent control and tenant protections, that can help move us toward the vision of housing as a human right.

In terms of our big long-term vision, we want to see housing as a basic right. We want to see everybody in a home, and I don’t think we can get there with the private market. Broadly, as a coalition, we see that there are various kinds of decommodified housing
models that can help us get there. And there’s regulations that can help us get there, both through tenant organizing and government action. Things like rent control and tenant protections are regulations that are part of guaranteeing housing as a public good.

Groups like the Housing Rights Committee are really trying to push the model of organized tenants directly confronting these structures as their own regulatory force, so we can regulate the market through our organizations as well (Goldberg, 2023).

Goldberg discusses different types of questions that SFADC members may consider when evaluating and shaping policy interventions to achieve wins that center equity and advance housing justice on the community level.

We have different rubrics we use to walk ourselves through and evaluate a policy, for example. We ask ourselves questions like: ‘Does this policy set us up for bigger wins in the future? Would passing this help us win something else? Does it decrease rents and profits? Does it increase tenant power and agency? Does it reduce reliance on the private market and increase community control? Does it increase tenant protections or housing as a right? Does it create equitable outcomes? Or is this going to benefit one group and not another?’

‘Is this a community level intervention, or an individualized one?’ One of the ways that the real estate industry has fought back against our wins over time has been to narrow the scope of the regulations we've won and the kinds of housing we've won to be at the individual level.

For example, we don’t have vacancy control, that’s illegal. You can have rent control, which is that if you’re in that unit, you can hold onto it and that rent is going to be affordable, but as soon as you leave, that rent can be raised to anything. So, there’s an incentive to push tenants out. But it also means that at a community level: Could you imagine moving to another apartment that fits your needs better? And could you imagine your kids or your friends coming and joining you?

There are groups that are talking about Black right of return in San Francisco: What does it look like not just to protect the people who are still here, but to talk about what would it look for communities to imagine a future here that involves defining the shape of this place at a community level and not just protecting individuals? So, I think about that idea that as an individual, being able to imagine a future here is predicated on being able to imagine a future for your community” (Goldberg, 2023).

Hirn (HRC) leads the Veritas Tenants Association (VTA), an association of tenants living in buildings across the city owned by a corporate landlord called Veritas. Hirn shared that HRC has participated in trainings with an organizer named Jane McAlevey, who works out of the UC
Berkeley Labor Center. McAlevey says in trainings that “the job of an organizer every day is to wake up and help build solidarity amongst people.” And that’s the daily task (Hirn, 2023).

Hirn shared that this is one of the most inspiring parts of the job:

If I come into a building or to attend a meeting, and these tenants haven't met each other or talked much before, or they're just meeting for the first time – and then they leave at the end of the meeting, feeling more connected, and they have more of a plan, then that's a victory. To me, that's probably the most energizing part of the job in many ways (Hirn, 2023).

Hirn also discussed wins such as landlord concessions that he has achieved through organizing and public action with the VTA. He shared how HRC uses these organizing victories as opportunities to help change the narrative and counter mainstream media that frames the housing crisis as an issue of supply and demand, as HRC does not share this analysis.

There are wins that come out through just sheer organizing and public action, and oftentimes it's winning concessions directly from landlords. In 2019, the VTA achieved a big win – canceling rent increases at 34 buildings that the landlord was trying to impose, and in some cases had imposed. And so, in those cases, the landlord Veritas rolled back the rents, and actually lowered rent, which those tenants had never seen before.

This is a moment when you can start to challenge people's assumptions about what's possible. Those big wins that happen through organizing are also opportunities for winning on the terrain of ideas and people's common sense about what's possible. And in housing, that's really important, because so much of how mainstream news writes about housing is just as an issue of supply and demand. It's just like, ‘there aren't enough homes. And if we just build more homes, no matter how much the rent is, eventually, the rents will go down.’ We don't share that analysis here at HRC. So, we try to use organizing victories to change people's ideas about how that's going to work.

And then, of course, there's changes in policy that we're always proud of and I have worked on over the years. But honestly, for me, it's the wins that happen directly with the real estate industry where tenants are able to pull concessions from landlords that would not have been possible otherwise (Hirn, 2023).

Mejia (HRC) leads the SouthEast Tenants Association (SEA), which has a geographic focus on SouthEast San Francisco. She discussed how success includes training tenants’ association members to become “organic leaders,” organizing buildings, and base-building to
train and educate more community members with the **goal of preventing evictions**. Mejia highlights the critical need for ongoing community education, training, and capacity building to ensure long-term success of anti-displacement movements.

Right now, success is being able to train members to become organic leaders. Last year, I would say I had an inkling that one member was an organic leader. And now, I have five members of the association that are really familiar with the materials and had joined all of our trainings that we put on this year: they’re aware of what Costa-Hawkins is, a nuisance eviction, an Ellis Act eviction, those are all the ones that we’ve done this year. They’re aware of the propositions that are going to provide supporting housing. There’s that success for me that we have **members that are now organic leaders and identify themselves as organic leaders**.

I’m more geared at **preventing evictions** – instead of organizing around evictions that are happening now – and a lot of that just comes with educating our members sooner than later. It also won’t be successful until more organizers are doing it and more organizations are adopting it – actively organizing buildings or base building to train folks, versus base building just to show up at a coalition’s action (Mejia, 2022).

Mejia also emphasizes that this work needs to be focused on **centering the tenants** and community members, and they need to have **community ownership of the work** to ensure long-term success.

It’s about them. I always see it as: I could go anywhere. I could go to another city, or I could get another job. I could leave. And we need to make sure the work is left for the members to do, so that they have ownership of it. Because a lot of folks get attached to the organizer. And it has nothing to do with me. It's like, ‘I’m only telling you that these are some steps we could follow,’ but I really try to transfer it back to the members because anything can happen. And it takes a while once you're doing this work. It takes a while to see that thread within that year that it could take for an organizer to really understand the lay of the land, and to build those relationships and build that trust. And during that year evictions are happening, and you're missing your targets and you're not organizing, and you don't know what you're not organizing against.

Last year [when I joined HRC] I missed a lot of opportunities for sure. When I got a list of the buildings for sale, those are 10 buildings I never got to. I think it was 56 units, so those are 56 tenants that probably got evicted. And so, knowing that, I think about it like that was worth success, if I could catch it before it happened, to **educate tenants, and ensure tenants are the ones educating each other** (Mejia, 2022).
**Impact of Community-Based Organizations**

Interviewees discussed the impact that they believe community-based organizations, such as those that they have been involved in, have had on addressing these issues and community concerns in their neighborhood. Some interviewees, including Erick Arguello (President, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District) and Fernando Martí, shared data reflecting trends in the Mission, including increased affordable housing production, Black and Latino residents returning to their communities, and Latino-owned businesses returning to the neighborhood. These are some examples of how organizers measure anti-displacement and housing justice work and provide evidence of community organizing making a meaningful difference in the neighborhood.

Charlie Sciammas discussed the essential role that direct service organizations have played in the Mission District for several decades. He argues that the work citywide coalitions like SFADC, CCHO, and REP-SF are currently doing is focused on tackling systemic issues and addressing root causes of gentrification, displacement, and evictions. He discusses preservation work as an example, emphasizing the need for community-control and community-based partnerships.

We continue to be in the same situations that we’re in because we’re not really trying to figure out how to systemically tackle a lot of the institutional issues that are causing folks to have adverse health outcomes or adverse housing outcomes…I think that work is very ongoing in terms of really trying to tackle more systemic root causes. I would say that’s the work in front of us. And that’s the work we’re trying to do. And it's very challenging. And we have more modest victories here and there in our ability to change the rules or create new programs that are more addressing root causes.

For example, through preservation work, we’re finding a way to interrupt that process that we’ve seen time and time again, of apartment buildings changing hands with speculators coming in and evicting tenants. And now, we’ve reached a new inflection point, where we have more opportunity for community control and community-based development organizations to convert a building into permanent affordability with deed restrictions.
We can easily come up with a list of hundreds of things we have achieved over the years. There is one on the CCHO website [https://www.sf echo.org/history] of some of the key policy changes and programs – whether it’s fighting for more resources, bringing more public investment, creating programs that allow for more convenient control. But there’s so much more to be done (Sciammas, 2023).

Sciammas discussed the legacy of decision-making in San Francisco, including planning, land-use, and development projects, that have fueled gentrification. He emphasized the importance of community organizers making the connection between individual struggles to the larger economic forces that decision-making that have caused these issues (Sciammas, 2023). Sciammas described how “block-by-block eviction defense struggles started to galvanize folks into more of a mass movement in the Mission. “And that's where there were a lot of really beautiful examples of folks coming together in a much larger way and making the connections” (Sciammas, 2023). For example:

There was an action where over 1,000 folks took over Mission Street, and basically walked to different sites of displacement, where folks were able to tell those stories, and make that connection to the larger forces of accountability and decision-making that are fueling all of this displacement (Sciammas, 2023).

Sciammas discussed how that movement led to a demand for a community-based planning process and emphasized the need for community agency, as well as language access to ensure community voices are heard and prioritized.

We need to have the community in the driver's seat to be able to make decisions about how the neighborhood grows and develops. We really want to put front and center the ability of residents in the Mission to be in that role of envisioning and shaping and defining what the real needs are, and what development frameworks are going to be most responsive to deeply strengthening and stabilizing residents of the neighborhood.

There was a demand for the city to partner with and resource a community-based planning process. And their response was, ‘we'll get the planning department to come in and do this process.’ And the community realized that there needed to be more autonomy and agency in that process. And so, there was a community-based process that was happening in a parallel way that folks self-organized. And it was really just trying to put in practice a lot of the grassroots participatory community planning strategies. We’re creating space for more everyday folks to be part of the process to participate, whether
they are young or old, whether they are Spanish speakers, Chinese speakers, English speakers, etc. (Sciammas, 2023).

Regarding how organizers measure success on addressing issues of gentrification and displacement, Arguello shared data on affordable housing production in the Mission District, as well as the number of Latino-owned businesses in the Latino Cultural District’s main commercial corridor.

People say: ‘Are you stopping gentrification? Are you bringing the community back? How do you measure gentrification?’ One thing is that it’s visible – and then we use numbers too.

For example, when we started, we had 130 businesses along the corridor’s core blocks. Our cultural district is much bigger than that, but this is the main corridor we want to protect because gentrification tends to eat those core commercial strips. And so, we have been keeping track of how many businesses we have, what types of businesses, where are they from, all types of data. And during the height of gentrification – we've had two waves of gentrification: the dot-com boom and the tech boom – the number of Latino businesses started to go down. We were at 79 Latino businesses, out of 130. And during gentrification, we notice our numbers going down to 64 – they start to drop. Historically, we've been able to replace Latino businesses. A lot of small businesses come one year, they go, and they are replaced quickly by another Latino business. So, we saw that pattern all the time, every five years, we saw little change in the number of Latino businesses. Then we notice, based on my data – ‘wait a minute, we’re not replacing them anymore.’ Rent started to go up, the white businesses started to come in, because everybody else couldn't afford them, and the realtors were trying to get rid of us. In terms of small businesses, people were getting displaced.

Arguello also discussed how community support proved to be very powerful in preserving Latino-owned businesses in the Mission during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The work we’ve been doing now on the ground is to maintain what we have. And then later, how to build it back up. So, COVID helped us out. It was interesting because of the 14 businesses that we lost during COVID, nine of them were the white businesses, and then there were new ones. Latino businesses were the ones that have been there longer, some have been there for 30, 40, 50, 60 years, they were well-established and supported by the community. While those gentrifying businesses were not supported by the community, they became kind of an island. We call them destination restaurants – people come from the outside. So, they came in at much higher rates, they were not connected to the community, and so when COVID hit, they could not survive. So, it’s those businesses that we [Latino businesses] replaced – and we got even more, so now we are up to 81 [Latino-owned businesses] post-COVID.
Another important thing is that we can’t do this on our own. We have to do it in communities. We all made a goal together to build 2,400 units of affordable housing in the neighborhood to replace the numbers that we lost. We’re up to 1,600 right now and more on the way. However, another challenge that we’re having that we just recently found out is that we have all these units being built in our neighborhood that are 100% affordable, but our people are not getting them – not the Latino community. Only about 40% or 50% of Latinos are getting into these buildings. We’re currently working on policy to fix that and support the Latino community in getting into these buildings, because we have a lot of nonprofits that prepare people to get into buildings and our people need help applying for housing.

Arguello discussed the importance of cultural preservation efforts and the power of Latinos taking up physical space in the Mission, through small businesses, as well as public art, murals, cultural flags, and other identity markers.

Another piece is that we put up as many murals as we can – we have the highest concentration. We are the largest outdoor public gallery in the country; we have 690 murals in the area. So, we’re putting our stamp down, including our flags – we’re here, we’re visible, and now people come to the neighborhood to look at these murals. Our murals are part of claiming territory.

We call them identity markers – we put our name, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, up and down the area. That’s a big part of it. We’re countering the real estate industry’s marketing. So that’s another piece that we can visibly see, and those numbers are important (Arguello, 2023).

Arguello shared that Calle 24 has had an impact on a national level and he is currently working to educate other communities on the Latino Cultural District model. Cultural districts from across the country and even across the world reach out to him to learn more about Calle 24’s model. Arguello leads presentations on Calle 24’s model and hosts tours of the Latino Cultural District, in which he discusses gentrification, displacement, and cultural preservation, so that “people can understand this model and how it works, so they can either replicate it or make it their own” (Arguello, 2023). He emphasized that he does not believe that Calle 24’s model is perfect, but he hopes that people can learn from their approach and adapt this model so that it best supports and benefits their own community. Centering the community is what makes
multiracial coalitions and grassroots organizing so powerful and necessary. Some keys to success include prioritizing community education, capacity building, and empowerment, while also adapting to emerging needs.

Martí shared that while he is more familiar with the impact of housing development and housing preservation, versus the tenant organizing wins, he believes that these are complementary efforts. He highlighted that in the Mission District, there are several hundred units of permanently affordable housing opening each year:

There's been a huge production of affordable housing development in the Mission, [although] maybe not as much as it's needed. But it's been huge compared to the 10 years before that. The last five years have seen the efforts of a lot of organizing to get funding and sites dedicated, and to develop the capacity of our nonprofits – some who did not used to build housing have become major housing providers. So those are huge successes, with several hundred units of permanently affordable housing opening up each year.

There have been some real wins in terms of particular buildings that were facing the possibility of all the tenants being displaced, that have been bought and preserved as affordable housing…And so, I think that the question is: How do we expand those wins? (Martí, 2023).

Martí noted the power of community land trusts, which I discussed in my literature review on page 38 (SFCLT, 2023). Martí shared that a friend of his at Housing Rights Committee argues that “we need to land trust the whole city, take all the speculators out, and have a system where the tenants are able to own all of these properties” (Martí, 2023). He said that while we are a long way from that vision, it highlights the problem of our extractive speculative housing system: “We have this system where landlords are able to use these properties to extract whatever income we get from our meager jobs into their hands, for the ability for us to have a place to live” (Martí, 2023). Martí discussed the importance of incremental changes and highlighted how passing COPA, the Community Opportunity to
Purchase Act, was significant because it represents a shift in how the law looks at private property:

What's really significant is that we were able to put into place a law, a small incremental change around how private property is defined, what is and what we are allowed to impose onto private property. And it wasn't that we were taking away their land or their buildings, but now they are forced to give the city and nonprofits the first right to purchase. So that's a shift in how the law looks at private property. And we can make these into bigger wins down the line” (Martí, 2023).

Theme 3: Case Study: The Marvel in the Mission

One example of a concrete “win” and a case study that demonstrates the power and success of community organizing was the community fight to stop the Monster in the Mission. Through this organizing campaign, Mission residents and community members defeated a proposed luxury housing project, known as the Monster in the Mission – in favor of a community-led project for 100% affordable housing: the Marvel in the Mission. Many interviewees pointed to this fight against the Monster in the Mission as an example of a successful multiracial community organizing campaign. Five interview participants (Zamudio, Sciammas, Smooke, Martí, and Arguello) were involved in this advocacy effort at different stages of the campaign and each of them shared their experiences with me. Zamudio also discussed the current implementation of the project to build the Marvel in the Mission.

Zamudio worked at CJJC when the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission began in 2013. This became the central campaign that Zamudio worked on during her time at CJJC, and she later transitioned into the role of Campaign Director for the Plaza 16 Coalition to further focus on this campaign (Zamudio, 2023). Zamudio shared her experience working on the campaign to stop the Monster in the Mission, including key takeaways and lessons that can be applied to future community organizing campaigns.
Zamudio explained that in the Summer of 2013, a corporate landlord called Maximus paid for an Astroturf organization, which is a fake grassroots organization, to talk to business owners and community members in the Mission District. For about six months, this Astroturf organization worked to seed a harmful, divisive narrative in the neighborhood to gain community support for Maximus to build a luxury development on the plaza at 16th and Mission Streets. This proposed development became known as the Monster in the Mission. Zamudio stated: “they were trying to create narrative conditions for their development to be seen as the solution” (Zamudio, 2023). According to Zamudio (2023), this narrative included demands to “clean up the Mission” and “increase police presence.” In October 2013, community organizers clearly understood that this was an effort by a corporation to try to build a 350-unit, 10-storey tower on the site of the plaza. From October 2013 to February 2014, community organizations, neighborhood advocates, and activists came together to try to stop this development (Zamudio, 2023). Zamudio described a turning point, in which there was a line drawn in the sand among organizers in the Mission between those who turned to harm-reduction efforts versus those who were making radical community demands early on. Siding with the latter, Zamudio emphasized the need for activists to make these radical demands and stand up to the corporate developer, whose proposal would have deeply harmed the neighborhood in the long-term.

Regarding the narrative conditions and landscape surrounding this issue, Zamudio stated that “towards the end of 2013, the eviction crisis was huge, and this was right after the 2012 census had just come out, so the numbers of how many Latinos had been pushed out of the Mission were really fresh” (Zamudio, 2023). Many community members were already living in fear of losing their homes. For these reasons, the Plaza 16 Coalition focused on creating unity
among community members and highlighting the ways in which the Monster in the Mission would further gentrify and harm the Mission District. Following many conversations with neighborhood groups, the organizers formed the Plaza 16 Coalition in 2014, with a big action focused on stopping the Monster in the Mission. “It was also about ensuring that the needs of the folks that were going to be the most impacted by this development – rent control tenants, SRO tenants, and the folks who call the Plaza their home and their living room – were the ones who were really framing and shaping the demands” (Zamudio, 2023). The Plaza 16 Coalition got ahead of the corporate landlord Maximus on the announcement of the development, and it started a strong counter-narrative campaign against the project, which the coalition named “The Monster in the Mission” (Zamudio, 2023). This case study demonstrates how rapid response and counter-narrative work is essential in these fights, and that they must begin with centering community needs for them to be effective. This work culminated in an informational community hearing with the City Planning Commission, held at Mission High School in February 2019.

From the beginning, we had a really strong narrative campaign where we were like, ‘This thing is bad, nobody wants it. We're calling it the Monster in the Mission,’ even before they had announced themselves, so we got ahead of them. We got ahead of them on the announcement, so throughout the six years of this fight, they constantly had to respond to framing that we had set up first.

When people ask what worked about this campaign, first: have whatever conversations you need to have with your community about like the demands, the bottom lines, the non-negotiables – have those earlier on, and get ahead of them on the narrative, so that your demands and your framing for the problem ends up going first. When we have to respond to their [developers’] narratives, to their spin, to their framing, we're in a harder position to have to respond, rather than having them have to respond to our narrative. And then the other thing that Plaza 16 did was basically get significant majority support in the neighborhood, both of neighborhood groups and businesses, as well as residents (Zamudio, 2023).
Building on its counter-narrative to defeat the Monster in the Mission, the Plaza 16 Coalition pivoted to developing a **community-led vision for an alternative affordable housing project**, which they named “The Marvel in the Mission.” Zamudio described how the Plaza 16 Coalition led a **community-based planning process** with Mission residents to engage community voices in shaping and designing this project on the plaza.

At one point, we had to switch from just being against the Monster to being for something. And so, we continued to run an oppositional campaign about what we don't want, but we also started running an **alternative campaign**, and naming that this site is a once in a lifetime opportunity for San Francisco to develop on top of a BART station, at a site this large, in the Mission. Sites this large aren’t that readily available in the Mission, which is actually a very small neighborhood for how many people actually live in it. And so, it was like, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, why would the city — and why would the residents of this neighborhood give that opportunity up to a corporation, who does not care about anyone that lives here?

We began running a **community-based alternative planning process** where we had folks do community planning work, where we were like, ‘What kind of windows do you want? How tall do you want it to be? What do you want on the floor? What do you want on the roof?’ And folks were like, ‘Aren't you going to do that?’ Or ‘isn't somebody else going to do that?’ And it's just like, ‘Sure, somebody else can sharpen it. But it’s you all – the residents here – who are going to live with this building for the next 50, 60, 100 years, so you have to make sure it's what you want it to be. And so, we did that (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio shared an update on current efforts to build the Marvel in the Mission, the **community-based 100% affordable housing development project**. Current efforts to implement the Marvel highlight the need for systemic change and demonstrate the need for incremental wins to achieve justice for our communities. Zamudio highlights how capitalism is a major challenge that hinders efforts to produce housing for social good:

We’re still working towards building the Marvel, our alternative instead of the Monster – that’s what we're still working on. And so, we're now on the other side of that fight, where we fully defeated the Monster. Now we're just trying to get the city to find the money to build deeply affordable housing, which is its own challenge. Being on the production side of housing is its own mess. **Capitalism is a monster and makes it so that everything we do is so difficult, even when we're trying to do things like produce housing for social good.**
Since we defeated the monster, the land has been bought and transferred to the city by another developer in the city. So, it didn't cost the city any money. Now we're just having to figure out, how do we pay for 100% affordable housing on this site? (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio’s key takeaways from the campaign include the following. She hopes that other community organizers can learn from this experience and apply these strategies and tactics to future struggles.

Be clear on your strategy. Make your tactics as diverse as possible. And try to keep the fight where you have power for as long as possible. And think about what it's going to take to get those majority supports because being able to say ‘we have everybody on our side’ was super powerful.

Organizing is a science as much as it is an art. And if we can get really scientific and clear about ‘What is winning? What are the methods of winning through organizing?’ Then things can be recreated. My hope is that what we did with the Plaza 16 Coalition gets recreated in other places.

We were diverse in our tactics. And we were very clear in our strategy. Our strategy was to get majority support of the neighborhood to oppose this development and ensure that the voices of the most impacted are shaping the demand” (Zamudio, 2023).

According to Zamudio, the Coalition’s diverse tactics included direct actions, community meetings, neighborhood outreach and community education, and strong opposition toward the corporate developer:

The planning department wasn't telling people what was going on. So, we had to tell people what was going on, which was useful because then we got to use our framing, instead of the planning department framing, to educate people about what was happening.

Direct actions were both about increasing awareness and knowledge and support from our community, and then also being really conscious about interaction with the developers. Anytime the developer came to the neighborhood, it was not going to be easy for them. Anytime the developers had something that they were saying about the project, we responded right away (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio noted that another key piece of the campaign was keeping the fight out of City Hall because it allowed for more community control and power. Zamudio notes that while it is a serious injustice, gentrification is technically legal. As discussed in my introduction and
literature review, gentrification is created through **intentional** city planning and policymaking, so keeping the fight out of city planning proved to be a valuable part of this campaign.

We have to **keep the fights in the places that we have power for as long as we can.** The Monster fight was five, six years long, and it never went to the planning department. We kept it out of City Hall for five, six years, because part of it was our own, like power calculus. We knew that if we kept it out of City Hall, if you kept it out of the code and permits bureaucracy and the zoning bureaucracy, then we would have more power.

Once a development gets into the groove of the planning department, communities have less power, because **gentrification is incredibly unjust, and it is a violence on our communities, but it’s not illegal.** And so, once the fight for our community’s stability gets into the machine of a city system, we lose a bunch of our power, because **what they’re doing is technically legal.** So, keeping it out of the legal system, permitting system, or the planning system was actually huge.

This project died before it even got into permitting. But it still costs them [Maximus] every year, they’ve had to pay rents on that site every year, they’ve had to try and finance this project every year. We made it more and more expensive for them because they had to hire a community engagement team at one point to respond to what we were doing (Zamudio, 2023).

Charlie Sciammas was also involved in the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission, in the earlier stages of the campaign, during his time working with People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER). Sciammas highlighted that the Monster in the Mission was a **development proposal that was very out of touch with community needs** and he emphasized the **power of community organizing in this long fight:**

The Monster in the Mission was definitely an example of a development proposal that was really out of touch with the real issues in the neighborhood, and that forced the community to react. And fortunately, you had a community that was able to really flex its organizing muscle and to be much more proactive, and sustain that level of organizing over many years, which you can't take for granted. Because that's very challenging to do (Sciammas, 2023).

Sciammas also named the **public community hearing with the planning department,** held at Mission High School, as one of the strengths of this organizing campaign. The campaign was effective in mobilizing and forging connections among a diverse group of community
members, with over 1,000 in attendance at the hearing. Sciammas says, “That’s one of the things that I would definitely lift up as one of the beautiful successes of that campaign: the ability to really reach much more deeply into the neighborhood and across the neighborhood” (Sciammas, 2023). He discussed the importance of preserving public lands for public good and engaging in community-based partnerships with community-based developers focusing on meeting neighborhood needs.

I would say that was a real strength of the organizing process. And the fact that there was public land, it's a BART station, and how important it really is, given that we've had so much luxury speculative development that has overrun the neighborhood. It's so incredibly important to hold on to our last few public land resources, and to ensure that we can really safeguard them for more community serving development that is going to serve to strengthen and stabilize and expand resources and opportunities for people in the neighborhood. So definitely that 'public land for public good' framework was very important. And I think also just being able to just name how unresponsive the private developer proposal was to the real issues and needs in the neighborhood.

One of the principles that we've used a lot in our organizing is: We don't want to hang back and wait for a developer to come in and offer a proposal and then just be invited to a reading to share our comments. We actually want to be the ones that are rolling up our sleeves, bringing others together at the table, and developing our community's vision for the kind of development that is going to really meet the needs in the neighborhood. And then we want to partner with a developer or hire a developer, to implement that vision. So not the other way around.

And really trying to figure out how we can have those community-based partnerships with community-based developers that are going to allow us to do things like the Marvel in the Mission, because we can't take that for granted, either. It really takes a lot of building trust. It takes a lot of relationship building and really developing like good systems of accountability, to have the community developers work closely with community-based organizations to develop a model where we're really figuring out how we can act collectively to move forward a community-based vision of bringing together different skill sets. And it takes hard work and a lot of intention for that to happen. So, I really wanted to name that as something that's very important.

And sometimes, it's hard because the city government does its best to undermine that. They really create rules of the game that are forcing a lot of the community developers to jump through all these hoops, in a way that sometimes makes them less able to be accountable to community-based needs. And we have to figure out how to navigate to that and challenge that when needed (Sciammas, 2023).
Joseph Smooke stated that strengths of the Monster in the Mission campaign include **intentionality around community education, base-building, addressing disinformation**, as well as **putting forth a community vision** for an affordable housing project at the plaza. These strengths highlight how centering community needs and voices is essential for success.

It wasn't so unique in that organizations came together to fight a threat, because that was pretty common. But it was the **intentionality** around popular education, around base building, around making sure to address all the disinformation that was spreading in the community, from Maximus and their communications team. That they were really diligent in making sure to network to find out how those messages were propagating, where they were coming from, who the targets were, and then making sure to get out there to counter message, counter organize, and disrupt.

Another part that was really successful was putting forth a **community vision**: A lot of times when communities are fighting against a threat, they're just constantly fighting against the threat. Whereas the Plaza 16 Coalition spent so much effort and time in creating a community vision, and that's why the Marvel became a concept that everybody embraced because they really felt like they had a vision. And it wasn't just a one-liner of affordable housing immediately. It was a real proposal for what would build community and what would build affordability and stability at that site and to support the school (Marshall Elementary). The school was involved in that vision. The actual Plaza was involved in that vision. It wasn't just housing. It was housing as part of the community. So yeah, it was really compelling (Smooke, 2022).

Smooke discussed how the multimedia journalism organization contributed to the **communications strategy** for the community fight against the Monster in the Mission. He described how People Power Media supported the coalition in developing a communication strategy to support their organizing goals and a set of messages to mobilize a broad group of constituents. Smooke also shared how he supported the Plaza 16 Coalition through his work as a legislative aide with Supervisor David Campos’ Office, in addition to the various roles he played at People Power Media.

We were brought in just to report on the Plaza 16 Coalition. We published a number of pieces in both writing and video as well. People Power Media was publishing about the Plaza 16 Coalition, and then they brought us in to help [with the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission]. They wanted us to transition from reporting on what the coalition was working on to helping with their communication strategies. So, we started
transitioning our role from reporting on the coalition’s work to actually providing technical support around communications and organizing.

The primary thing we did was that we helped to create a system where they [Plaza 16 Coalition] could connect their analysis to communications first, so creating a set of messages around their analysis and around our goals for the coalition. So that was one part of it, and then tailoring the communication around how to get the message out to different audiences. So really understanding who did they want to communicate with? And what were those different constituencies interested in hearing? And then basically taking their analysis, their vision and goals, and the different messages that they wanted to articulate around all of those and making sure that they were structured in a way that would communicate effectively to each of the different groups that they were trying to communicate with, to build allies, to build their base – all those different strategies. So, it was a communication strategy that was developed to support their organizing goals (Smooke, 2022).

Smooke noted that the Plaza 16 Coalition had already developed the name of “The Monster in the Mission” when People Power Media began supporting the coalition’s communication strategy. Smooke said that both names for the “Monster” and the “Marvel in the Mission” were developed through community meetings, with input from community groups involved in the coalition. He noted that the Plaza 16 Coalition and other groups used similar branding for other fights against harmful developments, when they found that this branding was effective in this campaign (Smooke, 2022).

Martí shared that he was involved in the fight at the very beginning of the organizing and building of the Plaza 16 Coalition. He discussed that the campaign was successful in mobilizing two different constituencies to stop the proposed development.

To me, I think what was really neat about that particular fight compared to other struggles, some successful, some not, around big developments, was the way that the coalition brought together both Latinx, mostly family advocates, for Latino families in the Mission District, and advocates for folks experiencing homelessness, or who are extremely low-income folks living in the surrounding SROs. Two constituencies that share the same areas, more or less, but have different needs, and oftentimes different goals. And then there were other constituencies, as well as some of the maybe more enlightened small businesses, but those two are something that I think we don't always see in organizing around development (Martí, 2023).
Martí noted that one of the major challenges of this organizing campaign was the corporate developers’ strategy to divide the community, which included hiring local consultants and trying to recruit local youth to represent the landlords’ side and create divisions within the neighborhood. As other community organizers I interviewed have discussed, Martí highlighted that a strength of the campaign was bringing the City Planning Commission to Mission High School for a community hearing on the proposed development, the Monster in the Mission.

One of the things about all of these struggles is how it exposes the inequities in the system and the planning processes: who it excludes, who it invites, whose voices are heard. So, one of the tactical goals in that campaign was to bring the planning of this shift out to the neighborhood rather than trying to mobilize folks to show up to a hearing at City Hall…One of the highlights of the campaign was when the Planning Commission came out and had their meeting on just this one item, at Mission High School.

There was a huge turnout of folks. And the other side turned out quite a few folks, who we thought were all paid to be there. But this was the outpouring of organizing, where residents were able to come out and express what they really want (Martí, 2023).

Martí also discussed the alternative community vision and community-based planning process used to develop a 100% affordable housing project.

I think the other side of the tactics were turning from what we did not want, the Monster, to envisioning what we did want and calling it the Marvel in the Mission. They had some workshops where community members could lay out goals to have control of this site and what they would want there. And that's where the cross-class, cross-racial aspect of the coalition came through in that what was envisioned was family, affordable housing, supportive housing for folks who are formerly homeless, and common spaces where they could meet and interact. And that is now going to be the beginning organizing element for the project that’s going to happen (Martí, 2023).

Arguello explained how Calle 24 got involved in the fight against the Monster in the Mission. Calle 24 created a language committee, in which council members and committee members provide community updates, including updates on developments coming into the area. Then Calle 24 “would address it with developers to either fight them, work with them, or have
them sell the property to the city, if it did not fit our community” (Arguello, 2023). According to
Arguello, the Monster was the biggest development the community stopped, and the Plaza 16 Coalition decided to fight it because it was the biggest one coming in. “We were part of the
coalition when it first started, and I think there were like 100 organizations against the Monster –
it was huge” (Arguello, 2023). While the Plaza is located outside of the Cultural District, it is
still within the Mission District and it would affect Calle 24’s work: “It starts a domino effect, so
we decided to join the fight. The Plaza 16 Coalition was brilliant, and it sent a strong
message to other developers” (Arguello, 2023). Arguello shared key takeaways and strengths of
the Plaza 16 Coalition’s organizing strategies.

I thought the work that they did and the team that they created was brilliant because
Maximus, who was the developer, tried to divide the community by providing funds
and organizations through a strategy to buy the community. And they did win a small
group of folks. So, the ones that were fighting it [The Monster], were very careful not to
attack them, because they were also the victims, when they saw it. And so, they did it
very carefully, not to go after them directly or anything like that…they even hired our
community folks, our elders, to lead the campaign. It’s really sad, because some of these
elders in the community have worked for decades, fighting for our community, and it was
too bad that they were able to convince them.

[The Plaza 16 Coalition’s] marketing was done well. They got some money to be able to
hire an organizer, which was definitely needed to just focus on that one fight. And that
battle went on for five, seven years.

And they did something that was hardly ever done. They had the planning commission
come into the neighborhood for the hearing, instead of the community going into City
Hall. So that was another great piece they did. They did a lot of education in the
community, which was great. They came to our group and presented on the issues. It was
all the organizers: they went to the nonprofits, schools, and to educate the government.
And as they did that, they got more support and more support. And so, the day of the
hearing, which was at Mission High School, about 1,000 or 2,000 people showed up. It
was huge – hours and hours of testimony…It was overwhelmingly folks from the
neighborhood…Nothing was passed [and the Monster was defeated]. There was too
much opposition (Arguello, 2023).

Arguello shared some key takeaways from the fight to stop the Monster in the
Mission that also apply to future struggles, including employing diverse strategies and tactics,
producing, and preserving affordable housing, and educating youth on the need for cross-racial solidarity.

The biggest thing I learned was, there’s no magic bullet. It’s a lot of things that have to work together. It’s layered. There’s not one thing to do with arrogance. And that’s why we layer protections in place, all these different things addressing different issues…It’s almost like a virus. For example, COVID or HIV – you have to attack it from different areas and dismantle their mechanisms…There’s no cure for it, but you can manage it through all these different areas, and eventually it weakens…

We have become a gentrified neighborhood. And we’re holding down the fort right now, trying to keep it at bay. It’s constant and it doesn't stop…We lost 14,000 in the Mission, and now we’re kind of stabilized. So, it's constant. And now we’re trying out other strategies and working on bringing people back. Affordable housing has been doing great…And it’s still a drop in the bucket.

We've learned a lot from the past too, especially if you're on here long enough. They've divided us before, and usually division comes from the outside and from the inside. Those of us that have been here for a while, we tell our young folks that the only way you’ll survive is coming together…We have to make sure our young folks understand that history and understand how important it is the differences that we have. We have to show that strength. It's more effective than when we're divided. That's an important piece (Arguello, 2023).

A. Other Community Organizing Case Studies

Interviewees Mejia, Hirn, Laberinto, and Smooke discussed additional case studies of community organizing efforts they have been involved in that demonstrate the power of multiracial organizing. This section includes an overview of each case study and highlights why they are significant to this research.

Mejia shared a story about her first experience with the Veritas Tenants Association (VTA) using the Right to Organize (RTO) legislation, passed in April 2022, to organize a building of tenants (Mejia, 2022). Mejia discussed the importance of helping tenants understand their rights as well as how the RTO supports and strengthens tenants in negotiating with their landlords, with the power of community on their side.
Our organization and one of our leads, Brad Hirn in the Veritas Tenants Association, they wrote up the Right to Organize legislation. And my understanding is that they wrote it the first time, and it didn’t pass, a few years ago, maybe three years ago. Last year, it finally passed, and it came into effect in April.

And so, their plan was always to organize every Veritas building, it's like 300 buildings in San Francisco. They're the biggest landlord. And then, I was tasked with figuring out what buildings we were going to organize.

The first one that came up this year was a building that was for sale. And actually, there was a list that came out last year, in October or November of buildings that were for sale. But when I had gone out to see where they were, there were about 10 buildings in the Mission, and when I got there, they were all empty. And so, they had been on the market for a while, and there were already empty units. So, some people had already either accepted a buyout, or they probably had self-evicted, because of the lack of knowledge around what to do when your building is sold. You don’t immediately have to move; you have some rights. But folks don’t have access to that information, so anything could have happened.

When that happened in March, when the building came up for sale at 234 Mission, I was like, let's see if I could use the RTO with this and stop the sale. And so, it was just going in there and meeting the tenants, organizing a meeting, and signing a petition. The RTO is supposed to be that five units or more can start their own tenants’ association, and then request to meet with their landlord. And so, the request is going to be like, ‘Why are you selling the building? What's going on?’ And that conversation took six months to finally have with the landlord.

There are ways through using the RTO that we can go to the Rent Board and put pressure on the landlord for not meeting with the association or acknowledging the association, you can file or decrease in housing services. But the process through the rent board is just not ideal. In my experience, it's not a place where tenants win. So, I was like, let's just keep asking for the meeting.

And through that process, we ended up meeting one buyer who wanted to meet with the tenants. It was a nonprofit that wanted to buy the building. And they weren't really being transparent. And so, the tenants rejected that offer. And it was the first time that the landlord realized, ‘the tenants actually have the power, you don't.’ And mainly because their first buyer was through the small sites program, and in San Francisco, all the tenants have to certify their income, do income certification, and 75% of the building tenants have to be in agreement that the that they want to go in through this program. But they're not told that they lose their rent control and that their rent could go up like 30%. And so, when I came in with that knowledge, the tenants were like, ‘Absolutely not, why would we agree to this?’ And then the landlord was just adamant that he was going to sell it to them, but then they couldn't, because they couldn't get that income certification. And that was in June or July. And then the landlord finally met with us in September.
So that was just an example, like, let's use this RTO. And let's see if we can get this meeting. And we ended up getting two meetings, right, we got the meeting with the buyer, and we rejected them. And then we got the meeting with the landlord, who was not willing to really budge or give answers. But slowly after, he started doing the repairs. And then just in November, two units were empty, and so he's rented out one of them. One of the units had been empty for the whole year. And if you're renting out a unit, well, you're definitely not selling your building. You can't sell it. Like the idea is that you sell it with less tenants, not with more. And so, he added another tenant, and then he took the sell off. So that was through my first attempt of using the Right to Organize legislation (Mejia, 2022).

Hirn discussed a citywide campaign for VTA building negotiations, working toward the goal of securing a rent decrease in buildings across the city (Hirn, 2023). Hirn shared how this campaign aims to support rent-burdened tenants and boost collective power for tenants through associations like the VTA.

We have a set of buildings in the VTA that are in the Mission. And primarily Spanish-speaking, working-class tenants, and members of the VTA. And right now, those tenants are part of a citywide effort to negotiate a contract on rent increases. So, while it's a citywide effort, there are definitely particular neighborhoods and buildings that are far more severely rent-burdened than others.

And the tenants in the Mission District buildings, when we did a survey about rent increases, they reported very high levels of rent burden, meaning how much income they paid towards their rent each month. And so, severe rent burden is a tenant paying more than 50% of their monthly income for rent. And for Spanish-speaking members of the VTA, they reported a 92% rate of severe rent burden. So, the goal of this campaign is to actually bring rent to the bargaining table, between the association and Veritas, the landlord and actually negotiate a contract that would lower rents and set even more sustainable rent levels and rent increases than what local law might provide.

So, these are rent-controlled buildings. But that doesn't mean that a sophisticated landlord can't figure out ways to raise rents more than tenants can afford. So, this is an effort to bring these issues to the negotiating table, where tenants may have more leverage collectively, and negotiate a better deal – a fair deal. But the Spanish-speaking members in the Mission in particular, they’re the most deeply impacted and they have a lot to gain from the association winning a good contract.

All VTA buildings are part of the campaign. That was how it was organized and launched; it was a citywide campaign involving all of the VTA buildings across the neighborhoods. So, the Mission buildings participate alongside the Tenderloin buildings, alongside the Richmond District buildings, and others (Hirn, 2023).
Laberinto discussed REP’s involvement in the city’s first housing element campaign focused on racial and social equity (Laberinto, 2022). Laberinto shared how REP has been able to put pressure on the city to build racial and social equity into the plan, and secure major commitments for affordable housing that may not have been possible without REP’s advocacy.

In terms of REP, we do take on a lot of reactive campaigns, there’s inevitably something that happens or comes up, like legislation or new proposed development, that presents a threat to our communities that we have to pay attention to and push for equity outcomes for. But in terms of a big campaign, I'll focus on the housing element one. That has been a two-year campaign for us, so just about as long as I've been on board.

The housing element is our city's housing blueprint, that details for the next eight years, how much housing we have to build with some actions and priorities. And what’s really interesting about this housing element in particular, is the Planning Department has said this is going to be the first housing element focused on racial and social equity. And we said, ‘okay, that is a really nice statement, how are you going to have real equity?’ And for two years as we’ve been observing it, despite there being the word equity thrown in 5,000 times, it really is largely a market-based plan, that our communities see as ‘Dang, this is really going to contribute to continue to displace folks,’ and there are cases of demolitions that we're seeing. San Francisco’s a really built out city, there is no way in which we're going to build 82,000 homes without demolishing some. And if that's going to happen, how do we ensure protections for tenants? How do we ensure that people’s homes aren't destroyed, and they're not completely pushed out of the city?

So, in the housing element, despite its stated goal of racial and social equity, we weren't seeing a lot of that actually baked into the plan. So, for two years, we’ve really been trying to make sure it focuses on racial and social equity. We've been doing our very best to challenge the actions on the list to really put in there some affordable housing provisions get some commitments to affordable housing that the city wasn't acting on, despite them having to build 47,000 affordable housing units as part of the goal from the state. So, for two years, we've been pushing on that, and it was just adopted at the planning commission last week. And it goes to the full board in January. So, it is still in process.

But as a coalition, we were able to get some major commitments that we had not seen before as a city to affordable housing. And though we don't think it is perfect or that it goes far enough, without our advocacy, we truly don’t know whether it would have happened. We have some commitments for land banking. Which wasn't going to be put in there before, but land banking, as a process of seeing ‘where are there some sites that are on public lands? How do we purchase them, and people hold on to them until we can develop on it?’ So, we have a pipeline of affordable housing development.
We have pushed for a lot of things we've been pushing before, but really trying to challenge getting rid of community and put in development approvals. So, retaining community voice, advocating for expanding state resources for affordable housing, making sure that there's some affordable housing capacity on the west side of the city, creating a system to track affordable housing investments.

So, we push them and there's way more to be done, and it's still in process. It's not fully adopted yet. But that is something that we've really been focusing on because as I said, **land use of housing is such a huge part of our lives.** And this housing element, of course, is something that's so big that's going to direct how the city builds housing. And for the next eight years, our committee will be a part of deciding what that looks like, how it impacts us, and how we can really refocus it on ‘if we're going to build, and we're going to do all these things to develop our city, we need to have a say in what that looks like’ (Laberinto, 2022).

Smooke discussed efforts he was involved in through his work organizing with the South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN), as well as creating an animated feature with People Power Media called **Priced Out**, which focuses on educating people about the housing affordability crisis and changing the narrative around housing (Smooke, 2022).

I know it's not in the Mission, but I'm on the **Board of the South and Market Community Action Network** and there was a huge multi-year campaign fighting against a development called the 5M development at 5th & Mission. So, there was the 5M fight and there was a Trinity Plaza fight. Those were huge in SoMa. And actually, the Plaza 16 Coalition got involved in the fight against 5M. So, that’s a good example of a fight on the development side.

**Priced Out:** We had been publishing a bunch about the housing crisis and housing affordability. We have done some analytical pieces that have gotten pretty massive circulation, hundreds of thousands of views all over the world, lots of engagement. And what we were noticing though, is that even though those pieces had circulation, we felt that we were providing critical information to our core audience, but we didn't feel like it was really changing the conversation. And so, we constantly were getting questions of, ‘okay, your analysis is really thorough, and it's very compelling.’ But we kept getting feedback from community organizations that they were still needing to have something that they could use to **communicate these complicated issues and complicated analysis to communities effectively.**

And so, I don't know we were just kind of brainstorming what that would look like. And we thought, well, maybe a cartoon would do that. Because cartoons are really effective at doing a couple of things. One is **depersonalizing a narrative.** So, we found that for the other side, like if they didn't like an expert, like an expert interview that we had, they would just start attacking the person. It’s a common strategy, and then they try to tear
down that person and delegitimize their expertise by attacking that person for really petty things. And so, we thought, well, let's create a cartoon, it's hard to tear down a fictional character you know, and then it's also very disarming like people will kind of retain a lot of information. And even if the dialogue is kind of situational, people will still kind of engaged with it, because the visual helps to kind of break down those barriers.

And so, that's where we created it. And during the creation of Priced Out, we had a lot of community interaction while we were developing the script, and then we did a whole community read-through to get to get feedback on the script before we finalized it. And that community read-through was super, super important. We had like over 100 people that we gathered, different people had different roles and they literally read through the whole script and then everybody like who was there over 100 people just kind of engaged in all kinds of feedback like: ‘Oh, yeah, I like that, or you should change that, or their character doesn't quite feel real enough.’ And that's how we finally were able to finalize the script.

And then since we've released it, we've won several awards. I can't remember how many right now, it's at least half a dozen awards. It's been in over a dozen film festivals, but we've also directly shown it through workshops to probably almost 5,000 people now. So yeah, every time we show it, there's a completely different conversation, because it depends on the audiences, what the kind of format is: Is it just a one-off presentation. Is it part of a curriculum or a set of workshops? Is there a panel discussion? Every time we show it, it, there's a completely different discussion around it. And so, we usually just kind of lead the discussion based on whatever the objectives are of either the organization who's hosting or the people who are in the audience. And so yeah, it's been effective in opening up the conversation around what housing is and how it works. And people always have tons of questions.

**Theme 4: How Community-Based Organizations Engage in Anti-Displacement Coalitions**

This section focuses on how CBOs are engaging in these three citywide anti-displacement coalitions: SFADC, CCHO, and REP-SF. For example, Zamudio discussed how HRC works as an anchor organization of SFADC. Zamudio discussed how SFADC began as “a way for housing organizations in the city to work together and have a better way to coordinate our work” (Zamudio, 2023). Zamudio explained how coalition members coordinate with one another on policy priorities:

When we were talking to legislators, primarily the Board of Supervisors, about policy or legislation campaigns, we were also talking about it with each other, for coordination and for power building. And also, just to make space for an actual flow of conversation… Sometimes, a group will be like, we want to pass this particular law, and it sounds great
based on who they work with, the tenants that they're working with and the base that they're building. But it might actually be really bad for other tenants in the city (Zamudio, 2023).

Goldberg explained that **SFADC has a completely voluntary structure** that supports housing justice organizations and other mission-driven CBOs to connect with one another and advance toward a shared vision (Goldberg, 2023). She also discussed the strength of a city like San Francisco, that has a rich history of community-based organizations working in particular communities to address their specific challenges.

Groups are a part of it if they feel like it benefits them, they fit the mission, and they find the value in the shared space. Some coalitions are held together through joint funding or other kinds of things that are sort of like the glue that ties it together. In this case, the glue is a shared purpose, which means we have to constantly be reassessing and aiming toward that. I think a shared sense of long-term vision and clarity about how we plan to get there is what a coalition like this needs.

**San Francisco is pretty special** in the sense that there is a really wide range of small organizations that are really rooted in a particular community that are doing this kind of tenant rights work and they all have very different styles. They have very different sorts of cultures and ways of approaching the work. They have different communities that they are serving. And I think that's really important and valuable. I think it's really good to have different kinds of places that different communities can go, so that you can go where you feel more comfortable and more seen, whether that's because the services are happening in-language or because it's in the neighborhood you live in, or because it's just sort of like the vibe that fits yours better. So, I think those kinds of specialties are the strength of our city.

There's a number of organizations that do tenant rights counseling, tenant rights legal defense, or organizing for tenant rights. I’d say about half the organizations are that and half the organizations are community-based groups, that housing ended up being something they're working on, because that's what’s important to their bases. I think, if you're working with working-class communities, communities of color, immigrant communities in the city, you're going to probably have to work on housing in some way, because that's just such a major survival issue for everyone (Goldberg, 2023).

Goldberg discussed the purposes of the Anti-Displacement Coalition (ADC), including how the coalition amplifies the work of individual CBOs and helps these groups collectively advance a citywide agenda focused on housing justice. Goldberg shared how SFADC provides
space for individual organizations to identify trends and threats and share resources to address problems and priorities collectively.

There’s a wide range of groups in the coalition, but all of them have in common that tenants’ rights work and housing justice work is a core piece of what they’re doing, in one way or another. The coalition serves a couple purposes. First, it’s a way for all of these groups to amplify their own priorities. All of these groups are really good at serving the communities they work with or organize with. But they have to be able to connect and talk to people around the city in order to move a citywide agenda.

The Anti-Displacement Coalition is sort of a formalized space for people to share some of those trends and threats that they’re seeing on the ground and look for broader patterns and threats that we might address collectively. Part of it is about being able to zoom out one step and get a little bit more of a bird’s eye view of what’s happening, what the conditions are, that are impacting the really specific work people are doing.

Part of it is about pooling resources. For example, if we want to close a loophole that’s being exploited right now, we’re going to all have to work together to pass legislation at the Board or whatever it might be, to close the loophole. And between all of us, we probably have the ability to move the supermajority of Supervisors on the Board, because we represent so many different neighborhoods and communities. And so, there’s that pooling, and then there’s the pooling of resources to train each other in different areas of expertise (Goldberg, 2023).

Goldberg discusses how SFADC provides space for training, collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and skills-building among like-minded organizations. The coalition also consists of committees focused on tenant counseling and legal service, policy priorities, and community organizing.

For example, we have what’s called a Counselor Network, which is basically a mutual aid network for tenant rights counselors from clinics all over the city. And the hope is that no matter where a tenant goes in the city for help, they’re going to get high-quality information. Because we’re all training each other. We’re all invested in everybody else’s clinics right now too. And I think that’s unique. I think there’s plenty of places or cities that you could go to where people would have a competitive feeling about that and be like, ‘we want to be known as the best clinic in the city and the one you send everybody to,’ but here there’s a real movement orientation and community orientation, and respect for each other’s ability to meet different people where they’re at. That translates to people being willing to train each other. They let their counselors shadow each other’s counselors and offer free trainings to one another and things like that.
We have a mutual aid space for counselors and legal service workers. And we have a policy committee that’s working on advancing shared policy priorities together. And then we have an organizing committee that focuses on mutual aid and building skills around organizing. We’ll do group tenant conventions, where we bring together members of different organizations to have shared conventions with each other. And we’re currently working on an organizing toolkit for tenants who want to utilize the new legislation that we recently passed, which gives a new set of rights to tenancy form and associations and buildings (Goldberg, 2023).

Interviewees discussed how they engage in various aspects of citywide coalitions like SFADC. For example, Hirn shared how HRC contributes to the coalition’s work through advancing policy priorities and participating in the Counselor Network. Hirn discusses the value of mutual aid, peer training, and educating tenants, including in multiple languages, to ensure they can advocate for themselves.

One of the major areas of the ADC’s work is around public policy and passing new laws at the city level. So, for us, a lot of the ideas for a new law come from a pattern that we’re seeing or hearing from tenants where we were in the buildings and neighborhoods where we work. So oftentimes, we will come to the ADC through that process and say, ‘Hey, this is something that we want to consider moving as a piece of policy’ and that then becomes potentially like a coalition-wide effort. So, in that sense, we help kind of shape policy and help advocate for legislation that other groups want to bring to the table and see passed.

ADC also has a counselor network. All of our counselors work with that network in various ways to train for peer training purposes, but also for analyzing trends and data that come through all the different clinics in the city…Our tenant counseling clinic is run by volunteer counselors for the most part, as well as staff counselors. The clinic runs on a self-defense for tenants model where we’re trying to make sure tenants have the tools they need to advocate for themselves. It runs in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Russian (Hirn, 2023).

In terms of People Power Media’s work with SFADC, Laberinto and Smooke both discussed how their organization engages in the SFADC through land-use analysis, popular education, and media. Laberinto explained that there is some overlap among the coalitions she is involved in: “It’s interesting because SFADC is a member of REP-SF, and People Power Media is a member of SFADC” (Laberinto, 2022). She shared, “Joseph [Smooke] was once the
policy chair of SFADC’s policy committee, so he has a lot of expertise and policy experience as a legislative aide, and he worked in affordable housing as an architect” (Laberinto, 2022). They discussed how SFADC advances policy, including an example of a recent policy win and ongoing priority for the coalition, the Right to Organize legislation.

When folks come to [people. power. media], it could be for land-use analysis or popular education. We created an animated feature called Priced Out that talks about why you can’t afford housing in San Francisco. So, ADC often comes to us for that kind of political housing development analysis for the coalition…We also do some media work for them, such as helping them produce some videos and do interviews with people, as we have expertise in media and filmmaking…For example, right now we’re working on Right to Organize tenant videos focused on the legislation passed in April.

I want to say how much ADC’s groups really led the fight for the Veritas Tenants Association to bring the Right to Organize to the ballot meeting. So, landlords and big corporate landlords can’t retaliate – if tenants want to organize, they have the right to do so under San Francisco law. So, we’re helping them produce videos on the Right to Organize and how a tenant can actually use it (Laberinto, 2022).

Smooke spoke about the structure and “organic quality” of the REP-SF coalition, which also includes clear processes for decision-making that was established at the very beginning of the coalition (Smooke, 2022). Smooke also discussed how organizations may join the REP coalition and how the coalition is structured without hierarchy to promote equity.

Another thing I think that has served us really well is the organic quality of the coalition. Decision-making is very clear. We set up a very clear process for making decisions as a coalition or committing to taking a position on various issues. So, if somebody within the coalition wants for REP to take a position on something, they have to initiate the process in a certain way and they have to respect the whole coalition. And sometimes the coalition has said ‘no, we’re not going to take a position on that.’

For organizations to join the coalition, we don't have any criteria, except you need to read the vision statement. If you want to be part of REP, you need to read all of the surrounding documents, and then it's really up to your organization if you want to be part of REP. So, it's not up to REP to accept organizations or reject organizations. If anybody wants to join, and their organization says, ‘Yeah, this is what this is and why we want to be a part of it,’ then they can join. It's really up to their own internal process. So that's actually been very helpful so there's no weird dynamic within REP around membership. And like I said before, there's no hierarchy, so there's no steering committee or governing
committees at all. We just want to make sure that the culture of the coalition is very organic and very equitable (Smooke, 2022).

Martí discussed how “CCHO sees its strategic role within a movement of different forces working to make progressive change in the city” (Martí, 2023). Martí explained that SFADC came out of a particular battle CCHO was engaged in, along with the SF Tenants Union and Housing Rights Committee. The campaign focused on fighting against an effort “led by moderate members of the Board to open up the condo conversion limitation in San Francisco, which was passed in the 1970s by a lot of tenant organizations, to allow only 200 units per year to be converted from rental to condo” (Martí, 2023). Martí argues that this campaign helped to “strengthen the strategic relationships between nonprofit housing developers and tenant advocates,” and from this campaign, community leaders decided to create the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition as “an ongoing effort to maintain those relationships…In 2014, we held a citywide tenant convention” (Martí, 2023).

The top two things that came from tenants themselves was (1) an anti-speculation tax, which CCHO was one of the prime movers for as part of a housing slate, which unfortunately lost. But even in losing, it did have an impact in slowing down evictions, because I think the owners saw that they were in a precarious position in the public eye. And (2) the COPA legislation was identified by tenants as a campaign that we should all work on jointly” (Martí, 2023).

**Theme 5: Resources & Funding Needed to Support CBOs & Coalitions**

Interviewees elevated the need for funding and resources to support community-based organizations and coalitions in the housing justice and anti-displacement movement. Community organizers emphasized the need for consistent streams of funding to build organizing capacity and expand this work of addressing the speculative housing system, the needs of specific communities experiencing racial capitalism, and corporate landlords exploiting tenants across the city.
Goldberg discussed resources and funding needed to support CBOs and coalitions like SFADC, including **investments in movement infrastructure and building organizing capacity**.

I think physical space to be together – actually having physical space to gather and return to that feels like our own is a huge resource, and it’s harder to come by, so I think there’s a real value there.

In terms of funding that’s available for groups – it’s all for direct services, basically – that is what you get funded to do. And I think we need some type of movement investment in building the infrastructure to really scale up our organizing capacity…A resource we need is **money that supports real, deep, long-term structure building around organizing**, recognizing that even the strongest unions that have been around for decades have staff organizers…Having people set aside, actually doing the work, and getting paid to do the work makes a big difference (Goldberg, 2023).

Hirn also discussed the need for “**avenues of sustained funding over time**,” rather than “one-off grants or being overly reliant on city funding, which comes with its own strings” (Hirn, 2023). Hirn discussed how he looks to the labor movement and labor unions as an example and thinks about how we can apply lessons learned to the housing justice movement. He discusses how the labor movement has a consistent stream of funding that has helped it become self-sustaining and contribute as a funder to rent control campaigns.

For example, I don’t think it’s any accident that the labor movement has been a funder of rent control campaigns in California, because the **labor movement is self-sustaining** in many ways, because of member dues. And so, how do we learn from other movements that have become more self-sustaining, and fund our work through our own people? We’re largely city funded [at HRC], but we don’t want to stay that way. So, then we have to think about foundation funding or individual donors or things like that. And it just opens up a whole domain of work that needs its own staff and expertise…

At the end of the day, I personally look to the labor movement and labor unions to see **how you fund a movement long-term**. But it certainly takes a lot to get there. The labor movement is also constantly under attack, and it is struggling to rebuild its presence in the country. But in California, it’s the link between labor unions supporting tenants’ rights and supporting rent control campaigns with funding. That was a big deal when labor unions started to do that. And we were able to start resourcing campaigns for rent control with the help of unions (Hirn, 2023).
Zamudio discussed the need for connections and **resources to build a movement ecosystem and organizing capacity** focused on ensuring long-term success.

I think having connections or having a way to build out our movement ecosystem, so that there’s a place where young organizers get trained, and where they can practice and can experiment. We need spaces where getting trained is their focus, so that after a couple years of being in an organization and getting trained, they can then apply for organizer jobs, and they can be effective organizers in campaigns and community-based organizations. That's a big one. At Housing Rights, we struggle with being able to both train new organizers and also run our campaigns and do the work we need to do – so being able to have a place where folks are actually getting trained and supported to be able to take on these organizing jobs, if necessary (Zamudio, 2023).

Zamudio also emphasized the need for funding to do this work. She discussed the **strengths and limitations of city funding**, as well as the importance of being “deeply funded through a lot of different sources”, including independent sources of funding that don’t have a ton of strings attached, so that we can do big bold things” (Zamudio, 2023).

We need a lot of money. We need resources to be able to do this work. And we need resources that are independent from the targets that we’re trying to take on. Housing Rights is currently funded by the City of San Francisco, which is fantastic. Because I deeply believe that the money we pay into our taxes is our money, and we should use it for the things we need. So, I am actually very proud to be funded by the city. And there’s also limitations to what the city sometimes tells us we can and cannot do. We try to navigate that in the way that puts the needs and demands of our tenants that we organize first. And it’s also just a tension that we continuously navigate (Zamudio, 2023).

Arguello emphasized that funding is an ongoing issue for his organization. He also noted the **limitations of city funding** and emphasized the importance of **securing unrestricted funds for community organizing work**:

Funds are always an issue. Always. So, one of the things that we did was work with our supervisor to create a permanent stream of funding for cultural districts. So, we get our base funding from the hotel tax. A portion of the hotel tax gets divided amongst cultural districts…It’s basically money for staffing and overhead…Funds are always a challenge (Arguello, 2023).

Laberinto discussed **measures that the city can take**, particularly focused on communities on the west side of San Francisco, including **directing funds to support capacity**
building and taking advantage of opportunities to purchase buildings and stabilize tenants through affordable housing.

There’s so much the city can do to support folks on the west side in particular. On the west side specifically there’s this kind of perception that development isn't happening there, that displacement and gentrification isn't taking shape there. And I know, for example, that some people and organizations on the west side have really been trying to push for capacity building. We want to be sure that we're staffed up to do things like small site acquisitions, or that we're staffed up to help tenants facing eviction. And the city has funds to do that, and it has said, ‘we want to help the westside with capacity building’ but they’re not taking that money towards the west side.

For example, SOMCAN does a lot of land-use work in the South of Market, which has been bearing the brunt of development for decades now. They get a lot of evictions there, and they also get a lot of opportunities to purchase buildings to stabilize the people in those homes. But we do not see the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) do anything to aggressively purchase those sites…It’s literally a matter of prioritization and urgency…It leads to even more stress for community-based organizations trying to fight evictions of these families, when the city could step in and purchase these sites…Despite there being programs in place to do it and affordable housing in the pipeline, we see all these things that the city could support with that would help alleviate some of the burden on community organizations and allow them to have more capacity for other efforts.

You think of these moments, and you think of all these organizations saying, ‘We need this to stabilize people in their homes. We need this to help unhoused people off the street.’ And you don't see that investment in prioritization from the city. A lot of resources that should be given to organizations facing displacement just aren't prioritized (Laberinto, 2022).

Smooke discussed the need for staff capacity and funding for staff working in coalitions and CBOs addressing these issues.

Staff is really important. At the beginning of the REP Coalition, I was the only person working on it. We ended up hiring two new people over the last couple of years, and it’s been essential…But the funding for the staff needs to be unfettered. It needs to really allow the coalition to do its work. I've seen too many coalitions get bogged down by expectations from funders or constraints from funders or reporting demands…

I think that those are two things that are really, really critical is making sure that there is staff support so that every organization can then be engaged by those staff. We're putting in the regular time, so every organization doesn't feel like they have to be overburdened or they're going to be left out. That's one critical thing and like I said, the funding for that staff needs to be assembled in a really particular way (Smooke, 2022).
Martí discussed the need for **funding and opportunities to build on existing work**, including expanding wins like building preservation and right-to-organize legislation that aim to build and support tenant power.

The Mission has always been this tremendous resource in terms of the density of nonprofits and the density of services…So I think one of the questions is **how do we support that ongoing work?** It's not that we're short on ideas or services or nonprofits but we're always short on funding.

One of the big things leading up to the pandemic and even through the pandemic on the housing side was this ongoing fear around buildings being sold. That’s where COPA and the Small Sites Program, as well as its limitations because of lack of funding, was really big. On the flip side of that, **right now there are so many opportunities for investors.** In the Mission District, in terms of building preservation, there are opportunities to really expand a program like the Small Sites Program…It’s one of the challenges going into 2024. Will there be an appetite for another revenue measure? Or even for a ballot measure that could **codify the uses of existing funds for programs** like this?

The other thing within that is that last year the city passed a Right to Organize legislation that was really spearheaded by SFADC. This has given the ability of tenants to basically create their own tenant unions within buildings…Connecting to the building acquisition program, these are all **trying to create structures where tenants can power themselves** through a union, through buying a building, whatever it might be – **in the face of the unequal forces they face with landlords who have all the power** (Martí, 2023).

Sciammas highlighted the need for more **public investments** as well as stronger solidarity and **meaningful community-based partnerships with city government**.

It's easy to say that we need more public investments. And that is absolutely part of the solution. But I also think that one of the most critical things is real partnership with city government, so that there are partnerships in place and that city government is a funding entity.

The city distributes grants, and then there’s certain kinds of purse strings and certain requirements that come with that relationship. And it’s an **imbalance of power**. But when we're talking about the community planning work, and we're talking about communities and organizations that are really trying to create space, to develop leadership, and to build the leadership of the community to be at the decision-making table for key high impact decisions that are impacting their communities, I think we need to figure out how to have stronger solidarity between city government and those community-based organizations. So that we can just focus on our impact working collectively, as opposed to having to be in a position time and again, to have to organize
against policies that are causing harm, or that are privileging benefits for certain parts of the community and making others more vulnerable. I definitely feel like that's something that there's so much more work to be done in terms of figuring out how to have more of that kind of **accountable collaborative partnership** and kind of reimagine what that can look like.

And then absolutely, there are a lot of policies and rules that can be reimagined. So, changing the rules, and really maximizing our public investments into the communities that don't have their fair share. And then also developing stronger partnership between city government and community-based organizations. Not just in the delivery of services, but in the **art of identifying needs and identifying solutions** (Sciammas, 2023).

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

Based on my conversations with nine community organizers and coalition leaders, I have developed the following conclusions focused on community organizing best practices and strategies, followed by public policy recommendations informed by my research findings.

Interviewees stated that **deep systemic change is needed to achieve real housing justice** in the Mission District. Community leaders discussed the importance of small, **incremental changes that will ultimately get us closer toward this long-term vision**. Based on my interviews, I learned that these three coalitions are approaching the problem of displacement through the following strategies:

1. **Tenant organizing and advocacy:**
   - This includes coalition and movement building, base-building, capacity and leadership development, and organizing-skills building. Some examples discussed in my interviews include the SFADC Counselor Network Trainings (Goldberg, 2023) and Leadership Development Courses for VTA and SEA members, focused on developing organic leaders (Hirn, 2022 and Mejia, 2023).
   - Other examples include “tangible wins” through tenant associations and building organizing, which have succeeded in preventing rent increases and/or evictions.

2. **Land-use and city planning:**
   - Some examples discussed in my research include approaches led by the Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition, which works to advance racial equity in city planning (Laberinto, 2022 and Smooke, 2022).
Another example is the use and preservation of public lands for public benefit (Smooke, 2022).

3. **Nonprofit affordable housing and community development:**
   - Examples of success include increased affordable housing development and the preservation of Latino-owned businesses in the Mission District (Arguello, 2023).
   - Another example of success is SFADC’s work to pass COPA, the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, which allows nonprofits to have the first opportunity to purchase a building when it is for sale (Martí, 2023).

4. **Creating and informing public policy:**
   - Citywide coalitions like SFADC, REP-SF, and CCHO work to advance and inform policy priorities rooted in a shared community vision. For example, SFADC has advanced policies including Right to Purchase policies like COPA, as discussed above, as well as the Right to Organize legislation passed last year, which allows tenant unions to organize in the city (Goldberg, 2023 and Mejia, 2022).

My capstone research demonstrates the importance of community-based organizations in the Mission District and highlights the need for policymakers to support CBOs, listen to the expertise of community leaders, and advance policy to address community concerns. Interviewees discussed the need for consistent streams of funding to continue and expand their anti-displacement efforts. Interviewees also noted some limitations of city funding and partnerships, as well as recommendations to help bridge these gaps and strengthen accountable, collaborative community-based partnerships with local government.
A. Best Practices and Strategies from Multiracial CBOs and Coalitions

This section focuses on best practices and strategies employed by multiracial CBOs and coalitions engaging in anti-displacement work in the Mission District. These strategies can be applied to future struggles and other communities facing similar challenges. This section discusses how we can replicate effective community-driven campaigns and explores the ways in which CBOs are working together in coalitions toward their collective goal of housing justice.

1. **Coalition structure to support members and dedicated staff to focus on specific organizing campaigns and efforts.**

   - For example, for the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission, the Plaza 16 Coalition hired Maria I Zamudio as Campaign Director to have a dedicated organizer focus on this campaign. Interviewees noted that this was essential to the campaign’s success.

   - Another example of coalition structures, which REP-SF co-founder Joseph Smooke shared, is that the REP-SF Coalition does not enforce any internal hierarchy such as a governing or steering committee. This requires intentionality around outreach and engagement with coalition members (Smooke, 2022).

2. **Intentionality around prioritizing racial equity.** Building internal cultural practices that ensure equity. This work includes the following.

   - Re-grounding and focusing on a clear, collective vision
   - Creating space to acknowledge racialized, lived experiences and different perspectives
   - Recognizing that our differences are part of our strengths
   - Building relationships and trust in coalitions

3. **Language access to ensure equitable and meaningful public participation for monolingual and multilingual community members.** Equitable language access is essential when engaging in multicultural, multilingual coalitions.

   - Examples of equitable language access in these citywide coalitions are included in my Data Analysis (pages 74, 87, 95, 97).

4. **Clear process for collaboration in decision-making, reaching consensus, and making collective decisions in a coalition.**
• For example, SFADC Director Molly Goldberg explained how coalition members bring policy interventions to the coalition for feedback and input, and collectively evaluate policy proposals with the goal of addressing specific community concerns (Goldberg, 2023).

Community Organizing Campaign Strategies:

1. **Key takeaways from the fight against the Monster in the Mission: Develop a clear strategy and use diverse tactics to secure majority supports and ensure the voices of those most impacted are shaping the demand. Keep the fight where the community will have more power** (Zamudio, 2023).
   - Interviewees discussed examples of keeping the fight where communities have the most power, including (1) keeping the proposed luxury housing development known as the Monster in the Mission out of the Planning Department, and (2) bringing the Planning Commission into the community for a hearing at Mission High School, rather than at City Hall.

2. **Develop and articulate a clear community vision. Ensure that community is at the forefront of the planning process, to prioritize community needs and concerns.**
   - Examples of community-based planning processes discussed in my research include REP-SF Coalition’s *Citywide People’s Plan for Equity in Land Use* and the Plaza 16 Coalition’s alternative-planning process to develop the vision for the Marvel in the Mission.

3. **Advance and reclaim our narrative on equity and on development. Ensure to put forth a clear, community driven narrative from the beginning of the campaign.**
   - Laberinto of People Power Media and REP-SF argues: “We want to fight to be sure that we reclaim the narrative on equity, and what that looks like. We want to be in control and determine what our communities look like and ensure that our communities are at the forefront of decision making” (Laberinto, 2022).

4. **Adapt and tailor your communication strategies and key messages for specific audiences to effectively mobilize a broad base of constituencies and community members.**
○ For example, the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission focused on mobilizing diverse constituencies across the neighborhood, including residents, small business owners, and community members.

5. **Focus on clear communication, neighborhood outreach, and community education.**

   *Develop a strong counter narrative and counter disinformation that seeks to divide the community.*

○ A strength of the fight to stop the Monster in the Mission was “intentionality around popular education, around base building, around making sure to address all the disinformation” targeting community members (Smooke, 2022).

**B. Public Policy Recommendations: Resources, Funding & Anti-Displacement Efforts**

My capstone research concludes with policy recommendations, including legislation and practices for city and state governments to adopt to combat the impacts of gentrification and displacement. These policy recommendations are informed by my interviews with community organizers and coalition leaders, as well as my literature review focused on anti-displacement policies and community-driven efforts toward housing justice. Community-based organizations’ recommendations for city and state government include those focused on 1) funding and grants, and 2) anti-displacement policies.

Based on my research findings, I propose the following public policy recommendations to support people of color impacted by gentrification and displacement in the Mission District. The list is followed by justification of each policy recommendation, beginning on the page 110.

1. **Repeal the Ellis Act (1985) and the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act (1995).** *These two state laws limit our ability to fight gentrification and contribute significantly to evictions and displacement of long-time residents across California.*

2. **Expand and enforce city policies to combat real estate speculation, including implementing an anti-speculation tax and enforcing the existing residential vacancy...*
tax. Anti-speculation and tenant protection laws are guardrails that are necessary because we live in an economy that refuses to treat housing as a human right.

3. Expand housing market regulations and tenant protection policies, including rent controls, eviction bans, and just-cause eviction clauses. Expand public and subsidized housing, and affordable housing production and preservation.

4. Advance legislation to codify the use of existing funds for building preservation programs, such as the Small Sites Program and Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA), which focus on permanently taking land and buildings out of the speculative housing market.

5. Prioritize city grants and expand state resources to build deeply affordable housing in San Francisco, including the Marvel in the Mission, the community-led project for 100% affordable housing at Plaza 16 (1979 Mission Street at the 16th & Mission BART Station Plaza).

6. Provide consistent streams of funding for community-based organizations and coalitions to expand their anti-displacement efforts. We need a funding model for community organizing focused on movement infrastructure that is ongoing and not project based.

7. Strengthen relationships and expand accountable collaborative partnerships between city government and CBOs to support anti-displacement efforts and implement community-driven policies.

8. Implement community-based participatory planning processes that prioritize racial and social equity, including language access to ensure equitable and meaningful public participation for monolingual and multilingual community members.
Public Policy Recommendations: Rationale

1. **Repeal the Ellis Act (1985) and Costa-Hawkins Housing Act (1995).** These two California state laws have limited our ability to fight gentrification and have contributed significantly to San Francisco’s eviction crisis as well as the displacement of longtime residents across the state by allowing evictions of residential tenants, limitations on rent control, and vacancy decontrol of rent-controlled units. My Introduction (pages 13-16) provides more information about the harmful impact of the Ellis Act and Costa-Hawkins.

   ○ As a result of its study on Costa-Hawkins, SFADC concluded: “We need to return control to cities and towns, where local governments should be able to implement policies to regulate speculation, stabilize rents, and keep people housed” (Goldberg, 2018, 29).

   SFADC’s policy recommendations include a full repeal of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act, as well as support of local and regional rent control efforts (Golberg, 2018, 30). REP-SF agrees with the need to “repeal state laws that disempower our communities and that deny our ability to plan for the future of our neighborhoods” (“Solutions”, 2023).

2. **Expand and enforce city policies to combat real estate speculation, including implementing an anti-speculation tax and enforcing the existing residential vacancy tax.** Anti-speculation and tenant protection laws are guardrails that are necessary because we live in an economy that refuses to treat housing as a human right. My Introduction (pages 9-10, 15-17), Community History (page 48), and Data Analysis (page 93) provide more information about the problem of real estate speculation as well as proposed anti-speculation taxes and other policy solutions that aim to address our speculative housing system.

   ○ For example, when SFADC was formed in 2013, the coalition supported a “ballot measure that would tax the ‘flipping’ of apartment buildings that was fueling and
exploiting our housing crisis. The speculator tax, inspired by legislation originally proposed by Harvey Milk just prior to his assassination, was designed to stabilize the housing market in our city” (“Our Mission + Coalition,” 2023).

○ When SFADC hosted a citywide tenant convention in 2014, one of the top two priorities identified by tenants themselves was an anti-speculation tax. According to Martí, “CCHO was one of the prime movers for as part of a housing slate, which unfortunately lost. But even in losing, it did have an impact in slowing down evictions, because I think the owners saw that they were in a precarious position in the public eye” (Martí, 2023).

○ The University of Minnesota (2020) recommends the following municipal policies for combating real estate speculation:

- **Residential Vacancy Tax:** A tax on residential property owners designed to open up supply in the housing market. It is applied when a home is not the owner’s primary residence and is left empty for a certain amount of time.
- **Anti-Speculation Tax:** A transfer tax levied on a property when it is sold within a certain time period after purchase to discourage property flipping.
- **Foreign Property Purchase Tax:** A tax on vacant properties held by foreign investors who don’t contribute taxes to the local economy.
- **Targeted Property Surtax:** A model that applies taxes on buildings that attract speculators.
- **Capital Gains Tax:** A tax on the appreciated value of property when sold.
- **Public Lease Registry:** A centralized hub for sharing and disclosing rental rates in a jurisdiction (University of Minnesota, 2020).

3. **Expand housing market regulations and tenant protection policies, including rent controls, eviction bans, and just-cause evictions clauses. Expand public and subsidized housing, and affordable housing production and preservation.** My Introduction (pages 16-17, 23), Literature Review (pages 32, 41), and Data Analysis (pages 67-68, 72-74) provide more information about the importance of rent controls, tenant protection efforts, affordable housing policies, and other community-led solutions.

○ Goldberg argues that “rent control and tenant protections are regulations that are part of guaranteeing housing as a public good” (Goldberg, 2023).

○ Samuel Stein also recommends strengthening rent controls to combat gentrification in U.S. cities: “Strengthening rent controls – eliminating the loopholes and making the protections permanent and universal – would be one of
the most important ways to halt housing inflation and cut the cord that so clearly connects planning to gentrification” (Stein, 2019, 162).

○ The REP-SF Coalition recommends prioritizing affordability and stability: “Build and buy affordable housing to create stability, affordability and opportunity for people and families with low incomes. Secure new, significant, sustainable resources for affordable housing, so new affordable housing is no longer dependent on market-rate housing” (“Solutions,” 2023).

○ This includes expanding community organizing through tenant associations and unions to bolster community power in landlord negotiations on issues including rent increases and evictions. For example, SFADC helped advance the new “Right to Organize” legislation passed in April 2022, which allows tenants to form unions to negotiate with landlords.

4. **Advance legislation to codify the use of existing funds for building preservation programs such as the Small Sites Program and Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA), which focus on permanently taking land and buildings out of the speculative housing market.** My Literature Review (pages 37-39) and Data Analysis (pages 77, 99, 103) provide more information about how these building preservation programs serve as an important solution to address the housing crisis.

○ According to Martí: “In the Mission District, in terms of building preservation, there are opportunities to really expand a program like the Small Sites Program...It’s one of the challenges going into 2024. Will there be an appetite for another revenue measure? Or even for a ballot measure that could codify the uses of existing funds for programs like this?” (Martí, 2023)

○ Another example that Martí shares is that one of his proudest achievements at CCHO was establishing COPA, the Common Opportunity Purchase Act, which was passed in 2019 and “gives qualified nonprofit organizations first right to purchase residential buildings for sale in San Francisco” (Ralda Diaz, 2022).

5. **Prioritize city grants and expand state resources to build deeply affordable housing in San Francisco, including the Marvel in the Mission, the community-led project for 100% affordable housing at Plaza 16 (1979 Mission Street at the 16th & Mission BART Station Plaza).** My Literature Review (pages 37-38) and Data Analysis (pages 80-
discuss the importance of investing public funds into affordable housing and preserving public lands for public benefit.

○ Martí argues: “We must invest public funds into creating affordable and integrated housing plans for the future. The resources exist; what we need is the political will to do it. As a country, if we put the money that we give to the military, police, and prisons into helping people in need, everyone could have a safe place to live” (Ralda Diaz, 2022).

○ REP-SF also believes an important part of the solution is to “stop selling off public lands to for-profit developers. We need that land for 100% truly affordable housing, neighborhood-serving small businesses, nonprofits, and publicly accessible open space” (“Solutions,” 2023).

6. **Provide consistent streams of funding for CBOs and coalitions to build organizing capacity and expand their anti-displacement efforts.** We need a funding model for community organizing focused on movement infrastructure that is constant and not project-based to cover ongoing expenses, including coalition staff salaries, overhead, and administration. In my Data Analysis (pages 99-103), several interviewees discuss the importance of sustained streams of funding for community organizing, noting limitations of city funding and other challenges they face.

○ For example, Hirn highlighted the need for “avenues of sustained funding over time,” rather than “one-off grants or being overly reliant on city funding, which comes with its own strings” (Hirn, 2023).

7. **Strengthen relationships and expand accountable, collaborative partnerships between city government and CBOs to support anti-displacement efforts and implement community-driven policies.** My Data Analysis (pages 103-104) discusses the need for collaborative and accountability community-based partnerships.

○ Sciammas emphasized the importance of “developing stronger partnership between city government and community-based organizations. Not just in the delivery of services, but in the art of identifying needs and identifying solutions (Sciammas, 2023).
8. Implement community-based participatory planning processes that prioritize racial and social equity, including language access to ensure equitable and meaningful public participation for monolingual and multilingual community members. Ensure community voices are heard, respected, and listened to by policymakers, with the goal of advancing community priorities. The Community History section (pages 50, 54) and Data Analysis (pages 74, 81, 87, 92-93) provides more information about community-based planning processes advanced through coalitions like REP-SF and Plaza 16.

- One example of community-based planning is the Citywide People’s Plan for Equity in Land Use: A New Foundation for San Francisco’s Housing Element 2023-2031. REP-SF states: “Community planning or people-centered planning is a process wherein a system of knowledge of the neighborhood or community is gathered and created from the bottom up, from the actual people who live and work in these communities, especially the most vulnerable people” (“Citywide People’s Plan,” 2023).

- Another example is the REP-Coalition’s Housing Element Campaign, in which REP developed the first housing element focused on racial and social equity (Laberinto, 2022). This campaign focused on advancing “Housing solutions REP Coalition believes should be in San Francisco’s Housing Element: housing policies the city should follow that come from community expertise” (Smooke, 2022).
Bibliography


Brahinsky, Rachel, Cassi Feldman, and Genevieve Kramer. 2000. “Saving San Francisco: A 50-
Year Chronology.” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, October 18, 2000. SF Gray Panthers.
https://graypantherssf.igc.org/00-10-18-sf_bay_guardian-50_years_of_redevelopment.htm


https://www.urbandisplacement.org/about/what-are-gentrification-and-displacement/


https://www.sfccho.org/history.


http://www.antievictionmappingproject.net/ellis.html.


Poblet, Maria. 2014. “Gentrification and the Battle for the Heart of San Francisco.”


https://48hills.org/2015/05/the-mission-comes-to-city-hall/


https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469607672_SummersSandoval


https://eltecolote.org/content/en/podcast-gentrification-displacement-with-housing-activist-fernando-marti/


Zuk, Mary, Karen Chapple, Sydney Cespedes, Mitchell Crispell, Christina Blackston, Jonathan Plowman, and Edward Graves. 2015. “Case Studies on Gentrification and Displacement in the San Francisco Bay Area – Chapter 4: Community Organizing and Resistance in
Appendix

A. Methodology Instruments

A. Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol: Coalition/Organizational Leaders and Staff

Hello. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my research study. I appreciate your time and willingness to have a conversation about the issues of gentrification and displacement and the impact of multiracial community organizing as a form of resistance. I am really looking forward to learning more about the work that you and your [organization/coalition] are doing to improve the lives of people of color in the Mission District of San Francisco.

I just want to confirm that this is a good time to talk for about an hour about [Name of Organization/Coalition] and the impact of your work.

Before we get started, I’ll share a little bit about myself and my research project, then review some information about confidentiality.

I was born and raised in the SF Bay Area, and my parents are immigrants from Nicaragua. My aunt and uncle also owned and operated a Nicaraguan restaurant in the Mission, on 24th street, for about 35 years, which I visited a lot throughout my childhood (opened in 1979 and closed in 2013) – and I’ve seen the neighborhood change a lot throughout the years. This is what sparked my interest in studying the issues of displacement and the housing crisis in the Mission District, as I’ve seen a lot of the impacts of these issues firsthand.

I studied communication and public relations during my undergraduate studies at USF, and then I worked for three years in strategic communications with nonprofits, foundations, and other advocacy organizations focused on environmental justice, civil rights, and other racial and social justice issues. My work focused primarily on messaging, narrative, and communication strategy.

As a master’s student at USF, I am doing a graduate-level research project focused on studying multiracial community organizing as a solution to combat gentrification and displacement in the Mission District. Housing justice and addressing displacement are issues that I care about deeply, and I am genuinely interested in learning more about the great work you do every day.

Regarding consent and confidentiality, I would like to emphasize that when I share results from this interview with others, it will only be through a high-level summary of the results or anonymous quotations. If you have chosen to remain anonymous in this study, I will not share your name or identify you. I will use the preferred pseudonym OR the name and title you have provided on the consent form.

Your participation in this interview is completely optional and voluntary. At any point, you may choose to skip a question that you don’t wish to answer. Please also know that you can choose to end the interview at any point.
This interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour. Before we begin, I also want to make sure that it is okay for me to record this interview. Is it alright if I record for my own records? I will not share the recording with anyone.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

**RQ:** How do multiracial community-driven organizations work to disrupt gentrification and displacement, and create meaningful change to support impacted community members in the Mission? [For reference; Not to be shared during interview]

1) Can you please tell me about what drew you to become involved with [Name of Organization/Coalition]? What is your current role?
   a. How has being involved with the [organization/coalition] impacted you?

2) [CJJC/SFADC] was created through a strategic merger of organizations fighting against displacement. Can you please tell me more about how the [organization/coalition] works to address these issues?

3) I learned that [Name of Organization/Coalition] was involved in the community fight against the “Monster in the Mission,” the proposed luxury housing project at Mission and 16th Streets. Thanks to the work of community advocates, the project was defeated, and the area will now be 100% affordable housing. Can you please tell me about your organization’s involvement in this important advocacy effort?
   a. What was this organizing experience like? What was your role? What was your organization’s role? Who did you work with?
   b. Can you tell me about some of the alliances created in this effort? Which organizations and community organizers came together?
   c. Were there certain organizing strategies and tactics that were effective in mobilizing a broad base of community members?
d. What did this process teach you about the importance of community organizations in fighting development that exacerbates displacement?

4) Are there examples of developments or specific organizing campaigns your organization and coalition have been a part of? Do you know of any good examples I should look to as case studies that demonstrate how and why organizing matters? And if it’s done in a particular way?

5) [Name of Organization/Coalition] does a lot of important work to support residents in San Francisco. How is the [organization/coalition] working to fight against displacement and gentrification in the Mission District specifically?
   a. Can you tell me about any current campaigns or efforts you’re working on in the neighborhood?
   b. How does the [coalition/organization] support people of color impacted by displacement?

6) Based on my research, it seems to me that one of the dynamics of organizing in the Mission District is people working across different boundaries, including race, class, gender, and sexuality. Is that accurate in your experience? How much do race and identity shape the advocacy and alliances you build?
   a. Do you build your organizing strategies around multiracial organizing?

7) What does a multiracial organizing model look like in practice? How does the structure of the [organization/coalition] reflect and enable its multiracial work?
   a. What is the value of bringing together Black, Latino, and other people of color to organize against displacement in their communities?
b. What role do you think communities of color should play in these movements?

8) As a diverse, multiracial [organization/coalition], how does [Name of Organization/Coalition] work to build solidarity between communities of color?
   a. How do we mobilize communities of color around our shared struggles? How do we overcome racial tensions to build a stronger movement?
   b. How is the [organization/coalition] contributing to the larger multiracial movement for social, economic, and housing justice?

9) Why do you believe that multiracial alliances and coalitions are necessary? Why is multiracial organizing valuable in today’s society?
   a. How could more problems be addressed with multiracial organizing?

10) What major obstacles or challenges do you face in your work as an [organization/coalition]?
    a. How has the pandemic impacted your work and organizing strategies?

11) What types of resources do you think are most needed to support community-based organizations and coalitions working on issues of displacement and gentrification in the Mission?

12) How do you and your [organization/coalition] define success when it comes to political organizing against gentrification and displacement?
    a. Are there any books, speakers, organizers, or other specific people whose work you look to as a model?

13) Is there any additional information you would like to share with me today?

14) Is there anyone else you think I should interview or talk to about this issue?
a. I would love to connect with community members and local activists to gain a
different perspective on these issues. Are there community members or
organizers you recommend I connect with through your work with

[organization/coalition]

Thank you so much for speaking with me today and for sacrificing some of your precious time. I
appreciate the conversation that we were able to have, and your contributions to my research are
invaluable.

I am continuing to conduct interviews through the end of February, and I would love to know if
you know of anyone else who would be willing to have a conversation with me. I will gladly
email you a description of my project that you can pass along to others. Any leads or
recommendations are greatly appreciated!

Once the project is complete, I will reach back out to see if you are interested in viewing the
results of my research; I would love to share my findings with you. Again, thank you for your
time. Have a great rest of your day!

B. Interview Recruitment Emails

Interview Recruitment Email: Coalition/Organizational Leaders and Staff

Subject: USF Graduate Research: Request for Interview

Hello [Name],

My name is AnaChristina Arana, and I am a master’s student at the University of San Francisco
in the Urban and Public Affairs program working on a research project focused on addressing the
issue of gentrification and displacement in the Mission District, with a focus on multiracial
community organizing and coalition building as a form of resistance. Through my research, I aim
to understand how multiracial community organizations are working to disrupt gentrification and
displacement and create meaningful change to support impacted community members in the
Mission.

I’m reaching out to see if you would be willing to participate in an interview about your work
with [Name of Organization/Coalition] and the impact of the [organization/coalition]’s work.
The interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour. I’m happy to meet with you in person or
on Zoom.

If you are interested in participating in an interview, please let me know what days/times would
work best for you to have a conversation. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank
you for your time and consideration.
Appendix B. Interview Participants

Organized Alphabetically by Last Name:

- Erick Arguello, President, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District
- Molly Goldberg, Director, San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition
- Brad Hirn, Lead Organizer, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
- Jeantelle Laberinto, Community Organizer with [people. power. media] and the Race & Equity in all Planning Coalition
- Fernando Martí, Co-director, Council of Community Housing Organizations (2011-2022)
- Allyn Mejía, Lead Organizer, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
- Charlie Sciammas, Policy Director, Council of Community Housing Organizations
- Joseph Smooke, Co-founder, People Power Media; and Organizer, Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF)
- Maria I Zamudio, Organizing Director at Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
Appendix C. Figures: Maps & Images

Maps: Gentrification, Displacement and Eviction Crisis in San Francisco

Figure 1: “Ellis Act Evictions.” Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. Accessed October 5, 2022.

Figure 2: “Mission District Facing Advanced Gentrification.” UC Berkeley Urban Displacement Project, 2015 SF Bay Area Case Study (Kwak, 2018).
Images: The Community Fight to Stop the Monster in the Mission

Mission Residents go to City Hall to demand the mayor recognize the Monster in the Mission as an emergency in the community

Figures 3-4: Photos taken by Tim Redmond, May 2015, 48hills.org
Community Hearing with SF Planning Commission at Mission High School Auditorium

Figures 5-6: Photos taken by Tim Redmond, February 2019, 48hills.org
Strong Community Organizing Defeated the Monster in the Mission, in Favor of The Marvel for 100% Affordable Housing

Figure 7: Photo provided by Plaza 16 Coalition, 2021, Plaza16.org

Figure 8: Photo taken by Tim Redmond, 2015 and 2022, 48hills.org