

— *Centro Por la Justicia* —

SOUTHWEST WORKERS UNION



MID YEAR REPORT
JULY 2022



PRIDE IS QUEER RESISTANCE

Our inaugural space for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual community proved to be a much needed haven and resistance space. The Pride is Queer Resistance Fest took over the Corazon and the Movement Gallery to respect, honor and continue the tenets of Pride month which was started as a riot by Black and brown transgender and queer women and femmes. Our Pridefest, under the direction of Daphne Villanueva she/they, hosted community members in a myriad of workshops like self defense, fundamentals of vogue, gender and name change, body movement, table talks on transgender healthcare and many more. Additionally, our Comadre Economies frame shifted focus to 2SLGBTQAI vendors and artists for a month-long weekend Mercado. Our Pride programming closed out with a beautiful community art show curated by Daphne titled “Embodiment,” a reflection on the queer body as a vehicle for storytelling, a vessel for spirit, and space of both great love and conflict.” The show also featured an exclusive return to music from Polly Anna. We recognize that queer resistance doesn’t end when Pride does and we thank each person that gave their time to better their community: We thank you!

MUTUAL AID



Every 3rd Saturday of the month, SWU hands out bags of fresh produce to the communities around us. Our bags are filled with several types of vegetables and fruit including: zucchini, oranges and lemons, onions, jalapeños, tomatoes, cilantro, and much more. Each of our bags are able to provide several meals with fresh produce and much needed fiber, vitamins, and minerals for each family. So far this year we have given out 900 bags of produce to hundreds of families and community members. SWU has also included other necessities such as our most recent fan distribution where we handed out 50 fans to community members and helped cool their homes as summer temperatures rage on. In the month of June we distributed grow bags with mini herb gardens so that we could empower people who don’t have yards to be able to grow their own herbs. By encouraging our communities to grow their own food, in whatever capacity available, we are teaching food sovereignty and helping people to reclaim their own power. We aim to feed our communities fresh foods from our cultures as a way to combat food apartheid and other systematic food inequalities.

BUILDING UPDATES

We are working hard to transform our space into a Healing and Resiliency Hub for our neighborhood and members. This will include a new Roots of Change garden layout and major work to our aging building. We are close to finalizing designs for Phase 1 and will begin construction by the end of the year. Our mutual aid work and other programming will continue on during construction. Growth, as many of us know, is quite often not very pretty and can in fact be ugly at times, We ask for patience as our building goes under construction so that we can bring the best new changes to our space that will help not only the SWU Crew as we continue to do our work but, also, the neighborhoods and communities around us.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION

The Youth Leadership Organization's (YLO) annual 8 week summer program has 20 interns. They range from 12-18 years. The focus for this year is mental health, DIY workshops, and demos and planning the annual our Back2SWU youth event. During our mini field trip to the San Antonio Botanical Garden, the Youth spoke on seeing native plants, areas to sit with shade, trellis plants and having outdoor fans to stay fresh in the hot humid weather. We had a workshop on how to create natural dyes with alum, coffee and turmeric. We have distributed over 50 fans to the community to beat these upcoming hot canicula days. We will also be making teas with mugwort from the medicinal garden. We are welcoming a new youth organizer Selene Garcia. They have been a youth leader for the past 7 years. So if you see her. Say Hi!



The work we do is very important for the youth to create connections with what's going on in the community. The policies that are implemented affect us all. It is important that the youth are conscious about them. The YLO went to a vigil in Travis park for the 53 migrants who lost their lives. As we grieve, we ask for elected officials to take action and urge them for a migration reform!

Back2SWU will be on August 6th from 10-2 pm, We will be giving away 150 backpacks to youth. During the event youth will learn how to organize a community event and also facilitate a demo. We are also working on having youth resources available, haircuts, hygiene packets and more.

CORAZON COHORT

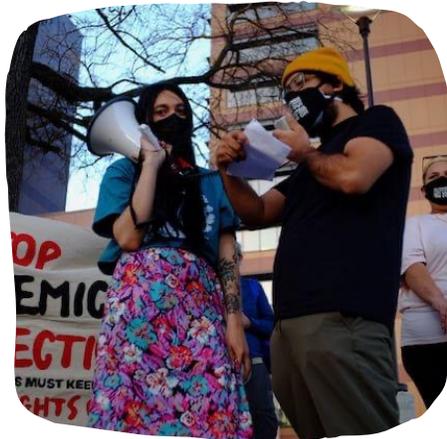
The Corazon Cohort is one of the projects tied to the communications fellowship with Climate Justice Alliance (CJA). The Corazon Cohort is a SWU writer's room where we had guest facilitators come to the Corazon Room to teach writers through prompts, writing exercises, and sharing our work with each other. We met 4 Sundays in May and June and had a small, but dedicated, group that showed up to each meeting. Free writer's rooms provide spaces for marginalized writers to be able to 1) write at all and 2) meet with their peers to create communities and relationships that can help uplift each other's efforts and words. We hope The Corazon Cohort can continue on as a writer's room space at SWU but, with covid numbers rising again, we may switch to a digital platform for safety until we can meet in person again.

ROOTS OF CHANGE

This 1st half of 2022 we've been having exciting time sowing connections with San Antonio's gardening community! During Black History Month our garden coordinators visited Black growers across the city. Throughout our interviews [with the growers], we learned about how growing food has connected them to their culture and talked shop about the growing season. As spring approached, we wanted to facilitate programming that empowered the community to grow food without having a big backyard. On one of our first workdays of the year, we celebrated the turn of the season by making grow bags! We had five green thumbs come out ready to learn and assemble grow bags. During this event, we discussed the importance of container gardening and working in smaller spaces like apartment patios. On Earth Day weekend, we held a class on container gardening. Six plant-loving pals joined us to learn how to make budget-friendly raised beds. This summer, we've held three workdays. In tandem with our "Pride is Queer Resistance" programming, our coordinators facilitated two queer-based skill shares. In our 1st class, we taught six queer plant-pals how to assemble raised beds. The subsequent class was filling them up in a budget-friendly manner & finally planting them in. A huge thank you to everyone that has come out to the garden workdays and blitz.

INTEGRATED VOTER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Our fourth year modeling integrated voter engagement has allowed us to continue organizing our community amid such trying times. IVE means bridging traditional forms of organizing with digital forms of organizing which in turn allows us as an organization to cover more ground and reach more people! We have completed two of our three campaigns for the year. Campaign #1 took us to the polls for this year's primary elections where we sent out 1,000 voter guides designed by the talented artist Linda Monsivais. We addressed residential ratepayers' inequity by demanding CPS Energy enact fair rate structures, close the coal plant and put an end to the violent legacy of residential disconnections for non-payment. Although we gained thousands of supporters along the way, a majority of city council sided with CPS and approved a 3.85 percent increase, lower than the proposed 11 percent CPS started asking for, but still too much for low-income families. Our fight continues however some wins include the appointment of our staff member Anacua Orellana-Garcia to the CPS rate advisory committee. Campaign #2 once again focused on CPS. This time to save the Save for Tomorrow Energy Plan which houses the Casa Verde program. Both are energy efficiency and savings programs for qualifying low-income households. The Step program was subsequently saved in a 7-3 city council vote and we continue to fight for utility and climate justice, linking both civic engagement and mutual aid. We thank the dozens of remote phone bankers who have led the work calling more than 20,000 households and talking to more than 2,000 supporters of our movement! Our campaign # 3 is set to start in the fall and will wrap up our IVE program for the year.



CLIMATE COLECTIVA

Climate Colectiva is a project of Southwest Public Workers Union (C4) and Centro por la Justicia (C3) rooted in climate justice and energy democracy principles working to build community solutions for protecting our water, land and people from fossil fuel extraction, contamination and from the climate crisis. Our colectiva combines rapid response, civic engagement, popular education and mutual aid to educate and move our community forward. This year we are amping up the climate colectiva to meet the needs and demands of the climate crisis we are in. This includes fighting for intersectional approaches that respond to frontline community members experiencing the brint force of the climate crisis. We continue our utility assistance and weatherization clinics which kicked off in 2021 and are seeking to double down on our climate justice learning and skillshares. In July, we created and gave out our Climate Colectiva zine: weathering la Canicula. We are meeting these needs by increasing our environmental justice staff and we welcome two new staff members to the mix!

COMMUNICATIONS FELLOWSHIP

SWU is participating in a communications fellowship called Communicating Our Power in partnership with Climate Justice Alliance (CJA). One of our staff members will be learning how to navigate social media, create more engaging content for our websites and other platforms, as well as learning how to wield narrative power to keep our stories told BY us instead of FOR us. This is important work because often time organizers and communities who stand up against injustices can be unfairly made out to be the villain. SWU wants our stories to be told through our voices, words, and lenses so that we won't be erased from history or current narratives. Our work is important and deserves to be seen.

TRABAJADORAS DEL HOGAR EN ACCION

The Trabajadoras are a group of hardworking domestic workers who get together to empower each other to learn new skills and go on field trips around San Antonio. The Trabajadoras have been working these last 6 months in sewing classes, crafts classes with recycled materials, Wood painting class, and weaving classes. All the things we've made have been sold in the Comadre Economies Markets at Southwest Workers Union. The Trabajadoras meet every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in person, and communicate through Whatsapp. We organize collectively, each person in the group votes on our next classes, activities, and outings.

SOUTHWEST WORKERS UNION - CENTRO POR LA JUSTICIA

Contact Us: Staff@swunion.org

Contact us to schedule an appointment. Our offices are currently closed and our staff works remotely due to the ongoing Covid Pandemic.

You can also follow us on Instagram @SWUJustice and @RootsOfChange and on Facebook "Southwest Workers Union"