This year PSR-LA celebrated the 40th anniversary of our innovative advocacy work that centers health professionals as effective champions for addressing environmental health and justice. 2020 has been a year like no other, and we are incredibly proud that despite the enormous challenges of a global pandemic, an economic crisis, a racial justice reckoning, and the most serious threat to democracy our country has ever faced, we have been able to come together as a diverse, powerful team to move our work forward in many exciting and important ways.

PSR-LA's work draws on medical science, public health knowledge and the lived experience of health professionals and impacted communities. This year, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, our health professional members have served on the frontlines of the crisis and they have worked with us to share information and their experiences. PSR-LA has also worked in deep partnership and solidarity with allies and community members. Through our intersectional coalition work, we have been able to give support as many of our community partners have had to pivot to support basic needs in the communities that are hardest hit by the pandemic.

As we look ahead to 2021 and beyond, all of us at PSR-LA remain hopeful and determined. The enormous grief and hardship presented by 2020 has also shown that our movements are resilient and that we can come together to fight for what is possible. The health voice is at the center of this conversation and PSR-LA will continue to do what we do best — move ideas forward for justice-based solutions that advance health and protect the most vulnerable. We hope that you will continue to stand with us and make a contribution to support our work in 2021 to that our movements are resilient and that we can come together to fight for what is possible.

Thank you for all your support and everything you do to help advance our work.

Celebrating 40 years and building the world we want to see.

Martha Dina Argüello
Executive Director

Denise Duffield
Associate Director

Robert Dodge, MD
President of PSR-LA

Board of Directors

Nuclear Threats

PSR-LA's Nuclear Threats Program advocates for policies that protect health from the harmful impacts of nuclear weapons, waste, and contamination. In 2020, we continued our leading role in the Back from the Brink campaign to fundamentally change U.S. nuclear weapons policy. Despite the challenges of 2020, we helped drive the passage of numerous city and state resolutions throughout the country. In April, we published our Community Costs project, which calculates the full cost of nuclear weapons programs to communities.

In FY 2020, LA County will spend $2,057,720,316 on nuclear weapons programs, and the City of Los Angeles will spend $841,882,188! These tax dollars are much better spent on human needs, especially now as we struggle to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact. Now more than ever, we must change our national priorities and invest in communities, not deadly weapons that must never be used.

In July, PSR-LA launched a redesigned website for the Frontline Launchpad for the Back from the Brink campaign to fundamentally change U.S. nuclear weapons policy. Despite the challenges of 2020, we continued our efforts to ensure the full clean-up of nuclear and chemical contamination at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL.) In February, we hosted a meeting of the SSFL Work Group to inform the community about the site's contamination and engage them in efforts to assure its cleanup. The meeting featured CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld and was attended by over 200 people, including city, county, state, and federal elected officials and representatives. PSR-LA also worked with the community and allied organizations to oppose NASA's efforts to evade its cleanup obligations by nominating the entire SSFL property to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. As a result, the Keeper of the National Register returned the application by over 200 people, including city, county, state, and federal elected officials and representatives. PSR-LA also worked with the community and allied organizations to oppose NASA's efforts to evade its cleanup obligations by nominating the entire SSFL property to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. As a result, the Keeper of the National Register returned the application to NASA in October, telling the agency it needed to account for having failed to reveal the impact that site operations and contamination have on the property, among other problems.

In 2021, we look forward to continuing our SSFL cleanup organizing and developing an intersectional and anti-racist approach to our nuclear abolition work, highlighting the disproportionate impact that nuclear production, waste, and contamination have on women and communities of color.
This year, the LA Leap Campaign continued to grow and brought about several new successes, despite the unforeseen challenges this year presented. As the economic impact of COVID-19 began to unfold, the City moved to reallocate funds from the newly-won Climate Emergency Mobilization Office (CEMO). Yet, thanks to our rapid and coordinated advocacy, we succeeded in saving the CEMO and securing 80% of the originally proposed funds with more opportunities to make up the difference still available. The CEMO will be the central city office for all climate action, and will be overseen by a Commission made up of community representatives and climate experts that will ensure that policy is equitable and uses participatory democracy to prioritize impacted communities.

Additionally, we spent the year identifying potential partners and communities to implement a series of pilot projects that will demonstrate how to bring clean, renewable energy to the communities that need it the most in a cost-effective way. We have been laying the groundwork for several initial pilot projects with community partners that will model the types of projects we hope the CEMO will initiate once it is fully established. We have secured funding from several foundations to support this work, and will be exploring both the life cycle impacts of oil in the city and alternatives for single use plastics.

We have been able to work collaboratively to elevate impacted communities and demand real solutions from those in power. Our relationships are key to our success. With longstanding relationships in Black, Brown, Indigenous and low-income communities (as well as with the health professionals who serve those communities), we have been able to work collaboratively to elevate the voices of impacted communities and to demand real solutions from those in power. We are reaching out to national and international partners to make sure we’re learning from their experiences, and sharing our own to build collective knowledge. We have also been creating and maintaining relationships with city officials, including the City Council and the Mayor’s office of Sustainability, in order to help the city navigate the process of hiring the CEMO director and image the scale and scope of the Office.

We look forward to the full implementation of the CEMO in 2021, and will continue to work with partners in the city to create this powerful and necessary community-led Office, as well as with community members and allies to hold that Office accountable to its stated mission of bringing about real change for the most impacted communities in the city.

**STAND-LA: Our Fight for 2500-foot Setbacks**

PSR-LA seeks to end oil production near homes and schools and bring about a just transition off of fossil fuels through our participation in the STAND-LA Coalition (Standing Together Against Neighborhood Drilling). Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, STAND-LA was able to significantly advance our work in 2020. On December 1st, after years of advocacy urging the City to protect public health by phasing out neighborhood oil drilling, the Los Angeles City Council’s Environment, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice Committee voted unanimously to draft an ordinance to end oil and gas extraction city-wide. The motion, which also advises the City Planning Department to report back on the necessary budget and staff requirements to address oil wells in residential neighborhoods, must now be approved by a full City Council vote. Additionally, the City Attorney’s office has indicated their willingness to defend such an ordinance against legal challenges from the oil industry or oil companies, and Councilmembers have echoed advocates’ calls for the City to help create a just transition plan supporting fossil fuel workers in family-supporting jobs in other industries as oil wells are phased out. This is an important advancement in our campaign and in 2021, we will continue working to realize this motion and to establish a 2500-foot human health and safety buffer in Los Angeles.

Earlier this year, STAND-LA partnered with South LA-based coalitions addressing criminal justice, housing and community planning, homelessness, immigrant and transit justice to organize a candidate forum for the Los Angeles County Supervisor District 2 election at the California African American Museum. We also partnered with actor/activist Jane Fonda, along with Greenpeace and other allies to bring the Fire Drill Friday movement to Los Angeles. Several thousand people, frontline residents and celebrities alike, joined rallies at LA City Hall and in LA’s Harbor area.

Through our work in the Last Chance Alliance and VISION coalitions, we continue extending our oil and gas work to the state level. In response to pressure from our movement, Governor Newsom announced late last year a rule-making process to establish new health and...
The selection of our community for an AB617 air improvement plan was a huge win for SCLA.

Land Use & Health

Building Community Capacity: As the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have shown, community self-determination is critical in creating equitable and healthy neighborhoods, especially for Environmental Justice communities. PSR-LA worked with the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) and other coalition members to develop a new report, Rethinking Local Control in California: Placing Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Heart of Land Use Decision-Making, which was released early this year. We also co-facilitated a webinar highlighting some of the case studies in the report that demonstrate the importance of community-led decision making and centering community voices in land use processes and policymaking at the local, regional, and state levels.

PSR-LA uplifted the concept of community-led decision-making and self-determination during CEJA’s 2020 Congreso, during which we presented on past and current land use policies and practices, such as redlining, that have led to COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on EJ communities, and how residents and advocates have already stepped up to ensure a Just Recovery for our communities.

Additionally, we spent the year supporting our housing justice and tenants’ rights partners in developing and advocating for policies to protect our most vulnerable during these tumultuous and difficult times. In the midst of a pandemic, recession, and racial justice uprising, we believe it is more critical than ever that our efforts are intersectional and broad in order to ensure that everyone, especially EJ communities, can remain safe and healthy.

A Green Transformation: This year, PSR-LA was awarded new funding from the Prevention Institute to explore best practices for transforming contaminated soil in South Central Los Angeles into safe and healthy parks and open space. We have spent the latter half of the year researching remediation technology and processes, as well as interviewing field experts on effective ways of ensuring a democratic and community-led process when it comes to bringing healthy and accessible open space to overburdened communities. We have had the opportunity to work with the South LA Climate Commons in their efforts to transform the Slauson Corridor, and have engaged with residents on identifying environmental justice concerns along the corridor and solutions to address them.

Climate Justice

PSR-LA is a coalition member of VISION (Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods), a statewide coalition of organizations based in communities living on the frontlines of oil and gas extraction. Together, we fought hard for AB 345, the statewide oil and gas setback bill, which would’ve required CalGEM to consider 2500 feet through their rule-making process. Unfortunately, the bill did not survive, but we remain committed to pushing another state setback bill next year.

SCLA-PUSH

Our SCLA-PUSH (South Central LA Project to Understand the Sources of Air Pollution and their Health Impacts) initiative was formed to address the legacy of air pollution in South Central Los Angeles (SCLA), including the impacts on residents’ health and quality of life. Since our launch in January 2019, we have trained over 70 South Central Los Angeles community residents to engage in air quality policy at the local, regional and state levels through our Air Quality Academy (AQA). Given the need to continue engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, our SCLA-PUSH project trained over 40 AQA graduates to become tech-savvy experts in virtual engagement. This allowed us to build community power by engaging them on the environmental reporting process through our newly developed EnviroReport App.

This year, our air quality advocacy work focused on the AB617 State Community Air Protection Program to ensure that SCLA communities were not left out of the opportunity to start an air improvement plan. Our SCLA-PUSH project organized SCLA community residents, community organizations, health professionals, and elected officials to submit over 200 Community Self Nominations to the local air district advocating for an official AB 617 community designation. On Friday, October 2nd, the SCAQMD voted 12-0 to approve the selection of our community for an AB617 air improvement plan, a huge win for SCLA communities. We are energized by this victory and excited for the next phase of this project.

Our recently launched SCLA-PUSH report is a reflection of all we have accomplished over the past year. In 2021, SCLA-PUSH will continue to develop an accurate picture of the complex intersection of air quality, health, cumulative burden, and environmental justice in South Central Los Angeles. We will identify potential solutions to reduce air pollution emissions primarily through creative technology solutions and innovation rooted in a Just Transition framework.
PSR-LA’s Water Program aims to identify threats to Southeast Los Angeles communities’ right to access safe, clean, and affordable drinking water. We advocate for policies that address these threats and promote the human right to water. 2020 was an extremely challenging year for many Californians as they navigated the obstacles set by the COVID-19 pandemic, including stay at home orders and the closure and slow reopening of non-essential businesses, all of which had financial impacts on many Californians’ ability to pay utility bills.

Water is key for the prevention of COVID-19, and PSR-LA along with our allies, has advocated for appropriate responses to the crisis that protect people’s right and access to safe, clean drinking water during the pandemic. While we have achieved temporary solutions to mitigate some of the impacts of COVID-19, we are continuing to fight the long term systemic problems with water management and delivery systems in the LA region.

In 2020, PSR-LA was key in stopping Senate Bill 625, which aimed to dismantle the Central Basin Municipal Water District (CBMWD), a local special district tasked with importing and distributing water supplies locally, and transfer its infrastructure and properties to the Water Replenishment District. Though the CBMWD has been controversial and has had operational issues, the SB 625 “gut and amend” bill left out key local voices in the process. In the upcoming year, PSR-LA aims to continue its involvement in state and local policy efforts focused on water.

We will also continue to connect and build relationships with local organizations, groups and community members who are interested in learning, addressing, and being involved in the decision-making processes that influence Southeast Los Angeles water issues.

PSR-LA’s toxics program continues to address the legacy of toxic chemical contamination from extraction to disposal. Our work seeks to fundamentally shift toxics management in California by supporting a Just Transition and safer alternatives. In 2020, PSR-LA moved important efforts through our work with the CHANGE Coalition (Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy) to advance safer alternatives and health protections for essential workers and frontline communities.

In collaboration with the Environmental Justice Health Alliance (EJHA), we hosted an Environmental Justice, Toxics and Climate Training which focused on fighting environmental racism and building unity among the climate and toxics movement. Over 150 participants attended from California and around the nation including climate, labor, and environmental justice advocates. Through our CHANGE coalition, we supported domestic workers in transitioning to digital organizing, running a full campaign for SB1257, and advocating for health and safety precautions for all workers. We supported the SB312 (Fragrance Disclosure) and AB2762 (The Toxics-Free Cosmetic Act) that were successfully passed into legislation. PSR-LA was also key in supporting legislative work around DTSC reform and strengthened bonds with state allies and climate leaders on the need to address toxics in climate policy and Just Transition efforts.

Nationally, PSR-LA collaborated on the Johnson & Johnson campaign to eliminate and ban the production of harmful talc products and we supported the Campaign for Healthier Solutions actions to advocate for the elimination of toxic products in dollar stores. These collaborations with Coming Clean, EJHA, and the Cancer Free Economy Network have amplified PSR-LA’s toxics work and visibility. PSR-LA has also engaged in legislative and coalition statewide efforts to move a California Green New Deal, a Just Transition, and a Just Recovery and will ensure the ongoing growth of our ability to shape toxics policy that centers the health of fenceline communities and essential workers first.
Health Professional Engagement

In 2020, as our health professional members fought the COVID-19 pandemic and environmental justice communities were some of the hardest hit by this devastating crisis, PSR-LA saw our work intersecting at the frontlines. Research has shown the communities who bear the brunt of environmental racism and the climate crisis are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic at an exponential rate compared to well-resourced communities.

A Note of Gratitude From the PSR-LA Staff

As 2020 comes to a close, the entire staff at PSR-LA want to extend our support to everyone who has been impacted by the incredible crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also want to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has helped our organization navigate the unprecedented challenges of the year. From all of our community partners and allies who worked with us to respond quickly and nimbly, to all of our funders and donors who stood with us and showed trust for our work in the face of unknown circumstances, we want you to know how much we appreciate you. We could not do this work without all of you.

In particular, we want to reinforce our deepest appreciation and solidarity with all of our health professionals who are on the front lines of fighting the COVID-19. Since PSR-LA’s founding, our health professional members have stood side-by-side with communities in the struggle for environmental health and justice. This year, health care workers have put their own personal health and safety at risk to help others who are suffering from the impacts of the virus. In all their work, PSR-LA health professionals have remained deeply dedicated to social justice and understand that to end the gravest threats to human health, we must speak truth to power. This strong and credible voice is needed now more than ever, and we want to express our deep appreciation to all of you for the sacrifices you continue to make, both for other individuals and in the name of protecting public health. Thank you for all you do from all of us at PSR-LA.

Thank you for supporting PSR-LA. We are grateful for all the many ways our community supports this critical work. Please keep up with us in 2021 and stay in touch!

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To donate, please use the enclosed remittance envelope or visit psr-la.org/take-action/membership to donate online.

For more information about PSR-LA, please email rkemal@psr-la.org to contact our Membership Coordinator, Rahel Kemal.
The Year in Review