

THE PHOENIX

WRITING TO REGENERATE COMMUNITY

OUR VISION

We envision a world where communities are self-determined, where many worlds and cultures flourish, and where we look after the well being of ALL forms of life. A world where our lives are liberated from oppression and domination and where the people we love do not have to die in order to live.

The world we envision is created by nurturing our relationships and our commons. This means we build community and keep it alive through our lands, the wisdom and culture of our elder generations, and sharing our knowledge using our languages and voices.

It is created through trust, respect, and caring which will heal, nurture, and strengthen our spirits and our work. And also created by walking with our struggles together ready to fight while using the power of our dignity to create change.

Our role as 50/50 crew is to engage with youth and families in the South Bay to reclaim commons and build spaces of cultural practice, learning and action. We engage some of this work through workshops, talking circles, encounters, learning to be well, and political action. We believe that our humble contributions will help manifest the world we envision.

We came together as 50/50 Crew because we saw a need for change in our community. Each one of us has a purpose and a desire to transform our dreams/vision into a reality. We can no longer wait for change to come. We have to resist and fight to create change now. It is not only the duty of 50/50 to work towards the world that we envision, but it is a vision that wish to share with future generations.



Winter 2012

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We came together as a collective in the summer of 2010 when a group of young people came together due to their frustrations with youth non-profit programs, and college organizations in San Jose, California. The collective wanted to help build a space where youth could come together, learn from each other, and take action towards injustice in society. At the same time, we envisioned a group where power and duties would be shared equally across all members, or as we said, "50/50". As a collective, we started to create and facilitate workshops at youth centers and local high schools to get other young people involved. At this point, people started calling us "50/50 Crew." In the Spring of 2011, 50/50 started to do "Know your Rights" workshops at Gardner community center and supporting youth in their actions to keep the community center open. 50/50 kept facilitating various workshops across San Jose including a movie showing of the Hollywood drama "Panther," which is a film about the rise and history of the political Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. In the summer of 2012, 50/50 held a political kick back



called "Rage, Rebel, and Revolt" at the Biblioteca Latino Americana (Latin American Library) for San Jose youth to come together, engage in conversation, and listen to testimonials of the conditions in San Jose schools and streets. Since then, we as 50/50 have supported other youth groups engaged in resistance across the Bay such as Coaltnealli. 50/50 also attended the 2012 Xicana Moratorium Day in Oakland, CA, marched alongside others in the fight for worker and immigrant rights on May Day, attended retreats, and supported political artists.

Across the Bay and the world, through our actions, we have been spreading the message that "We Are Not Criminals, We Are Youth In Resistance". Our current action is the creation of this newsletter to document our experiences, stories, struggles, and let our voices be heard. We hope to spread our stories about the neglect, abuse, and criminalization of youth that takes place in city streets, schools, and oppressive institutions across the Bay so we can mobilize everyone to get involved in the fight for a dignified and respectful life for all.

T H E W O R D

An East San Jose High School Practicing Prison Politics

I pulled into the parking lot at Andrew Hill High School as the bell rang for class to end. I noticed a regular commotion of students walking to and from class but there did seem to be an intensity different from other days. I stood around to make sure everything was cool. Sure enough, the bell rang for class to start and all students went to class. It seemed that nothing was going on, and I went about my business. A few days later, a student of mine informed me that he got cited by campus police for what supposedly went on during that passing period. The student received a citation for conspiring to start a fight, even though no actual fight occurred (there was a stare down but the student explained he did not want to get in trouble so there was no fight). The student asked that I go with him to speak with the assistant principal at the school about the whole situation as my voice as a staff member may offer some validity to his statement that there was no fight. The student explained the situation to the assistant principal who explained to him that the only way they could void his citation was if he ratted out anyone that brought drugs or weapons to campus. The staff

member said "you have to do something for us if you want us to do something for you." Essentially, the staff member was bargaining the student's induction into the justice system. The student did not want to get into any problems with his peers so he just took the citation.

This story shows what undoubtedly happens often at our schools. Administrators have the power to apply solutions that would create a more united student body, but they don't. Instead they create solutions like suspensions, snitching, and citations, which result in more divisions and feed into the criminalization of youth. At the end of the day, these administrators only find out what happened and what led up to the fight, rather than working to actually resolve and prevent a future incident not only in the school but in the community. They abuse their power because they try to manipulate students to snitch against their own peers and punish them for not cooperating in reproducing more divisions. Ultimately this process neglects the reasons why students might engage in a stare down or see violence as solution. What is even worse is that we trust these adults with the well being of our youngsters but their priority is not the true well being of the youth, but rather exercising a quick fix to a problem through manipulation, punishment, and criminal citation.

WHAT WE WON'T TOLERATE ANYMORE...

ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF YOUTH BY PEOPLE IN POWER...

Teacher watch is a way for us as a community to use our power and challenge abusive authority figures in our education system. How many times have you felt that you were mistreated or disrespected by teacher or administrator? How many times have you felt that you were punished unfairly? **Do not let authority figures abuse their power!** We learn these actions from past struggles like the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, which used the idea of Cop Watch to stop police brutality. They would patrol and intervene in cop activity within their neighborhoods. Like the Panthers we are asking you to record abuse of authority and share it with us so we can start thinking about how we can intervene to end their abuses. When you see it, record it! Use a binder, booklet, or even with your mobile device. We will have enough evidence to make a difference in our community whether we use it as leverage, proof or even just for informational purposes.

CRIMINALIZATION OF YOUTH.....

When a student fights against and speak out against an injustice by a teacher or administrator, or when a student cuts class because they are bored in class, and when a student "acts out" because they are being disrespected or undignified they are often labeled as "deficient". Rather than listening to the student and figuring out why they acted out, the school simply punishes the student through suspensions, expulsions, detentions, and police citations! They are labeled and treated as a criminal for pointing out an injustice! What they fail to see is that what they call acting out, we call resistance. Every day we resist the school system and other places of domination whether we know it or not, but we must now do it collectively and not allow them to treat us like criminals!

BYSTANDER SYNDROME...

Have you ever witness an injustice but didn't do anything about it because you felt things would never change? it didn't impact you? or felt like no one would have your back? This is what we call Bystander Syndrome which can be defined as people in the community not taking action or relying on others to take action for them. This can include a reliance on the police, non-profits, schools, or other capitalist institutions. When we rely on the police, non-profits and others to fix our problems things usually don't get done, the problems are not fixed at the root cause, and we are moved away from building our own power as a community. Further, the state's tactics of abuse and neglect of people eliminate dissent which results in people acting as spectators preoccupied with capitalist functions instead of taking action.

A CALL TO ACTION...

50/50 is here to make a change in our communities, schools, and beyond at our own pace and at our own terms. Over the past two years we have created and presented workshops about how capitalism is impacting our communities, participated in rallies, marches, convened people to talk about the solutions that we envision for our communities. We have created know your rights workshops to arm ourselves anyone in power who tries to abuse their power and keep us down. We are taking action not because we are criminals, but rather because we are people who are resisting injustice because we envision a better world.

During the summer we were able to meet a lot of people around the bay area who are also creating change. Our first "action" happened in July when we invited young people from all over San Jose to first "political kickback" called Rage, Rebel, and Revolt. We organized a political kick back because we wanted people to come together across racial, school, political, generational, and gender lines to discuss solutions and problems in our communities. As we ate and listened to music, we shared our stories around teacher, admin, school, and police abuse and mistreatment.

In August we traveled to Oakland, Ca and met with Xicana/o youth from a group called *Coaltnecalli* which translates to "feminine energy, mother earth, culture" in the nahuatl language from Mexico. This group of young

One step you can take against abuse, and criminalization- knowing your rights!

Questioning & Searches....

School officials **can pull students** out of class and **question them without** reasonable suspicion as long as the school isn't doing it arbitrarily or for purposes of harassment.

California law states that school officials can **only** search you under two requirements...

- Before a school official searches you there must be "**reasonable suspicion,**" **based on facts** that the search will produce evidence you are violating laws or school rules
- Second, school officials *should* search students in a way that is "**reasonable**" based on the student's age and what officials are looking for.
 - Restrictions apply to student physical searches, ex: pat down of clothes, emptying pockets and any personal belongings such as backpacks, lunch bags, purses and/or cars that are on school property

Similar to searches of persons & personal belongings, school lockers are **not supposed to be searched unless there is reasonable suspicion** they will find something that is breaking the law or school rules.

Items found in an illegal search by school officials or police cannot be used against you in criminal or juvenile proceeding, but the evidence **can be** used by the school in disciplinary proceedings.

Strip searches of students are **absolutely prohibited**.

Police on Campus...

Police **DO NOT** have the same rights as school officials to search students. Most situations but not all, police need more justification than a school official. Like public streets, police need a warrant and "probable cause," based on the Fourth Amendment of the US Constitution.

Police **can** stop and frisk (search) you if they have **reasonable suspicion that you are breaking the law, or the suspect is armed**. After a person is lawfully arrested police can search you.

If you are taken off campus by police or for any other reason, the law states that schools must notify parents *unless* the student is taken off campus in the event of child abuse by parents. If you are **questioned on campus by police there is no law** that states schools or police need to notify parents. **Students can exercise their right to remain silent** when questioned by police and should ask to have a parent or trusted adult present. *Since this is not a law requirement, schools and police officers do not have to honor the request.*

people meets every Friday night to think about new ideas and political actions they can take to make sure their schools and communities are safe from abusive police officers and disrespectful teachers. During the same month, we participated in their annual Xicana/o Moratorium Day- a day of political music, various speakers, and community messages. At this event we connected with hella people from all over the bay area who were down and ready to support 5050 and encouraged us to take action in San Jose.

For us, meeting new people and thinking about how to spark a culture of resistance in San Jose is a form of action! Connecting with people who are making a difference in their community is important because learned that there are other courageous people who dare to fight for justice rather than to just accept the constant humiliation in their schools and communities. Through trips and "political" kickbacks we learned that San Jose youth do not have to "punk out" and accept the everyday bullshit. We ask you to join us. Let's come together and organized our communities to the point that we can defend ourselves against abuse. If you are tired of being disrespected by administrators, bad teachers, and corrupt police officers, get involved by learning your rights, join 5050, submit your stories to The Phoenix!

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