

**Youth
Speaks**

**20
23
IMPACT
REPORT**





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Friends of Youth Speaks,

For 27 years, Youth Speaks has thoughtfully challenged the mythical “center” of the social and cultural order to actively seek out voices, texts and narratives that have been deliberately excluded from the larger American Story. Generations of young people have trusted Youth Speaks to help them harness their creative bliss, reconcile contradictions of the worlds through their words and support them in their declarations as stewards of a soundful generation.

20 years ago, I first started my journey with Youth Speaks. It was at a time when our country and world was in a similar moment we find ourselves in today.

The U.S. was in the midst of launching a war on Iraq. A pandemic known as SARS was gripping the globe. Rights to same-sex marriage and educational equity were being aggressively contested in the highest courts across the country.

Times have changed but the urgency of our mission has not.

YOUTH SPEAKS BELIEVES, THAT BRAVE NEW VISIONS OF THE FUTURE DEMAND THE CREATION OF NEW VOICES AND NARRATIVES TO LEAD THE WAY. THIS PAST YEAR, WE DID JUST THAT.

We activated our new 4,623 square feet building in the Mission District of San Francisco—a performance space for safe, brave place-keeping and youth storytelling. Our welcoming, inclusive third space has built a community for local residents, youth and their families, with a focus on engaging youth who have been historically marginalized, isolated and affected by displacement.

We convened a national network of youth voice organizations and arts leaders across the country and hosted 200 youth poets in San Francisco for a return of the beloved Brave New Voices Poetry Festival & Convening.

We partnered with the California Arts Council to administer vital resources to emerging, established and legacy artists at the intersection of art, Indigenous practice, and multi-racial movement work in Northern California.

Our work in Bay Area public schools and neighborhoods continue to reach young people who have limited access and opportunities to literacy programs that build their creative intelligence and critical thinking skills through one-to-one mentoring and peer support.

Youth Speaks is an incubator for youth voices and ideas, and a platform to amplify revolutionary dreams. We honor legacy, but don't believe in resting on it. As we look ahead, we are excited to spark new ideas that challenge us to grow—like Power Lab—and stay true to the models that have enabled us to deliver impact year after year.

Our greatest power is to listen to and amplify the stories of young people of “uncommon” cultures and places, who bring the noise to declare that this world is theirs. This is our work.

Thanks for being part of this movement with us.



Handwritten signature of Michelle Mush Lee.

MICHELLE MUSH LEE
Executive Director



Handwritten signature of Renée Dupree.

RENÉE DUPREE
Board co-Chair



Handwritten signature of Corey Ponder.

COREY PONDER
Board co-Chair

WE CREATE SPACES

THAT CHALLENGE

YOUTH TO DEVELOP &

AMPLIFY THEIR VOICES

AS CREATORS

OF SOCIETAL CHANGE

VISION

We envision a world in which young people are heard, honored, and connected through creative ecosystems of interdependence and care.



OUR GOLDEN RULES

1. THERE ARE NO WRONG ANSWERS

2. THE STANDARD IS YOURSELF

TIMELINE *of* YOUTH SPEAKS

FOR NEARLY THREE DECADES, YOUTH SPEAKS HAS WITNESSED THE POWER AND POTENTIAL OF YOUTH VOICES WHEN THEY FEEL SAFE ENOUGH TO BE HEARD, AND SEEN.

American poet Marc Smith is credited with starting the poetry slam in Chicago.

1984

Youth Speaks founded.

1996

Hip Hop music and artists have a breakout year with albums from 2pac, Outkast, Nas, & Jay Z.

1996

First ever Youth Poetry Slam in the world hosted by Youth Speaks in San Francisco, California.

1997

Youth Speaks hosts first National Youth Poetry Slam (later known as Brave New Voices) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

1998

Queeriosity launches in response to queer youth of color & allies advocating for racial equity, & more safe spaces that reflect their beauty & brilliance.

1998

The global warming and climate change documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* brings in \$50M at the box office.

2006

Youth Speaks pilots youth narrative change campaign, Speak Green. 150 BIPOC poets tour w/Bishop Desmond Tutu, President Bill Clinton & 75+ mayors to amplify intersectional climate justice discourse.

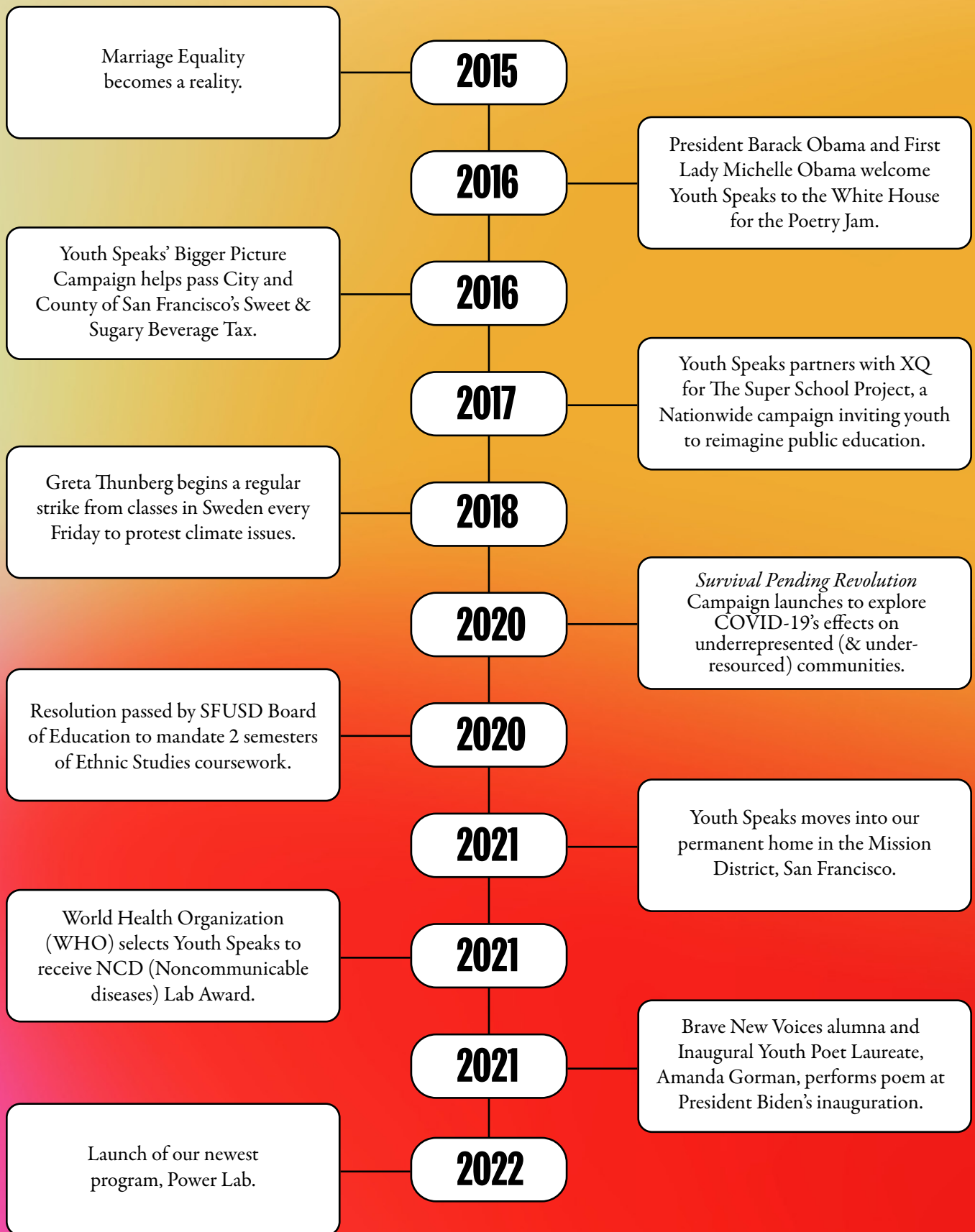
2006

HBO airs 7-part documentary nationally on Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Festival

2009

Launch of The Bigger Picture campaign combating public health disparities through digital storytelling and poetry.

2012



OUR ALUMNI STORY

You can find our alums thriving in music, television, the arts, theater, design, activism, government, politics, academia, journalism, publishing, and of course, poetry.



HIEU MINH NGYUEN

Poet & Lecturer at Stanford University



TERRY TAPLIN

Poet & Berkeley City Council Member



CHINAKA HODGE

Poet, Educator, Playwright, Screenwriter, & Youth Speaks Board



RAFAEL CASAL

Writer, Rapper, Actor, Producer, Director, & Showrunner



GRETCHEM CARVAJAL

Entrepreneur, Artist & Youth Speaks Staff



DAVEED DIGGS

Actor, Rapper, Film Producer & Singer-Songwriter



BENJAMIN EARL TURNER

Film Writer, Actor, Rapper



GEORGE WATSKY

Rapper, Singer, Songwriter, Record Producer, Poet, Author, & Illustrator



OBASI DAVIS

Artist, Designer & Educator



NILES LICHTENSTEIN
Entrepreneur & CEO, Co-
Founder - Nestment



DANEZ SMITH
Poet, Writer & Performer



ZHALARINA SANDERS
Poet & Rapper



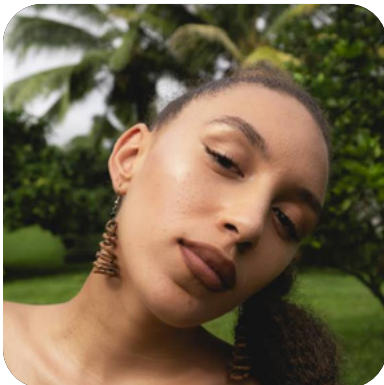
JOSE VADI
Journalist, Writer &
Communications



ELIZABETH ACEVEDO
Writer, Rapper, Actor, Producer,
Poet & Author



LEILA MOTTLEY
New York Times Bestselling
Author & Poet



JADA IMANI
Hip-Hop R&B Artist &
Organizer

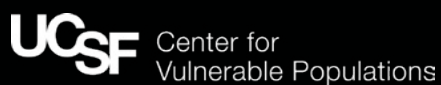


CHANCE THE RAPPER
Rapper



AMANDA CORMAN
Poet & Author

OUR CO-AUTHORS RADICAL PARTNERSHIPS



“[We] youth share such similar experiences but I find that sometimes poetry is the only time we’re truly brave enough to share it.”

- Myra, 17, Youth Speaks Participant



PROGRAMS



Youth Speaks believes in the power of fostering creativity through the arts to support the healthy development of young people. We know that access to the arts is especially vital for Indigenous, Black, Latine, Asian & Pacific Islander, immigrant, LGBTQIA+ youth, and others who are historically unheard.

Youth Speaks operates locally in the Bay Area, regionally working with partner organizations throughout California, and nationally through our Brave New Voices network. Here are our key programs.

ARTS EDUCATION & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



IN-SCHOOL RESIDENCIES

Residencies are high-level creative writing and performance poetry workshops at local schools. Youth Speaks Teaching Artists partner with teachers in complementary subjects to engage youth in culturally relevant arts education.

WRITING & PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS

Our Writing and Performance Workshops are the heart of Youth Speaks. Young people come together weekly with an amazing poet mentor to imagine, write, share and rehearse.

ARTISTIC PRESENTATION & CREATIVE EXPRESSION



UNDER 21 OPEN MIC

Our famous monthly open mics are produced and promoted by SPOKES members and are curated to provide emerging young writers and performers affirming spaces to flex their skills on the mic in a fun, safe, and brave environment.

TEEN POETRY SLAM

The Teen Poetry Slam is an opportunity for youth artists to represent the Bay Area at the Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival. The Slam is an Olympic-style competition where poets have 3 minutes to rock the stage.

UNIFIED FEST

Unified Fest is where the Bay Area's best young emcees and youth poetry slam teams gather to show their skills in two events: MC Olympics and the Unified Poetry Slam. MC Olympics is an Olympic-style hip hop competition featuring the Bay Area's best young emcees.

YOUTH NARRATIVE POWER



POWER LAB

Power Lab brings together youth, organizers, industry experts, and community leaders to leverage the power of culture to influence policy, combat misinformation, and heal civic trauma. We bring together passionate young poets to learn about the power of public narratives and social justice storytelling by exploring dominant narratives about complex issues at the center of young people's lives. Power Lab participants innovate and create new works that connect individual voices to collective stories.

SPOKES

SPOKES are Youth Speaks' youth advisory board. They are the decision-makers, vision bearers, and spirit of what Youth Speaks does. SPOKES is a paid position that works directly with Youth Speaks staff to build community and receive artistic and leadership development through hosting, curating and leading event and workshop spaces including the Backyard Conference.

NATIONAL



BRAVE NEW VOICES FESTIVAL & BRAVE NEW FUTURES CONVENING

Brave New Voices is the only festival of its kind. Every year, 500 young poets and the nation's leading artists convene in a different U.S. city, or online during the pandemic years, for a multi-day celebration of arts education, performance, and civic engagement. In addition to youth tracks, Youth Speaks provides professional development and enrichment for adult leaders in the field. In July 2022, Youth Speaks convened adult leaders from 11 youth arts and culture storytelling organizations for a multi-day conference about the future of our field and moving towards narrative and cultural building power.

“My favorite part of the event was hearing about other people’s vulnerabilities. It was a reminder for me to be honest with my emotions, pains, and experiences. This was healing and has inspired me.”

- Stacy, Youth Speaks Participant

AUDIENCE

96%

Youth Speaks events helped them connect more to others

95%

Felt more inspired to write or create art after a Youth Speaks event

99%

Youth Speaks event had a positive effect on their mental health



PARTICIPANTS

85%

We helped them understand perspectives different from their own

76%

We had a positive effect on their mental health

83%

We bring value to their school that is different from other programs



OUR REACH

During the 2022-23 program year, we engaged:

9,018

**YOUTH ENGAGED
IN LOCAL
PROGRAMMING**



7,000+

**AUDIENCE MEMBERS
GOT DOWN WITH US
AT AN EVENT!**



\$80,000

**IN STIPENDS FOR
YOUTH ARTISTS**



DIGITAL REACH

During the 2022-23 program year, we engaged:



20M REACHED

ON INSTAGRAM

19,6K Followers
Gained 8k+
in one year on
Youth Speaks &
Brave New Voices
profiles



4M VIEWS

ON TIKTOK

64.6K
Followers
Gained
60K in
one year



2M VIEWS

ON YOUTUBE

259K Subscribers



*“It’s the 21st century,
we’re long past the time
where we associate age
with wisdom.”*

- Yamini, age 16



Yamini at Teen Poetry Slam 2022 at the Sydney Goldstein Theater, SF

OUR NARRATIVE POWER AGENDA

So often when we talk about the future, **the future** itself is rarely in the **conversation**. Since 2006 (and the launch of our Speak Green campaign), Youth Speaks has applied our deep knowledge of youth culture and narratives to shift mindsets, transform policies and expand dignifying opportunities for Indigenous, Black, Latine, Pacific Islander, Asian American, Arab, immigrant and working class youth to bring us closer toward tangible transformation.

We're committed to creating opportunities for leadership where youth learn cultural organizing principles and "culture change" skills to amplify their voices as leaders of artist-led systems change.

For a **new generation of cultural leaders** to live confidently and with hope depends our unwavering support of artists, whose applications of voice advance systems of interdependence, abundance and belonging. Our commitment to young people of our Future World includes the voices, stories, and lived experiences of young people among us whose expressions of survival have often been met with sentences of silence and civic abandonment.

We are excited to lead a broad-scale **Youth Narrative Strategy for justice** powered by the voices of young people –a movement where youth artists can enter the public policy domain as valuable purveyors of community-led change. And we've spent the last 27 years setting the stage for it to happen.



GLOBAL REACH

Top YouTube Cities

- Nairobi, Kenya
- New York, U.S.
- Lusaka, Zambia
- Pretoria, South Africa
- Los Angeles, U.S.
- Accra, Ghana
- Chicago, U.S.
- London, England
- Kampala, Uganda
- Sydney, Australia
- Cape Town, South Africa
- Toronto, Canada
- Abuja, Nigeria
- Melbourne, Australia
- Houston, U.S.

Aiya “Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam Finals 2019”
232,000 Plays (1.1M all time)



Get Lit “Rape Joke”
144,000 Plays (7.2M all time)



Royalty “Letter To Your Flag”
107,000 Plays (1.5M all time)



MAGIC MOMENTS



CHAMPAGNE + POETRY



UNIFIED FEST!!
APR 22 2023



**TEEN POETRY SLAM
W/MOSES MOODY! GO DUBS!!**



**BRAVE
NEW
VOICES 2023**



A thank you from the Youth Speaks staff for making this past year incredible.

FINANCIAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Consolidated
Statement of
Financial
Position

ASSETS	
Cash And Cash Equivalents	\$659,837.63
Receivables	\$3,189,739.97
Investments, at Market Value	\$3,406,226.92
Fixed Assets	\$31,730.57
Property	\$1,783,461.79
Prepaid Expenses, Inventory Assets Deposits	\$16,417.31
Total Assets	\$9,087,414.19

LIABILITIES	\$191,897.69
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NET ASSETS	
Without Donor Restrictions	\$4,674,645.81
With Donor Restrictions	\$3,837,953.81
Total Net Assets	\$8,512,599.62
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$8,704,497.31

Consolidated
Statement of
Activities

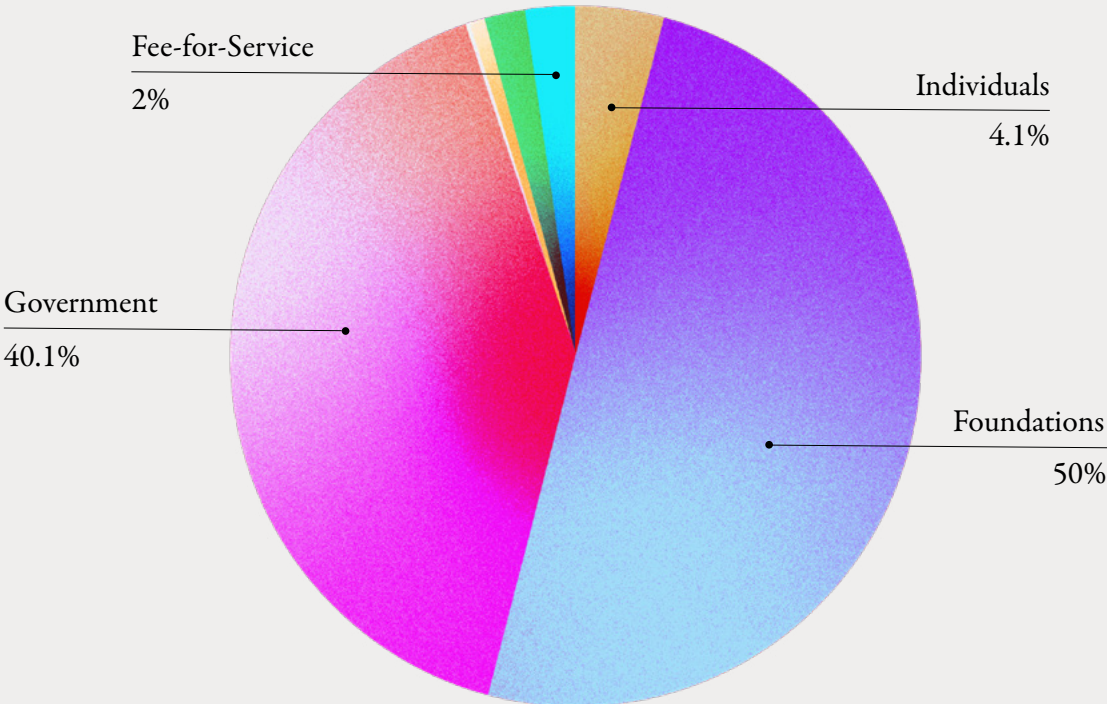
SUPPORT & REVENUE	
Contributions & Grants	\$5,016,175.30
Fee-for-Service, Registration & Ticket Sales	\$159,923.22
Net Assets Temporarily Restricted	\$-3,456,369.79
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$1,231,259.20
Total Support & Revenue Before Gains on Investments & Other Assets	\$2,950,987.93
Gain or Loss on Investment	\$85,401.71
Total Support	\$3,036,389.64

OPERATING EXPENSES	
Programs	\$1,979,830.23
Supporting Expenses	
Fundraising	\$308,993.31
Marketing	\$50,979.99
Administration	\$386,466.06
Facilities	\$86,111.39
Total operating & Supporting Expenses	2,812,380.98

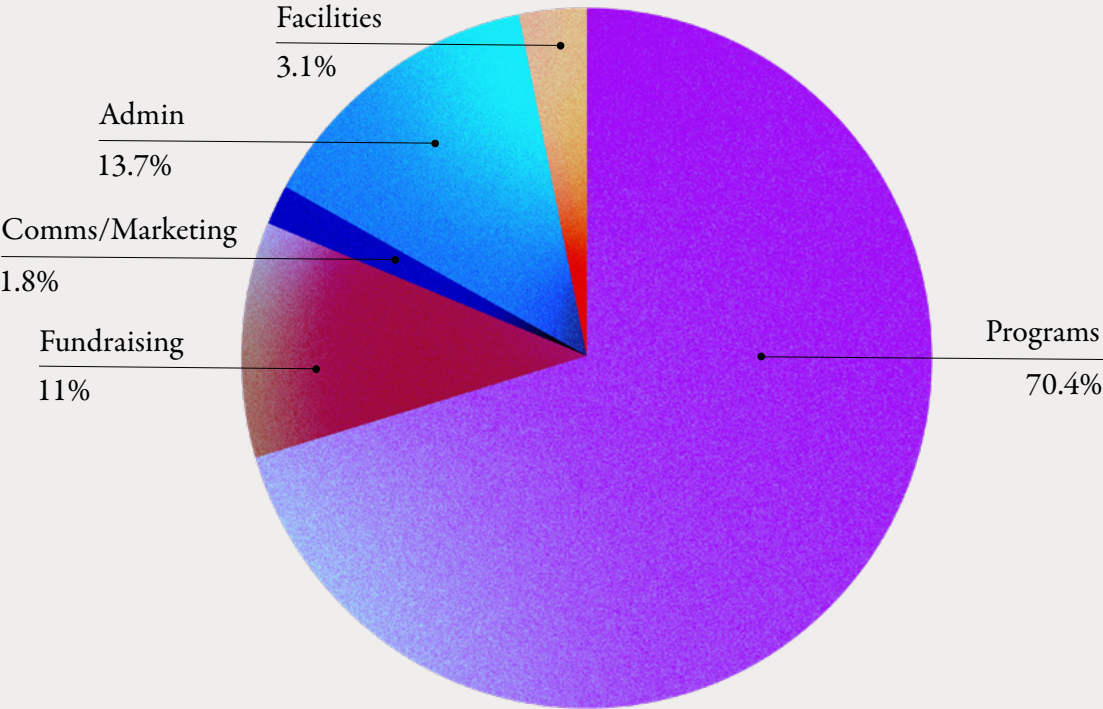
NET INCOME	\$224,008.66
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* Financials are unaudited

SUPPORT & REVENUE



PROGRAM EXPENSES & SUPPORTING SYSTEMS



“Youth Speaks is a force of nature. It is a powerful space within our democracy from which young people can fly bravely out into the world with new found voices...Youth Speaks is the beat of a generation, empowering young leaders who’ll take us through the years ahead in ways we can’t yet imagine.”

- Robert Redford, Actor & Philanthropist



OUR PEOPLE

Youth Speaks is proud to be a BIPOC-led, woman-led, immigrant-informed organization

99%

**OF STAFF
MEMBERS
IDENTIFIES
AS BIPOC**

57%

**OF OUR TEAM
IDENTIFIED AS
CHILDREN OF
IMMIGRANTS**

71%

**OF OUR
BOARD
IDENTIFIES
AS BIPOC**



TEAM



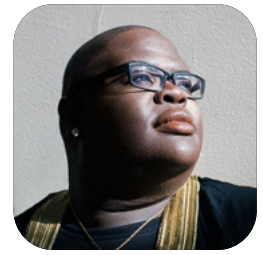
Michelle Lee



Joan Osato



Stephanie Cajina



Darius Rashad Parker



Bijou McDaniel



Nick James



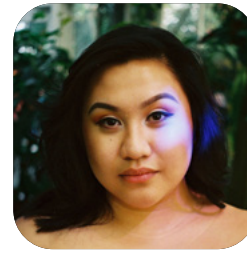
Sandy Vazquez



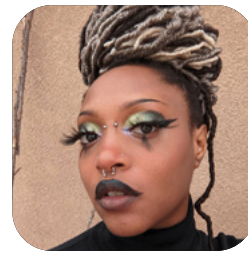
Paola Ramirez



Kaylé Barnes



Gretchen Carvajal



Aleah Bradshaw



Leticia Guzman



Vania Luna Gutierrez



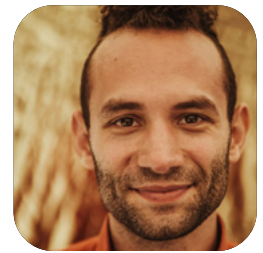
Annie Jupiter-Jones



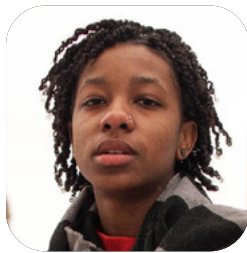
Bridgette Yang



Jose Portillo



Maximiliano Urruzmendi



England Smith



Kat Evasco



Perla Barraza



Moira E. Pirsch



Tierra Lu

BOARD



Renée Dupree



Corey Ponder



Chinaka Hodge



Tony Francis



Tim Haydock



Jenny Fan Raj



Jen Heifferon



Emily Leys



Evan Bissell



Alyson Palmer



Steve Cox

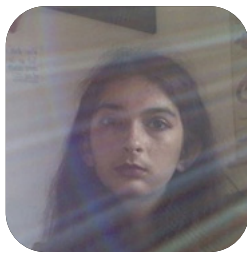


Cesar Luna



Laura Brief

SPOKES



Minerva



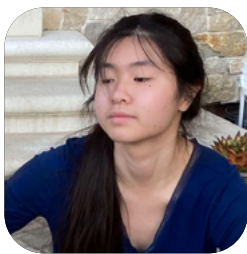
Sarah



Myra



Mahder



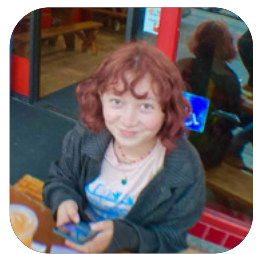
Lauren



Zoe



Jescent



Rena

As we
embrace resist
the future the present the past
we work we struggle we begin we fail
to understand to find to unbraid to accept to question
the grief the grief the grief the grief
we shift we wield we bury
into light as ash
across our faces



**...THE NEXT
GENERATION
SPEAKS
FOR ITSELF**