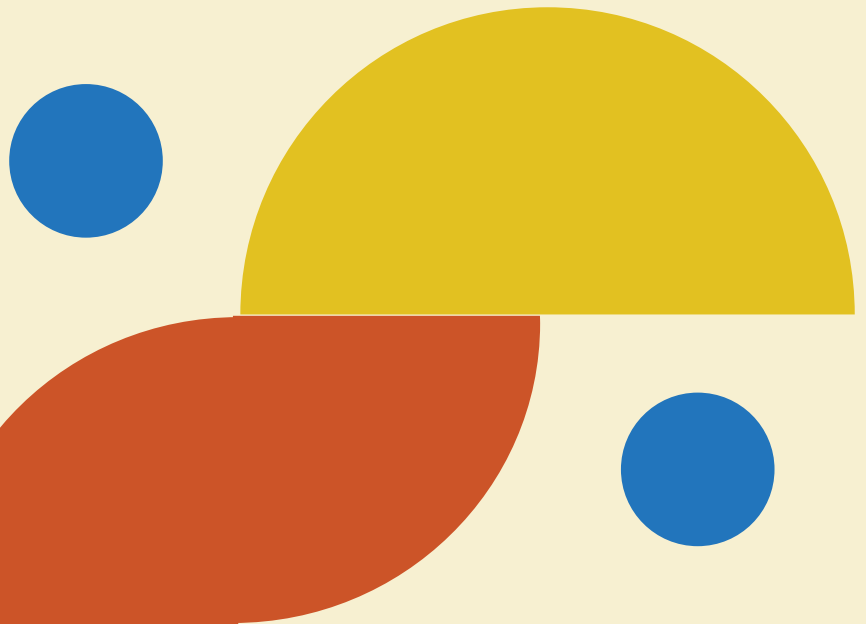


ANNUAL REPORT

2023

O ROOT &
REBOUND





Our Mission

Root & Rebound's mission is to support people navigating reentry and reduce the harms perpetuated by mass incarceration.

Team

Amanda Carlin, *Litigation Staff Attorney*

Deborah Choi, *Youth Justice Staff Attorney*

Katie Decker, *Record Cleaning Paralegal*

Eva DeLair, *Deputy Director, California Programs*

Marvel L. Faulkner, *Reentry Attorney*

Sam Fishman, *In-Prison Programs Attorney*

Alesia Flores, *Deputy Director of National Programs and South Carolina Managing Attorney*

Carmen Garcia, *Executive Director and President*

Zack Gates, *Data Manager*

Zach Gautier-Klos, *CA Policy Attorney*

Claudia Gonzalez, *Central Valley Policy Associate*

Gabriel Gonzalez, *Shartsis Friese LLP Public Interest Fellow*

Fredrick Green, *Warm Handoff Fellow*

Daniel Halpern, *Senior Paralegal*

Stephen Ho, *In-Prison Programs Coordinator*

Joshua Kim, *National Director of Litigation for Economic Opportunity*

Marshal Lawler, *Policy Fellow*

Mona Patel, *Supervising Attorney, Record Cleaning Program*

Jamie Popper, *Supervisory Attorney, In-Prison Programs*

Kiran Rao, *AmeriCorps VISTA Data Analyst*

Luke Robins, *AmeriCorps VISTA Development & Communications*

John Rodriguez, *Education & Communications Manager*

Chloe Sanderson, *Program Coordinator*

Alwin Smith, *Resource Specialist & Employment Coach*

Ivet Soria, *Supervising Social Services Manager*

Sarah True, *Equal Justice Works Fellow*

Janae Wright, *Frontline Operations Support*

Gail Yen, *California Policy Director*

Thank you to Kayla Jenkins, who designed this Annual Report, and to all of our interns, law clerks, volunteers, clients and donors who are invaluable members of our team.

Board of Directors

Saeleen Bommarito

Carmen Garcia

Irene Diaz

Watani Stiner

Dear Friends,

Thank you for being a part of this community that continues to build positive change in the lives of individuals and the reentry systems.

I am so grateful for our wonderful partners that deepen the quality and broaden the reach of the work we do. Thank you to our incredible staff in California and South Carolina who work every day to improve reentry success. Thank you to our incredible donors and volunteers who give their resources, time, and knowledge to contribute to the massive work that we do. Thank you also to all of our clients who trust us to stand by them in their reentry journeys and who teach us, through their hard work, the path forward in the reentry world. It is this incredible combination of partner organizations, staff, volunteers, donors, and clients that creates the Root & Rebound community.

In 2023, our community won major victories in reentry systems and individual journeys of people returning home from incarceration.

Root & Rebound made serious legislative changes in both California and South Carolina this year. Five bills that we sponsored passed into law. These bills relied on our community at each step of the process. Our clients showed us the most pressing obstacles currently preventing successful reentry, our staff and community partners worked tirelessly through the political process, and our donors and volunteers built the political momentum to pass the bills.

Together, we passed AB 937 and the Stable Parents, Stable Children Act in California which strengthens family stability for parents in reentry and their children. We also sponsored another successful California bill that addressed housing during reentry and two bills in South Carolina (House Bill 3605, House Bill 3890) that supported youth and people seeking professional licenses and certificates. I am so proud of these bills that are now improving reentry systems and impacting the lives of the people we work with daily.

Many people we work with return from incarceration ready to work through massive barriers in order to give back to their communities. We work with individuals who are in the process of becoming supportive parents, mentors, leaders, nurses, firefighters, and more. With our support in 2023, these community members overcame barriers to professional licensure, housing and employment discrimination, family separation, and other systemic injustices. All the members of our Root & Rebound community support these incredible journeys in a system that often makes these journeys seem impossible.

Each one of you plays a crucial role in achieving our mission to support people navigating reentry and reduce the harms perpetuated by mass incarceration. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful community in 2023. We look forward to all we will achieve this year and beyond.

With love and gratitude for this community,



Carmen Garcia
Executive Director and President



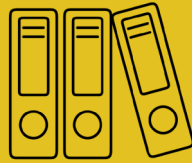
Our Reach in 2023

POLICY



3 bills in CA and 2 bills in SC that we co-sponsored passed into law

EDUCATION



951 people attended our reentry trainings and workshops

DIRECT SERVICE



2,480 people received individualized legal services

925

Prison mail letters received

254

Volunteers

"Knowing that I had a dedicated advocate in my corner, fighting for my rights and believing in my capacity for positive change, has had a profound impact on my mental well-being and sense of self-worth."

Gabriel's Story

"I'm a firefighter. That's what I am. And I love to do it"

In the heart of a forest, amidst sweltering temperatures, Gabriel steadily clears vegetation, preparing for the encroaching threat of wildfire. With each swing of his axe, beads of sweat trace a path down his face and arms. Despite the exhaustion, he finds solace in the rhythmic motion, his mind shedding the burdens of the past. As a California firefighter, this work serves as his therapy, but getting there wasn't easy.

Root & Rebound worked with Gabriel who, unlike some of his peers, started his firefighting journey in prison. Tackling fires helped him momentarily erase the environment he was in, extinguishing the concrete that surrounded him. Firefighting was the outlet that helped him feel like he had a purpose in the world again.



Emerging from years of incarceration, Gabriel found himself navigating a world that felt both foreign and unwelcoming. He applied to programs and asked for support from others, but the help wasn't always there. Despite initial setbacks and rejections, he was determined to take his freedom seriously. He enrolled in fire training programs, started community college, and remained sober. Through perseverance and his commitment to hold the title of a firefighter outside of prison, Gabriel not only earned his place in the firefighting community but also achieved the remarkable feat of expunging his record—with Root & Rebound's help—and is now able to pursue his EMT certification. Today, as he continues to serve his community, Gabriel embodies a source of inspiration for individuals attempting to move beyond the shadows of their previous lives.





Our Clients Say

From our 2023 Deep Direct Services Surveys, which Root & Rebound conducts twice every year to measure our impact.

99%

of clients now have more opportunities available to them

99%

of clients feel more confident in their ability to achieve their goals

82%

of clients have more secure housing

91%

report feeling more confident navigating government systems and programs

74%

of clients agree that their income has increased

91%

report feeling more knowledgeable about their rights

91%

of clients feel more confident in their ability to be there for their families

75%

of clients have been able to gain access to public benefits

"[Root & Rebound] has also made me feel like I can be a contributor to society rather than an outlaw."

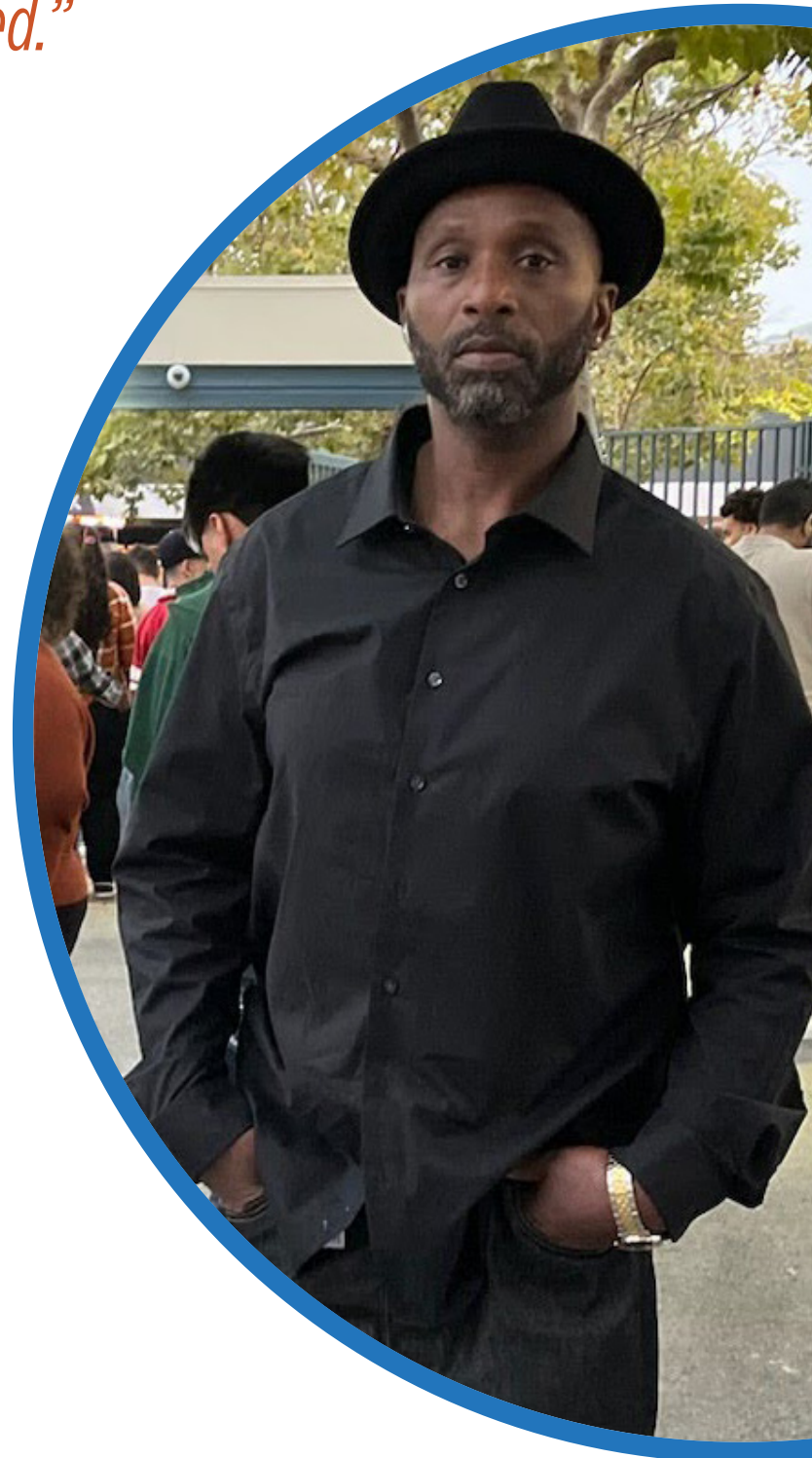
Shujaa's Story

“We had been gone 20, 30 years, so like we didn't know nothing about the outside world.... Root & Rebound came in and brought us up to speed.”

After spending 25 years of his life behind bars, Shujaa shares his journey from prison to freedom. Before his parole hearing, he felt the weight of preparing for the unknown and the potential challenges of re-entering society. Root & Rebound's workshop at Folsom State Prison provided crucial information on employment rights, housing, parole conditions, and benefits. Shujaa's release was supported by a well-crafted reentry plan and a letter from Root & Rebound to the parole board.

Upon release, Shujaa experienced the joys of freedom but also confronted the harsh reality of a changed world. Navigating a city filled with challenges, he learned to exercise self-control and discipline. However, reentry is not without setbacks. Shujaa faced the heartbreak of being denied permission to attend his aunts' funerals, highlighting the ongoing struggle for understanding and support from parole officers.

Six months into his new life, Shujaa is rebuilding. Working two jobs, attending self-help groups, and adapting to technological changes, he dreams of becoming a truck driver and owning a home. His ultimate hope is to be seen not as a former prisoner but as a normal person capable of change and trust. Shujaa's story sheds light on the complexities of life after incarceration and the ongoing journey toward a new normal.



Our Model

Root & Rebound's unique model utilizes a four-pronged approach to dismantle racial and economic inequity born out of reentry systems and support successful reentry journeys.



DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Via our free, statewide legal hotlines, legal clinics, and direct representation in court in California and South Carolina, we have supported more than 13,000 people since our founding in overcoming the legal barriers and discrimination that stand in the way of their reentry goals.



SYSTEMS REFORM

Through policy advocacy and litigation in California and South Carolina, we remove structural barriers to opportunity for all people impacted by the criminal legal system in housing, employment, family reunification, and more. When we encounter a lack of political will to pass needed reforms, we advance impact litigation against discriminating employers, landlords, and public agencies.

"Root and Rebound helped expunge my record which allows me to have a good job now that can help me support my family."



NARRATIVE CHANGE

We share the voices and stories of our community of clients, partners, and supporters to shed light on systemic injustice, challenge societal stigma around having a criminal record, and put forth a vision for change. We believe in giving people the opportunity to demonstrate, through their actions, who they are today and to construct their own narratives that counter preconceived notions. We actively recruit people with lived experience into leadership roles in our organization; 75% of our Board of Directors is system-impacted.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

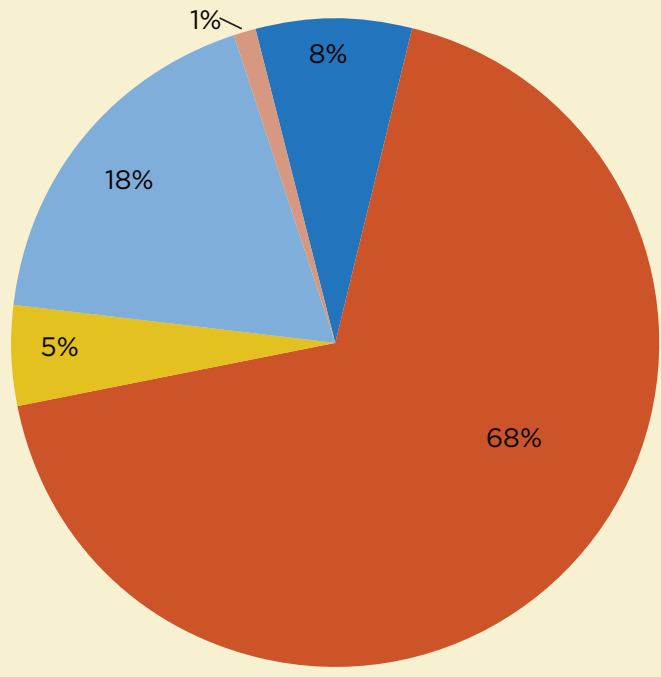
Being rooted in community grounds all of our work. We build relationships with people in reentry and the justice reform community through deep partnerships with social service and advocacy organizations, community outreach, clinics, webinars, our client policy advisory council, and our volunteer and pro bono programs.



Financial Overview

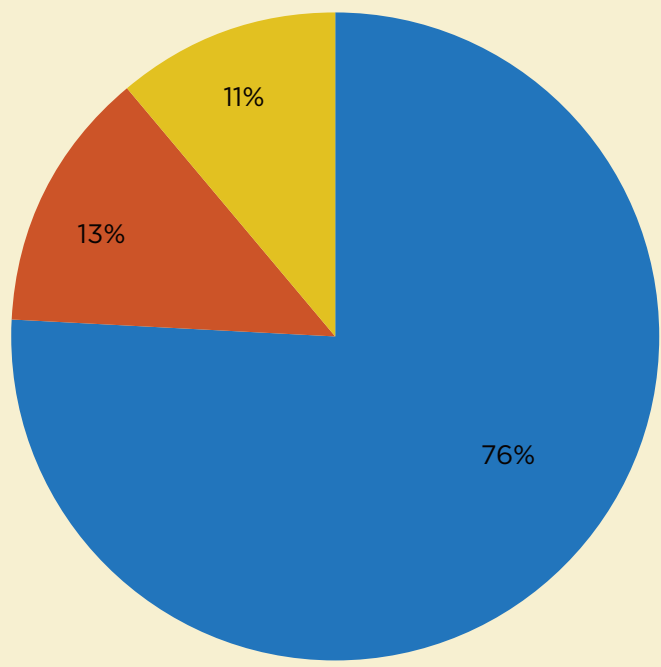
REVENUE

- Corporate
- Foundation
- Individual
- Government
- Earned

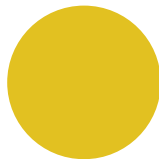


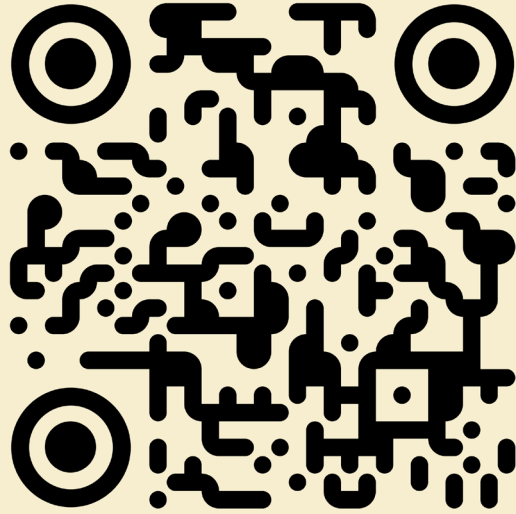
EXPENSES

- Program
- Administration
- Fundraising



*Your donations make
this work possible.
Thank You!*





SCAN TO MAKE A DONATION

“[Root & Rebound] gave me hope that my past will not define my future.”



www.rootandrebound.org

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