Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friend,

Due to your partnership and generous support of our frontline initiatives, 2022 was a year of great victories for the Romero Institute. Your support empowered the Lakota People’s Law Project in its battle to protect Indigenous rights and sovereignty, Let’s Green CA!’s mission for a livable planet, our RICO offense against Big Oil, and our Special Media Project.

In the midst of growing inflation, a brutal war in Ukraine that derailed U.S climate goals, and shocking greed by the oil industry, you kept us moving forward to achieve a contract to develop a progressive television series based on our organizational history, a legal blueprint to expose the criminal history of Big Oil, and historic breakthroughs for the Lakota people and California climate policy.

With your help, we were able to win a lawsuit with our allies forcing the State of South Dakota to at last comply with the National Voter Registration Act, thus increasing voter access for the Lakota people and all citizens of the state. Critical support from our generous Lakota Law community also helped our intrepid legal team to assemble a unique *amicus* brief to the Supreme Court defending the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

On the West Coast, our Let’s Green CA! initiative had a great victory when the California legislature passed SB1230, which we introduced with State Senator Monique Limon, a host of sponsors, and allies from the environmental, labor, and environmental justice communities. This legislation makes it possible for low- to moderate-income communities to participate in buying electric vehicles through financial incentives available at the point of purchase. Millions more people will now be able to help bring down our transportation carbon emissions in California, the fifth largest economy in the world.

You are helping us build alliances and co-create solutions that are critical to a livable future.

Our intrepid legal team made great progress assembling the criminal racketeering crimes of Big Oil, drafting a 350-page complaint with a 100-page appendix. With your help, we will complete the investigation and complaint in 2023 and be ready to launch an organizing campaign for candidates in the 2024 election cycle: “If you get elected, will you hold Big Oil accountable for its crimes?”

In this annual report, you’ll discover more highlights of our program initiatives and gain insights into our impacts, financials, and goals moving forward — all of which is empowered by your generous support. Thank you for walking with us on this sacred journey!

In deep appreciation for all that you do,

*Sara Nelson*

*Executive Director*
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2022 Annual Report
Named for the martyred Salvadoran priest Archbishop Óscar Romero, the **Romero Institute** is an interfaith, nonprofit law and policy center based in Santa Cruz, CA. Descended from the Christic Institute and home of the Lakota People’s Law Project and Let’s Green CA!, we defend Indigenous communities and the Earth. For more than 50 years, our leaders have been guardians and advocates for the people. Through public education, grassroots organizing, leadership development, research, investigation, impact litigation, and forward-thinking public policy, we take action where our objectives have the potential for large-scale impact. We embrace new ways of thinking that promote a consciousness of unity and cooperation.

**Mission:** The Romero Institute strategically exposes systemic injustice and implements lasting solutions. We defend Indigenous rights and fight to end the climate emergency. We protect constitutional rights, treaty rights, human rights, and the environment. We champion equity and advocate for the people.

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**Daniel Sheehan, Esq.**

A Harvard-trained constitutional law attorney, Daniel Sheehan, Esq. serves as the Romero Institute’s president, chief council, architect of public policy, and primary spokesperson. Daniel has led or participated in some of the most important public interest cases of the last 50 years, including the Watergate and Iran-Contra Scandals, the Pentagon Papers, and the killing of Karen Silkwood.

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**www.RomeroInstitute.org**

Located at 210 High Street 2nd Floor, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
RICO

In 2022, based on rigorous research by our legal team, Daniel Sheehan drafted a 350-page criminal Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) legal complaint, with a 100-page appendix, against the six major oil companies that conduct business in California. It is designed to facilitate the empaneling of grand juries by state attorneys general and U.S. Attorneys with the goal of developing admissible evidence of the crimes committed by individuals making decisions to commit mail fraud, assassination programs, bribery, witness intimidation, kidnapping, blackmail, and other criminal activities. These individuals include CEOs, management officials, key stockholders and financiers, and the American Petroleum Institute, which conspired with oil leaders to lie to the American public about the known dangers of fossil fuels causing climate change.

The Romero Institute, formerly the Christic Institute, is the only nonprofit group ever to have filed such a civil RICO suit — against the 29 people who were working with Oliver North in the Iran Contra scandal.

Romero Institute was honored to be named a Top Nonprofit of 2022 by Great Nonprofits — a crowdsourced reputability review site. To read firsthand accounts of the experiences volunteers, experts, and donors have had with Romero Institute, visit https://greatnonprofits.org/org/romero-institute.

Special Media Project

In 2022, the Romero Institute agreed to provide access to the Romero/Christic archives to a Los Angeles media production company for development of a TV series about who killed nuclear labor leader Karen Silkwood in 1974. The series will tell the story of the young people who came together to drive a national organizing, educational, and litigation campaign to uncover the truth about Karen's death. It will explore the dangers of the nuclear industry and implications for the modern world.

Learn More & TAKE ACTION in our brand new website www.RomeroInstitute.org
LET'S GREEN CA!
We have a moral obligation to end the climate crisis.
As the fifth largest economy in the world and a historic environmental leader, California is uniquely positioned to create a model of equitable climate action that can be replicated worldwide.

Mission:
Let’s Green CA! partners with underserved communities and working families throughout California to build ground-up solutions to the climate crisis. At Let’s Green CA!, we put jobs and workers first, cost and consumers first, equity and frontline communities first.

2022 represented a watershed year for Let’s Green CA! and California climate action as a whole, thanks to activists like you. Take a look:
youtu.be/VTy6V0s7LDI

We did it!
Romero Institute’s new Let’s Green CA! program is off to an incredible start, successfully passing statewide climate legislation in our second year! Our clean car equity bill SB 1230, co-sponsored by the Dolores Huerta Foundation and authored by California Senator Monique Limón, was signed into law by Governor Newsom in September. SB 1230 paves the way for large-scale, equitable participation in California’s clean car revolution by simplifying and streamlining the process of applying for clean car incentives and by making thousands of dollars in incentives and rebates available to customers at the point of sale. This is a huge win for working families across California, public health, and climate action!

Join the movement to win climate justice for Californians greencal.org
A Year of Alliance Building

**2,175 primarily low-income & Spanish speaking people reached through our home electrification education events.**

**IN THE NEWS**

“The Guardian

**INSIDE AMERICA’S GROUNDBREAKING SOLAR-POWERED HEALTH FACILITY**

“To build out the system and renovate the clinic to accommodate solar panels on its roof, the clinic partnered with the non-profit climate justice group Let’s Green CA.”

(Read More)

**Environmental Justice (EJ) Workforce Standards**

We built an alliance of over 35 labor, EJ, and climate advocates to fight for good jobs and equity at California’s community choice energy (CCE) programs! We’re working together to ensure that our transition to clean energy creates family-supporting careers and that frontline communities have a real voice in what wind and solar projects look like and how they’re built.

**Electrification Education in Spanish speaking and underserved communities**

In 2022, we took our message of electrification to the very people who will gain the most from getting fossil fuels out of their lives — low income communities of color. Our organizers connected residents in farm working communities with thousands of dollars in incentives for clean cars and healthy homes. We hosted a bilingual induction cooking class at the San Benito Health Foundation and organized education sessions at Catholic parishes in Santa Cruz, Salinas, Castroville, and Soledad. We were proud to do this work with support from Central Coast Community Energy, Ecology Action, and Electrify America.

**1,700 public comments submitted to protect Indigenous lands at Juristic.**

**15,000 Solar Panels Installed at Granite Rock**
Lakota Peoples Law Project was born in 2004, when a group of Lakota grandmothers asked the Romero Institute to help prevent South Dakota’s Department of Social Services from systematically removing Native children from their families and tribal communities. LPLP’s focus expanded in 2016, when the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) threatened the Sioux Nation’s sacred lands and water. By 2020, we had developed close ties with tribal nations throughout South Dakota and other nonprofits, working together to replace fossil fuels with renewable solutions, protect the voting rights of Native people, defend Indigenous foster children and their families, and more.

Mission: A coalition of Native and non-Native activists and lawyers, the Lakota People’s Law Project (LPLP) partners with Lakota and other Native communities, creating systemic change that supports the sovereignty of the Oceti Sakowin oyate — the People of the Seven Council Fires — and Native nations throughout the United States. We combine public education, on-the-ground organizing, lobbying, and high-impact litigation to help win Native and environmental justice and safeguard Indigenous sovereignty.

During 2022, Lakota Law won justice as a plaintiff in court on voting rights against South Dakota, strengthening enforcement of the National Voter Registration Act. We also reached thousands of Native voters with Oceti Vote, our get-out-the-vote event in Rapid City during election season. Our lawyers issued an *amicus* brief to the Supreme Court to protect the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and we continued our fight against the Dakota Access pipeline, partnering with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to produce our “Water Wars” video series. You can watch the entire series right here.

Our Journey Together in 2022

- We accomplished so much together!

- Won a lawsuit as a plaintiff forcing South Dakota to comply with the National Voter Registration Act, thus increasing and protecting voting access for Native and all people across the state.

- Launched our “Water Wars” video series in partnership with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Great Plains Tribal Water Alliance, spotlighting numerous legal violations by the federal government and DAPL parent company Energy Transfer.

- Co-authored an *amicus* brief with U.S. Senator and ICWA author James Abourezk to defend Native children and sovereignty from an attack in the Supreme Court.

- Produced the Oceti Vote event, a weekend-long festival to register Native voters and raise awareness about the 2022 national election. Watch event highlights here.
PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS

“South Dakota Settles with Tribal Nations in Voting Rights Lawsuit”

“In August 2021, The Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Lakota People’s Law Project, and individual voters filed a lawsuit in district court alleging that the state was failing to uphold portions of the law, particularly a mandate for driver’s license offices and public assistance agencies to provide voter registration services to their clients during applications, renewals and change of address requests.”

(Read More)

DON’T LET ICWA BE THE FIRST DOMINO

80,025 People signed our “Protect the Indian Child Welfare Act” Petition

PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS

“South Dakota Settles with Tribal Nations in Voting Rights Lawsuit”

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(Read More)

GETTING OUT THE NATIVE VOTE

“Push for greater Native American voting access could impact South Dakota race for governor”

“If we start voting, we’re going to be respected,” said Chase Iron Eyes of the Lakota People’s Law Project, whose group held an Oceti Vote Fest in Rapid City on Oct. 22-23 featuring a basketball tournament and concert, with staffers on hand to help people with registration forms. “If we don’t vote, we don’t matter.”

(Read More)

SAVING NATION

220K+ Actions taken by supporters in 2022, including petitions demanding lawmakers end whitewashing of history in schools, help the Cherokee Nation seat a congressional delegate, federally recognize the Lumbee Tribe, and protect Thacker Pass and the Black Hills from mining.

Amicus Brief Filed to defend ICWA. Click here to read it.

2,000+ Members Grew the movement to win justice to a new level.

16,082 People

sent letters to Protect Indigenous Women and Girls

80,025 People signed our “Protect the Indian Child Welfare Act” Petition
While expenses outpaced donations in 2022, we were able to draw on funds in our reserve to cover the difference. We will implement new fundraising strategies and trim expenses in 2023. We are grateful for the generosity of sustaining members, donors, and foundations who continue to lay the stepstones on our journey toward environmental and Indigenous justice.

Romero Institute’s EIN is: 95-3527131

Click here for a copy of our financials.
romeroinstitute.org/financials

In 2022, we put our money where our mission is!

With the help of our impact investment team at Morgan Stanley, Romero Institute divested our stock portfolio away from stocks that do not align with our values (corporations who rank high for emitting airborne pollutants in the U.S. and companies with civil and environmental penalties, fossil fuel exposure, or human rights violations) and toward stocks we can be proud of supporting. Now echoing our mission, our portfolio management account is focused on more targeted exposure to environmental solutions, energy efficiency, and climate solutions. And our unified managed account incorporates ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) data into the decision-making process.
In Tribute

Sadly, 2022 marked the passing of two of our board members — our Chairman, Dr. Paul Lee, and Pearl Daniel-Means. We hold a deep, lasting love for them, respect for their legacy, and gratitude for all they contributed to Romero Institute’s mission for justice.
**Key Foundation Support**

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**Romero Institute Members**

**Luminary Council ($100,000+)***
- Markell Brooks
- Gwendolyn Grace
- Mark Sims

**Omega of Resistance Members ($10,000+)***
- Paul Lee
- Rev Herb Schmidt
- Lorraine Grace
- Kent Heckenlively
- Rachael Sotos
- Christopher & LuAnne Hormel, matching gift through #HalfmyDAF

Special thanks to the Vision Circle Members of Lakota People’s Law Project who contribute $5,000+ annually!
Thank you for staying by our side during this sacred journey. We accomplished a lot together in 2022, and with you as our partner, we will continue winning justice for people and the planet in 2023.

In the new year, we will press on with our investigation of Big Oil’s racketeering (RICO) crimes in California, complete our criminal RICO complaint, and advocate for the empanelling of grand juries. We will work with our allies on our mobilization plan for 2024 to pressure candidates to commit to making Big Oil accountable for its crimes. We will continue the work of the Special Media Project, developing ways of reaching millions of people about the criminal enterprise that prevents the human family from entering a positive and peaceful future. Real solutions can only spring from true facts.

Let’s Green CA! hit the ground running in 2023 with a companion bill to the one we passed in 2022. The new bill, SB823, sponsored by State Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas, will create a system for these communities to access public chargers with charging cards that give them the same low rates for charging electricity as homeowners with solar panels on their roofs and chargers in their driveways. These two bills are being lauded as providing just answers to complex problems that were previously without creative solutions. Millions of people will be able to participate in “going green” as a result of these two bills.

Let’s Green CA! will continue to work with our grassroots partners in four counties to educate environmental justice communities about the significant health benefits for their families and the availability of generous financial incentives to electrify their kitchens.

The Lakota People’s Law Project will keep assisting frontline communities to end extraction, prevent pipelines, safeguard tribal sovereignty, provide kinship care for Lakota children, and amplify Indigenous voices. The Supreme Court will rule on whether to overturn the Indian Child Welfare Act and will review our *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of ICWA’s author, the late honorable Senator James Abourezk. This critical law is under attack by states like Texas and white adoptive parents with a desire to convert Native children, using a law firm, pro bono, that typically represents Big Oil. They seek to undermine tribal families and sovereignty and weaken Native cultures, political power, and resistance.

Our logo represents the flame of love, hope, and truth in these troubled times and your generous heart keeps the flame alive. Together, we can bring light into dark places and learn to live again in balance with nature and one another. It is up to each one of us, right now, to create a welcoming world for generations to come. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, “The future of the Earth is in our hands.”

Please act now to secure justice for Indigenous people, our Earth’s greatest protectors, and our planet.

Donate: Romero.gift
info@romeroinstitute.org 831-459-6135