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THE WOMEN IN POWER ISSUE

# IDEALISTIC AND FEARLESS

## 37 SOLDIERS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

One soundbyte from any presidential debate makes it clear: The country is divided as never before. From abortion to immigration to racial injustice, the clashes are fierce and the stakes are high. And if we are a society at war with itself, those pictured here are the battle-hardened commanders on the front lines. “There’s a historic consciousness in the Bay Area of the fights that have happened here,” says Celeste Faison, cofounder of the BlackOut Collective, an Oakland-based black activist group. Within the past five years, the Bay Area has become ground zero not only for pervasive local issues like discrimination in tech and housing abuses but also for national causes like Black Lives Matter, transgender rights, and reproductive justice. Though these movements encompass all genders, an outsize number of those leading the charge are women. They organize grassroots and big-picture efforts, from advocating for groundbreaking legislation to teaching underprivileged kids to code. Throughout the ranks, there’s the sense of a common goal. “Activists today are attracted to an intersectional framework,” says Samara Azam-Yu, co-executive director of the reproductive justice organization Access. “We’re not just about abortion or housing or immigration anymore. We’re interested in every issue and how they overlap.” The movements’ leaders include doctors, lawyers, doulas, engineers, pastors, and a self-professed “diva and screaming queen.” They’ve found strength in diversity, says Theresa Sparks, executive director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission: “These people represent every element of our culture in San Francisco.” Whether taking to the streets or to social media, they’re shaping the future of our society.

By **Lauren Murrow and Sydney Johnson**  
Photographs by **Helena Price**

**Alicia Walters**  
Movement building  
director at Forward  
Together

**Chinyere Tutashinda**  
Cofounder of the BlackOut  
Collective

**Gina Clayton**  
Founder of the Essie  
Justice Group

**Rheema Calloway**  
Black priorities project  
organizer of Causa Justa

**Celeste Faison**  
Black organizing  
coordinator at National  
Domestic Workers  
Alliance and cofounder  
of the BlackOut  
Collective

**Cat Brooks**  
Black Lives Matter  
leader and founder  
of the Anti-Police-  
Terror Project

**China Pharr**  
Cofounder of the  
Black Love Festival

**Etecia Brown**  
Cofounder of the  
Black Love Festival

**“There’s a spirit of rebellion and a fearlessness to challenge oppression in the Bay Area that I haven’t seen anywhere else. That consciousness permeates everywhere. For many black people across the country, this is the first time they’ve been able to directly confront power. It’s transformational.”**

**—Celeste Faison**



**“I like to think of myself as running the war room. I bring together all the top people in command—strategists, activists, and policy experts—and let them do their work really well. We’re the only state in the country to have expanded abortion access since *Roe v. Wade*. It is quite stark.”**

—*Shailushi Ritchie*

**Sierra Harris**  
Co-executive director  
of Access Women's  
Health Justice

**Poonam Dreyfus-Pai**  
Fellowship manager  
at CoreAlign

**Samara Azam-Yu**  
Co-executive director of  
Access Women's Health  
Justice

**Jill Adams**  
Executive director  
of the Center on  
Reproductive  
Rights and Justice  
at Berkeley Law

**Sabrina Andrus**  
Executive director of  
Law Students for  
Reproductive Justice

**Shailushi Ritchie**  
Director of the California  
Coalition for  
Reproductive Freedom

**Eveline Shen**  
Executive director  
of Forward  
Together



**Theresa Sparks**  
Executive director of the  
San Francisco Human  
Rights Commission

**Rev. Megan Rohrer**  
The first openly trans pastor  
ordained in the Lutheran  
Church

**Clair Farley**  
Associate director of  
economic development  
at the San Francisco  
LGBT Center

**JoAnne Keatley**  
Director of the Center  
of Excellence for  
Transgender Health  
at UCSF

**Nikki Calma**  
Program supervisor  
for Trans Thrive, a  
drop-in center for the  
transgender  
community

**Felicia Flames**  
Transgender pioneer  
and activist

**Janetta Johnson**  
Executive director at the  
Transgender, Gender-  
Variant, and Intersex  
Justice Project

**“Fifteen years ago, a trans person couldn’t walk around the city without being the object of ridicule, discrimination, or violence. That’s different now. This year alone, San Francisco is contributing over \$1.5 million to transgender programs. We’re doing more than any other city in the country.”**

*—Theresa Sparks*

**“Housing has become the absolute number one issue on everybody’s mind in this city. That stronger interest in the work that we do means that we’re increasingly known as a force to be reckoned with. In the end, we’ll do whatever it takes to keep longtime San Franciscans from being forced out. We’ve proven that we mean business.”**

—Sara Shortt

**Julie Levak**  
Founder of *VanishingSF*, a blog and social media campaign covering San Francisco’s rising wealth inequality

**Jennifer Friedenbach**  
Executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness

**Jennifer Fieber**  
Development and policy coordinator for the San Francisco Tenants Union

**Doniece Sandoval**  
Founder of Lava Mae, a nonprofit that converts buses into bathrooms for the homeless

**Maria Zamudio**  
Housing rights campaign organizer for Causa Justa

**Tina Cheung**  
Senior community organizer at the Chinatown Community Development Center

**Sara Shortt**  
Executive director of the Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco

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