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“Oakland Shows the Way”:

The Coalition on Alcohol Outlet Issues and
Media Advocacy as a Tool for Policy Change



B E R K E L E Y M E D I A S T U D I E S G R O U P

L I Q U O R

In September 1993, the alcohol industry was running scared. So scared, in fact, that the widely read industry publication *Market Watch* ran a dire warning about a threat sweeping the nation: communities organizing to place controls on alcohol outlets at the local level. “Now’s the time to get up from behind your sales counter or bar and act before it’s too late,” Marvin Shanken wrote in an editorial, sounding an urgent call to retailers and tavern owners.¹

A groundbreaking ordinance passed by the City Council of Oakland, California was what had liquor store owners worried. The ordinance addressed the proliferation of alcohol outlets in inner city neighborhoods and the violence, drug dealing, and other problems associated with them. The most controversial piece of legislation included a \$600 annual fee to be paid by liquor store owners to cover the costs of an education, monitoring and enforcement program designed to reduce crime around problem outlets.

Oakland’s Coalition on Alcohol Outlet Issues (CAOI), a group of community activists and service providers, viewed Shanken’s editorial and others like it as an indication that the Coalition was a force to be reckoned with – they were shifting the traditional balances of power. CAOI spearheaded a long-term, intensive community organizing effort to pass two precedent-setting ordinances.² In addition to community organizing and policy development CAOI used media advocacy during their four-year effort. Media advocacy is “...a hybrid tool, combining community advocacy approaches with the strategic and innovative use of media to better pressure decision makers to change policy.”³ This case study examines the way CAOI strategically used media advocacy techniques to support the passage of healthy public policy.

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“Oakland Shows the Way”:

The Coalition on Alcohol Outlet Issues and
Media Advocacy as a Tool for Policy Change



¹ Shanken, Marvin, R. (1993, September). Retailers and tavern owners unite. *Market Watch*. p. 5.

² See Mosher, James and Works, Rose. (1994, December). *Confronting Sacramento: State Preemption, Community Control and Alcohol-Outlet Blight in Two Inner-City Communities*. The Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems. This case study draws heavily from that excellent report.

³ Wallack, Lawrence, Dorfman, Lori, Jernigan, David and Themba, Makani. (1993). *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention*. Sage Publications. p. xi.

Community Organizing and Policy Advocacy

Oakland's Ordinance No. 11625 began with a fortuitous and independent interest in liquor stores in low income neighborhoods shared by CAOI members and Oakland City Councilmember Nate Miley.

The origins of the ordinance date back to the mid-1970s when the Oakland Community Organization (OCO), a citizen action group, became concerned with the crime and loitering liquor stores brought to Oakland's flatland neighborhoods. The flatland neighborhoods are a stark contrast to the affluent neighborhoods in Oakland. The flatlands are decidedly poor: the area has the lowest median household income in the city, the highest number of public housing projects, the fewest grocery stores, eating places, community centers and job opportunities, and three to five times as many liquor stores as in wealthier areas of the city.⁴ And, many liquor stores pose serious public health and safety problems for neighborhoods because they attract violence, drug dealing, gambling, prostitution, public drinking and drunkenness, vandalism, graffiti and loitering.⁵

Due to OCO's organizing efforts, the City Council passed an ordinance in 1977 requiring those who wanted to establish new alcohol outlets (liquor stores, convenience stores, markets and bars) to obtain a conditional use permit (CUP). A CUP regulates land use by allowing specific types of business activities with special permission, usually requiring that permit holders agree to follow those conditions laid out by the city. It is a useful tool for controlling the location and business practices of commercial land uses. This ordinance required that new alcoholic beverage retailers be at least 1000 feet away from existing alcohol outlets on specific "problem streets."



⁴ Troutt, David Dante. (1993) *The Thin Red Line: How the poor still pay more*. A project of the West Coast Regional Office of Consumer's Union, San Francisco.

⁵ Mosher and Works, op cit.

Despite passage of the 1977 CUP, crime and nuisance problems still surrounded many Oakland liquor outlets. Though the city had gained some local control over the activities of new alcohol outlets and the proliferation of alcohol outlets had slowed somewhat, the outlets in operation prior to 1977 were not covered by the CUP ordinance. Additionally, the city had only one staff person responsible for monitoring complaints about the hundreds of businesses operating in Oakland under *any* type of CUP, alcohol-related or not. City officials and the police regularly received numerous complaints about dangerous and illegal activities associated with alcohol outlets. In one two-month period during 1993, Oakland police reported 908 calls regarding 140 liquor stores.

Oakland City Councilmember Miley had worked on the earlier liquor store campaign as an organizer for OCO. In 1991, he revisited the issue when he and Alameda County Supervisor Don Perata held two community meetings concerning the saturation of Oakland's flatlands area with alcohol and tobacco billboards. At the meetings, community members indicated that their primary concern was with liquor stores rather than with billboards.

As a result of information presented at the community meetings, Miley directed the city Planning Department to research the feasibility of new legislation to strengthen the 1977 ordinance. The Planning Department suggested that the city could use its local land use and police powers to create a comprehensive program to educate, monitor, and enforce nuisance-based provisions applicable to *all* alcohol retailers in Oakland.

In retrospect, the campaign to pass and implement the liquor store ordinance had two phases. During the first phase, CAOI members worked tirelessly to ensure the ordinance's passage by the City Council and to defend its integrity, despite heavy lobbying by the alcoholic beverage industry and the apparent willingness of the City Council to compromise. This first phase began in December 1992 and ended in July 1993, when an ordinance was passed creating a one-year pilot education, monitoring and enforcement program for alcohol outlets. In part this ordinance, scaled down from an eight-year timeline and initial fee of \$1700 to a one-year trial program with an annual fee of \$600, was a compromise between the positions of the retailers and CAOI. During the second phase, the Coalition joined with others across the state to defend legal and legislative challenges from the alcohol industry.

Due to the Coalition's persistence, the legislation went beyond what had ever been done before and continued to push the boundaries on local control. "If it hadn't been for the Coalition's organizing and media advocacy efforts, the ordinance would have passed, but it would have been fairly useless and written to the tune of the alcohol retailers," said CAOI member Joan Kiley.⁶

The police regularly received numerous complaints about dangerous and illegal activities associated with alcohol outlets

⁶ Quotations from members of the Coalition on Alcohol Outlet Issues and others are from interviews conducted during September and October, 1996.

Phase I: Local Organizing

Independently of Councilmember Miley's efforts, a group of Oakland service providers and community members were pursuing the liquor store issue. Elva Yañez, then Public Awareness director of East Oakland Fighting Back, a community-based prevention organization funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, met members of a group with similar concerns, the Los Angeles Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment. The Community Coalition had been successful in getting the city of Los Angeles to impose limits on the number of alcohol outlets rebuilt after the civil unrest that followed the Rodney King trial in April 1992. Yañez and others in Oakland were impressed and inspired by the Community Coalition's work and decided to apply its strategy to Oakland's problems.

The Coalition on Alcohol Outlet Issues officially formed in January 1993. The core of the Coalition consisted of representatives from approximately 10 community-based organizations who met regularly to develop strategy and exchange information. Besides Yañez, steering committee members included local activists Regina Chavarin, Jim Hill, Ed Kikumoto, Joan Kiley, Socorro Padilla, Rosalinda Palacios, Makani Themba, Ralph Morales, Martin Waukazoo, Colette Winlock, Phu Wong and Rose Works. East Oakland Fighting Back organizers Rose Works and Phu Wong led the mobilization and organizing effort.

The group had 45 members including community-based organizations, neighborhood associations, churches, crime watch groups and residents. The Alcohol Policy Network, California Latino Alcohol and Other Drug Coalition, Interfaith Prevention Program Inc., Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems, Narcotics Education League, National Black Alcoholism Council - California Chapter and Native American Health Center were among the groups represented. The Coalition was diverse in terms of racial/ethnic composition, reflecting Oakland's population mix.

CAOI's goals were to educate the community about alcohol outlet issues and to mobilize community support for the ordinance introduced by Councilmember Miley.

CAOI's first action, a symposium for community activists, organizers and neighborhood residents, aimed to educate community members about the ordinance and helped create support for it. The "Community Symposium on Alcohol Outlet Issues" was the first of several events held by the group that widely publicized the value of local control and the Coalition's agenda.

After the symposium the Coalition had eight weeks to mobilize the community, educate the council and counter the arguments of the alcohol industry prior to the initial vote on the legislation in July. Miley had already introduced the legislation, and the alcohol industry was lobbying aggressively against it, catching the Council off-guard because they underestimated the pressure that the alcohol industry would bring to bear against them. The Coalition did not have time to run a large-scale citizen-based grassroots campaign like the Community Coalition had in Los Angeles. "All we had time to do was mobilize existing organizations and community organizers and educate them about the issue so their constituencies would get busy calling and writing letters to their Councilmembers, showing up at rallies and council hearings, and doing all the other things required to keep elected officials accountable to community needs," Yañez said.

CAOI's local organizing paid off, and on July 27, 1993, the Oakland City Council voted unanimously for an education, monitoring and enforcement program for alcoholic beverage retailers citywide. Though less than what the Coalition had wanted, the revised ordinance set a precedent toward expanding and strengthening community control of problem liquor stores in California. The ordinance gave the city the authority ultimately to revoke the business permits of any noncompliant liquor stores.

Phase II: Legal and Legislative Challenges

Once the ordinance was approved by the Oakland City Council, the alcohol industry used both legal and legislative tactics to try to kill it. A group of alcohol retailers and grocers, the California Beverage Retailer Coalition, along with Village Market and Clem Daniels Liquors, sued the city and the Councilmembers. The industry argued that Oakland overstepped its authority since the State Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) has licensing jurisdiction over retail alcohol outlets. The lawsuit also challenged the city's authority to retrospectively regulate liquor stores that were in operation prior to the enactment of Oakland's first conditional use permit.

The lawsuit was intended to have a chilling effect on the Council, as well as other cities who might be considering copying Oakland's lead. The message was that this innovative approach to controlling problem liquor stores was going to cost a lot, in terms of legal staff time and, if Oakland lost the case, reimbursement of the plaintiff's legal costs.

The second industry tactic was legislative: the industry attempted to pass preemptive legislation that would take away California cities' long-standing right to enact conditional use permit ordinances. This law would have wiped out the Oakland ordinance and the 100 or so similar ordinances in effect at that time throughout California.

CAOI was forced to organize statewide to address this legislative challenge. In partnership with groups across California, CAOI mounted a statewide effort to protect existing alcohol-related land use ordinances, including Oakland's, and preserve the legal right of local jurisdictions to enact such ordinances.

The alcohol industry's action was no surprise to CAOI members. Yañez explained, "Pass a strong local ordinance and you will very likely end up in the state capitol defending it, especially if you go up against the alcohol, tobacco or gun industries. Preemption, taking away cities' and counties' right to pass local laws, is a favored tactic of these industries. They use their allies in the state legislature to undermine local communities' power."

In the meantime, CAOI's strategy changed to reflect the need to protect Oakland's ordinance from legal and legislative challenges. Not only was the Oakland ordinance at risk, but the right of any local jurisdiction to enact similar legislation was also jeopardized. Thus the stakes had dramatically increased. Therefore, CAOI not only ensured that the Oakland City Council took the necessary steps to defend the new ordinance but also linked Oakland's local control issue to the broader statewide anti-preemption campaign. The Coalition's goals during Phase II were to derail the alcohol industry's legal challenge and stop the state legislature from preempting the ordinance.

Following the lead of the Los Angeles Coalition, CAOI recruited a local attorney, Dan Siegel, to work on a pro-bono basis. With his help, CAOI became equal partners in the lawsuit. "This worked against the industry," Joan Kiley said, "since we had a lawyer who really did his homework, and could argue our case extremely well."

Over the next three years, the lawsuit made its way from the California Superior Court to the California Court of Appeals to the Alameda County Superior Court and finally, to the California Supreme Court.

Finally, in August 1996 the California Supreme Court refused to review a state appellate court decision upholding Oakland's authority to do two things: 1) levy the \$600 fee, reimbursing the City for the expense of the program and 2) include the alcohol outlets that were in business prior to when the original city-wide CUP ordinance passed. The Coalition's effort to include the older outlets under the new CUP was a first. This victory provided an additional tool for cities and counties across the state to better regulate alcohol availability.

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Media Advocacy Supports CAOI's Organizing

As the ordinance wended its way from the city planning commission through the court system, CAOI members were present — and visible — at each juncture. CAOI kept visible by using media advocacy to advance the policy hand-in-hand with organizing. CAOI's organizing strategy included meeting with public officials, testifying at hearings, organizing neighbors affected by problem outlets and holding demonstrations before Planning Commission and City Council meetings. By working intensively with reporters, CAOI generated dozens of print and television news stories, stories that got the attention of the public and policy makers and helped frame the issue from the group's perspective of public safety and local control.

Coalition members recognized that while media advocacy work is important, good community organizing is essential in any policy campaign. The two are inextricably linked. Yañez explained, "Do the organizing and the media will be easier to attract. [Media advocacy] will be more effective because it builds on the strong foundation of organizing." The core group planned and strategized with this in mind.

Throughout their organizing and advocacy, CAOI kept the news media informed of their progress and intentions. They did this by building and maintaining relationships with journalists, creating news opportunities, thoughtfully framing the issue, and having willing and well-prepared spokespeople who could provide journalists with an authentic voice to describe the problem and solution they advocated.

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Building Relationships

Yañez focused on coordinating all media efforts with assistance from Socorro Padilla, a steering committee member. Padilla is a native Spanish speaker and community organizer in Oakland's Latino community, and was a key spokesperson for the Spanish language media.

Yañez's job was to create a steady stream of compelling media events and status updates, accompanied by accurate and helpful background information designed to make journalists' job a little easier and push CAOI's perspective to the forefront in any coverage. She was constantly in touch with reporters and assignment editors at local television, news radio, Spanish language television and alternative radio stations. She sent out news releases any time an event or rally was scheduled, then followed up with phone calls. Sometimes the calls were simple and straightforward but always essential. Yañez recalled, "I usually asked for the assignment editor. I would call and say 'Hi, this is Elva Yañez from the Coalition on Alcohol Outlet Issues. Did you receive our news release? We're going to be [taking the following action] today. Will you be sending anyone to cover the story?'" The Coalition was careful to keep its information clear and accessible, and always had a media kit with a one-page news release, referenced fact sheets, a press clip or two and several contacts listed with work and home phone numbers.

During the first phase of the campaign, the Coalition's core group met at least once a week, then divided into smaller subgroups to complete discrete tasks like mailings, phone banking and faxing. Together they strategized, and generated ideas for news releases and events. Coalition members like Socorro Padilla, Colette Winlock and Joan Kiley emerged as important spokespeople for the group. Makani Themba of the Marin Institute was another important spokesperson and media strategist. Marin Institute staff also assisted with mailings and faxing news releases. Even so, Yañez coordinated much of this activity. Because the Coalition was volunteer-based, comprised of busy community activists and professionals with full-time jobs, it was critical that the group had one person who could be counted upon to work with television and newspaper reporters. The foundation Yañez laid during the first part of the campaign made media work during the campaign's second half (when she could no longer act as a full-time media coordinator) all the more possible.

CAOI generated dozens of print and television news stories that got the attention of the public and policy makers

One of CAOI's media advocacy efforts early in the campaign illustrates the attention they paid to cultivating relationships and following up with journalists. While the group was busy planning the symposium that brought members of the Los Angeles Community Coalition to Oakland, Yañez pitched the story to Kevin Keeshan, a managing editor at KGO-TV. "I said we're going to bring the people from South Central LA who've been working on keeping the liquor stores from rebuilding. And the editor wanted the story. He asked for an exclusive. He said 'We'll send a reporter out to the airport to film them when they arrive.'" Keeshan had a proven interest in alcohol policy. In 1991, he had done a story on alcohol and poverty which featured Colette Winlock, then executive director of the National Black Alcoholism Council-California Chapter and an active CAOI member.

The coverage the Coalition received from Channel 14, a local Spanish language television station, was especially thorough. The Coalition was very effective in interacting with two Spanish language television news programs. Yañez used the same techniques to do outreach to the Spanish language media — she communicated in English with the assignment desk in the same manner as all other media, sent news releases and made follow-up calls. However, she always let them know when there would be a Spanish-speaking spokesperson available.

The same Spanish language reporters covered the issue over the entire campaign, unlike mainstream stations that sent out a different reporter and camera crew each time. Consequently, the Spanish language TV reporters had a more thorough approach to the issue. From work on other campaigns, Padilla had developed a working relationship with Pablo Padula, the Channel 14 reporter whose frequent reporting on crime prevention and neighborhood issues pre-dated the Coalition. Spanish language coverage involved longer segments, often in the more desirable lead spots.

The group learned that the presence of a reporter can influence the outcomes of an advocacy action. In early June 1993, a group of approximately 10 Coalition representatives were scheduled to meet with Mike Nisperos from the Mayor's Office on Crime and Drugs. The group was concerned that Mayor Harris and the Councilmembers were being influenced by alcoholic beverage industry lobbying and that compromises being proposed would make the inspection, monitoring and enforcement proposal ineffective.

Yañez had informed several reporters of the meeting. Greg Edmonds of KGO-AM Radio News showed up. His presence added immeasurably to the meeting's success. When Nisperos saw that a reporter was present, he immediately let Mayor Harris know. Although the Mayor had not been scheduled to meet with the group, he came to the meeting and listened to their concerns. CAOI members felt this was to their advantage. They had the opportunity to show the mayor that they would hold him accountable if he "backtracked" on past promises.

During the next weeks, Yañez went about planning the "Community Symposium on Alcohol Outlet Issues," recruiting people, and developing materials. When the date of the event got closer, she issued news releases. Since she had given Keeshan an "exclusive" on the airport arrival of the L.A. organizers, Community Coalition executive director Karen Bass and associate director Sylvia Castillo, she did not mention the airport arrival to the other reporters and editors she contacted. She made a phone call to Keeshan a few days in advance, to check on the story's status. He assured her that a reporter would be at Oakland Airport. Bass and Castillo, skilled in working with the media, did not need much preparation. The KGO

reporter was at the airport and the story aired on the 11 o'clock news that night as well as at 6 o'clock the next morning. It linked the liquor store campaign in South Central L.A. to the budding one in Oakland. Minutes after getting off the plane, Bass talked to the reporter. She said, "We've been able to be successful in Los Angeles exactly because we've involved neighborhoods, churches, schools, etc. This is really an effort that we believe is the beginning of a statewide movement."⁷ Bass's sound bite accurately predicted the beginning of a movement that would spread across the state.

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can influence the outcomes
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⁷ KGO-TV. News story, 11 p.m. news, May 24, 1993.

The KGO-TV story set the tone for the extensive media coverage the Coalition received in the future. Shortly after it ran, KCBS Radio ran an unsolicited editorial in favor of the ordinance which aired five times throughout the day on the all-news radio station (see below). The editorial resulted from the KGO-TV coverage as well as other coverage of the Symposium.

Other coverage of the event included segments on local television and radio news programs. Two local newspapers, *The Oakland Tribune* and *The Montclarion* ran stories. A week later, a front page story appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on local control of alcohol outlets, accompanied by a story on the effect of malt liquor on the African American community.

The media response to CAO's efforts, particularly the KGO story, was important for the Coalition's morale. It energized the group and validated its work. The Coalition knew controlling alcohol outlets was important to the community – now the media confirmed and reinforced that knowledge by using their resources to tell the story to millions in the San Francisco Bay Area and the state.

Editorial Opinion

Frank Oxarart
Vice President and General Manager
KCBS-AM News Radio
San Francisco

Transcript of editorial aired on Thursday, May 27, 1993

Who owns the streets of Oakland? KCBS thinks the people of Oakland ought to have something to say about that. And this week they did. In East Oakland and other low income neighborhoods they began to loosen the grip of alcohol on their streets. The issue is liquor stores. Community groups say there are disproportionate numbers of stores selling alcohol in low income neighborhoods, that some of those stores sell alcohol in a way that promotes drinking on the spot and promotes drinking malt liquors and fortified wines, among the most abused forms of alcohol. The consequences range from the nuisance of public drinking to creating an environment that intimidates neighbors and drives away other businesses.

So Tuesday community groups met to talk about the problem and Tuesday night they went before Oakland's City Council to push for action. That action includes a proposal by Councilman Nate Miley to hold liquor stores to stricter standards of conduct, enforced through annual inspections and public hearings to allow neighbors to get involved. The State controls liquor licenses, but Miley's proposal would give Oakland a new tool to use in policing liquor stores locally. This shouldn't be interpreted as Prohibition revisited. Stores have every right to sell alcohol, as we do to use it. But saying its legal doesn't have to mean that anything goes.

KCBS believes that a community should have something to say about the life on its streets. Councilman Miley's proposal is a step in that direction for Oakland's neighborhoods. And we think that the people of Oakland should send that message to City Hall.

CAOI Creates News

The campaign organizers, Works and Wong, were responsible for coordinating the most publicly visible organizing work the Coalition did, the three community rallies which CAOI held during the first phase of the campaign.

Television reporters gave extensive coverage to the rallies, which were a focal point of CAOI's organizing. Each of the rallies was held at the Council chambers before a Council meeting when the ordinance would be discussed or voted upon. Speakers, protesters and slogan chanting were part of each event.

The rallies served several purposes. First, CAOI organizers hoped to pressure the Council to vote favorably for the legislation. They wanted to build community support for the local control issue. They also knew that the events would draw reporters. Television reporters were particularly receptive to the demonstrations because they provide visuals to enhance the drama of the story.

Along with coordinating the rallies, Works and Wong were responsible for keeping "all the inner and outer circles" of the group informed of council and coalition activities. They maintained a database, kept in touch with the aides of various Councilmembers, made signs for rallies and press events, and did outreach to potential CAOI members.

Making sure that large groups of people attended hearings and the rallies was a particularly important part of the organizers' work. Their goal was to motivate residents to participate, powerfully demonstrating for City Councilmembers and the media that the ordinance had broad community support. Attendance at the rallies ranged from 35 to 75 ordinance supporters.

Media Advocacy Highlights, 1993

May 25	May 27	June 7	June 7
CAOI holds community symposium, "Local Control of Alcohol Outlets: Experiences in South Central L.A. and Oakland."	KCBS-AM News Radio runs unsolicited editorial in favor of local control five times throughout the day.	KGO-AM News Radio reporter's presence helps CAOI get Mayor Harris's attention.	"Mornings on 2" – Debate on proposed alcohol outlet ordinance.
Community leaders from Los Angeles are featured presenters. Event receives extensive coverage from local media, including KGO-TV. When interviewed by KGO-TV reporter after arriving at Oakland Airport, L.A. organizer Karen Bass predicts the beginning of a statewide movement.		Concerned that the Mayor and City Council members are being influenced by alcoholic beverage industry lobbying, CAOI sets up a meeting with the Mayor's Office on Crime and Drugs. Elva Yañez alerts the media about the meeting. Drug Czar Mike Nisperos is scheduled to meet with the group. However, once the reporter arrives, the Mayor decides to meet with the Coalition himself.	Discussion with Colette Winlock, CAOI member and executive director of the National Black Alcoholism Council - California Chapter, and Clem Daniels, president of the California Package Store and Tavern Owners (CAL-PAC) airs on local station KTVU's daily morning television program.

CAOI's media advocacy efforts slowed down during the three-year period when the ordinance's legality was challenged, but they did not disappear entirely. The legal battle was fought primarily by Dan Siegel, but Coalition members attended the hearings and held news conferences and mini-rallies. The preemption battle at the state legislature involved statewide mobilization, trips to Sacramento, letter writing, telephone calls, visits to elected officials — all the standard advocacy techniques. Along with the South-Central Los Angeles advocates, Oakland Coalition members spearheaded an effort to mobilize advocates across the state in defense of local control. When the State Legislature held hearings on the issue in Sacramento, "Regulation of Alcoholic Beverages: State Versus Local Control," CAOI took the lead in organizing a news event — a demonstration held on the steps of the state capitol.

Approximately 80 individuals representing different California communities joined CAOI at the event. Community groups present included the Community Coalition of Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (Los Angeles), Vallejo Fighting Back Partnership, Sacramento 21, and the Berkeley Community Partnership. While media representatives from newspapers, radio and television from across the state were present including the *San Francisco Examiner*, *The Oakland Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, the Associated Press, KGO-TV News and KFBR Radio, most of the actual media coverage focused on the hearing, not the demonstration. In these stories, CAOI got news attention but did not have as much influence on the stories' frame as they would have liked. Coalition members had donned gags to illustrate that community members were not allowed to speak at the hearings, but this aspect of the story did not appear in news reports.

June 9	June 22	July 13	October 20
<p>CAOI holds first community rally at the Lakeside Garden Center (site of Oakland City Council meetings).</p> <p>More than 50 CAOI supporters rally in support of proposed ordinance. Later, representatives from CAOI and alcoholic beverage industry address Planning Commission at a hearing. The Planning Commission decides not to vote on changing language of zoning code due to large number of ordinance supporters attending rally and hearing. Media coverage included <i>The Oakland Tribune</i>, KDTV-TV (Spanish language television news), KPIX-TV, KGO-TV and KCBS-AM Radio.</p>	<p>CAOI organizes second community rally.</p> <p>More than 35 CAOI supporters demonstrate before City Council meeting at which proposed ordinance was to be discussed. Both the Coalition and the industry subsequently address the Council. Media coverage of the event includes KPIX-TV and KGO-TV.</p>	<p>Third community rally is held.</p> <p>More than 75 CAOI supporters attend rally in support of proposed ordinance. Interviews with KRON-TV and KGO-TV reporters are scheduled to take place but because of breaking story involving fatal shooting of youth, reporters are called away. Media coverage includes KGO-TV, KPIX-TV, KCBS-AM Radio and <i>The Oakland Tribune</i>.</p>	<p>CAOI holds news conference and informational picket on steps of State Capitol, Sacramento.</p> <p>More than 80 individuals from community groups across the state rally in support of local control when state hearings are held on the issue. Although many media representatives attend the hearing and rally, most coverage focused on the hearing. Media coverage is statewide and includes: KGO-TV, KBR-FM, <i>Los Angeles Times</i>, <i>Contra Costa Times</i>, <i>The Oakland Tribune</i>, <i>San Francisco Examiner</i> and <i>San Jose Mercury News</i>.</p>

CAOI Speaks

The Coalition had numerous experienced spokespeople who represented Oakland's diverse flat-lands population. Along with Elva Yañez of East Oakland Fighting Back and Joan Kiley of the Alcohol Policy Network, they included Martin Waukazoo of the Native American Health Center, Colette Winlock of the National Black Alcoholism Council-California Chapter and Socorro Padilla of the Narcotics Education League. Ideally, the Coalition would have liked to use the campaign as an opportunity to train more members in media advocacy, enabling them to act as spokespeople as well. But the rushed nature of the effort did not allow enough lead time to do so. Because of unplanned media opportunities, such as reporters arriving early or unexpectedly, Yañez was spokesperson more often than she would have liked.

By early 1994, Yañez, Wong and Works had left their positions at East Oakland Fighting Back which had a big impact on the organizing and media work. While the ordinance was being considered by the Oakland City Council, Yañez had been able to devote most of her work time, when necessary, to media coordination. During the statewide phase she worked with the Coalition in a reduced, voluntary capacity. Wong's and Works's departures eliminated two full-time organizer positions, a huge loss for the group.

Works's new position at the Marin Institute allowed her to remain involved with the campaign, although in a different role. Fortunately, the group had already developed a strong rapport with reporters and was able to generate responsive coverage despite the changes.

Spokespeople also changed during the second phase of the campaign. Early on, the group had decided that people of color should speak for the Coalition. It made sense because the ordinance would have the greatest benefit for neighborhoods where the majority of residents were people of color. Additionally, Yemeni or African American retailers always represented the liquor store owners in the news stories. Socorro Padilla continued to work with the Spanish-language television station. But since Yañez needed to pull back, it was no longer always possible to have a person of color represent the Coalition to the media.

Framing Strategies

The Coalition received coverage from a variety of local newspapers — ranging from bi-weekly community newspapers such as *The Montclarion* to major dailies such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The frames in the newspaper coverage evolved throughout the course of the campaign and CAOI had to work hard to get its frame included. For example, reporters from *The Oakland Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* tended to cover the story as part of their City Council beat. At first, they reported it as an issue of the City Council vs. retailers, leaving out the community control and public safety viewpoint represented by CAOI. The local African American paper, *The Oakland Post*, focused its reporting on the point of view of the retailers as black-owned small businesses and its columnists editorialized against CAOI. This was frustrating for CAOI members — many of whom were African American — who had hoped for a better reception from that paper.

Joan Kiley recalled how the Coalition worked with a reporter from *The Oakland Tribune* to encourage him to include their point of view in his coverage. "He was only covering the story from a City Council perspective. It was as if the community was some kind of annoyance," Kiley said. She added that what she believes got the reporter's attention finally was repeatedly seeing the number of people CAOI was able to mobilize for hearings and rallies who were "willing to stay until midnight if necessary." During the second phase of the campaign, the reporter called upon Coalition members as sources.

CAOI had to work hard to get
its frame included

Industry groups like the Yemeni Grocers Association and the California Package Store and Tavern Owners Association (CAL-PAC) focused on the proposed fees when they talked to reporters, arguing that the ordinance was anti-business and held liquor store owners responsible for what was a “people” problem, not an alcohol problem. CAOI wanted the voice of the community to be included in the debate and emphasized that the ordinance was good public policy that would make low-income neighborhoods safer and healthier.

Armed with well-prepared sound bites and statistics, Coalition members did not hesitate to make their presence known to reporters who came to cover ordinance-related events and hearings. Kiley offers these words of advice, “Always remember your points. Keep them simple, repeat them over and over.”

Despite her preparation and focus, Kiley was sometimes frustrated at what could happen during a story’s editing process. “I could make exactly the points we wanted to make and they wouldn’t use them. They would use something else,” she said.

If spokespeople felt their point of view was not represented in a news article they would follow-up with the appropriate reporter. They also approached op-ed and editorial page editors in order to get editorials and opinion pieces published.

Initially, the group found it difficult to place op-ed pieces in *The Oakland Tribune*. However, persistence paid off. After several reminder phone calls to the paper’s op-ed editor, a Coalition-developed column “Alcohol Retailers Should Support New Ordinance” appeared on September 23, 1993.⁸ A subsequent piece also developed by the Coalition, “Ordinance Puts Local Powers to Good Use” was published on December 12, 1994.⁹

When the arena shifted to the courts, the retailers gave the same message to reporters (“We are not responsible for what goes on outside of our stores”), but CAOI began to fine-tune its own message during the news conferences it held at court hearings. CAOI used numbers to substantiate the magnitude of the problem, telling reporters that the Oakland police received 908 calls concerning disturbances in 140 liquor stores during a two-month period. Several television news reports spotlighted these statistics by creating their own charts.

During the course of the campaign, the Coalition found that there were differences in the kind of coverage they received from newspaper and television reporters. According to Yañez, “Unlike television journalists, newspaper reporters were slower to acknowledge the Coalition’s role in the power struggle.”

When the California Supreme Court upheld Oakland’s ordinance by refusing to hear the alcohol industry’s appeal, news coverage was minimal. Yet the decision is far-reaching. Attorney Dan Siegal noted the importance of the ordinance, “The decision gives strong support to local governments not only in their efforts to regulate nuisances associated with alcohol outlets but also in their ability to require the outlets to pay the costs of such regulatory programs. Also, the decision is an important part of what appears to be a legal trend away from protecting the alcohol industry under the doctrine of state preemption, and recognizing the divergent needs of local communities to enact regulations to address local problems and concerns.”

In October 1996, the city of Oakland approved an implementation plan for the ordinance. Today, CAOI members find themselves engrossed in a new challenge — making a hard-won policy real by seeing that Oakland continues to implement the policy, changing the liquor landscape of Oakland.

CAOI emphasized that the ordinance was good public policy that would make low-income neighborhoods safer and healthier

⁸ Kiley, Joan. (1993, September 23). Alcohol retailers should support new ordinance. *The Oakland Tribune*.

⁹ Yañez, Elva. (1994, December 12). Ordinance puts local powers to good use. *The Oakland Tribune*.

Lessons from CAOI

Resources make a difference.

During the first phase of the campaign, Yañez's position as Public Awareness Director of East Oakland Fighting Back allowed her to work on the Coalition's media efforts full-time. "My job, as I saw it, was to make sure we got coverage. It was relentless. I didn't do anything else," Yañez explained. CAOI's intensive effort to educate community members, the City Council and journalists early in the process enabled them to stay visible later when the Coalition had substantially fewer resources.

Be assertive, be prepared, be persistent.

CAOI members were well-prepared for their encounters with journalists throughout the campaign: they knew their facts and knew what arguments to expect from their opponents. Also, they learned that they had to be assertive if they wanted to get their story told their way. Kiley, who was a frequent spokesperson for the group, described her own process of preparation for interviews with newspaper and television reporters. "I would try to have the one, two or three points that we all agreed upon in mind. No matter what the reporter asked, I would try to bring it around to those points," she said.

Stories need visuals.

The Coalition found that television assignment editors responded best to stories with a strong visual element. So they held strategically planned media events, identifying in advance the policy goals, sound bites, speakers and materials for the media kit. They planned compelling news events with powerful visuals (people marching and carrying signs) in front of significant backdrops (liquor stores, the mayor's office, City Council chambers). Additionally, when Kiley was interviewed by CBS Network News for a general story on the ordinance, she illustrated the fact that liquor stores are over-concentrated in poor neighborhoods by directing the camera crew to a single corner where six liquor stores were situated.

Often, neighborhood children were recruited by organizers to take part in the events, giving the stories an additional engaging element. The CAOI core group recruited community members who could speak from "from the heart" about the liquor store issue. These spokespeople included police officers, youth and representatives from alcohol and drug programs — all of whom would benefit from less crime and disruption around the stores.

Monitor the "alternative" media.

CAOI members worked with both the mainstream and alternative news media. In particular, reporters from the local Spanish language television station gave the story exceptionally thorough coverage. Yañez explained, "Treat them the same as any other media, spend the time with the reporters and you will get terrific coverage. But don't waste your time with small alternative media outlets that have obvious and strong links to the [opposition]."

Re-Use the News.

By 1996 when the ordinance got the go ahead for implementation, the story had generated more than 35 minutes of local television news coverage.

CAOI found that the media coverage they received could be used as an effective advocacy tool. For example, when City Councilmember Sheila Jordan appeared to be wavering in her support for the proposed ordinance, Coalition member Ed Kikumoto, a resident of Jordan's North Oakland district, wanted to do something about it. After conferring with one of Jordan's aides, Kikumoto showed a videotape of a KGO-TV news story on poverty and alcohol at a town meeting Jordan sponsored. This changed the nature of the meeting. District residents grew excited about the ordinance. Jordan ultimately supported the legislation.

An Oakland police department sergeant offered his time to edit the various television news stories onto a single, chronological tape. He added a simple identifying title to the beginning of the tape, which they gave to City Councilmembers during a delegation visit. They knew that public officials pay particular attention to issues which receive extensive news coverage.

The compilation tape was used by CAOI members when they visited Councilmembers before the first vote on the ordinance. The group delivered a videotape of news coverage along with a message urging Councilmembers to vote for the ordinance. City Councilmember Nate Miley said, "The video tape clearly outlined the neighborhood concerns about problem liquor stores in Oakland and was an extremely useful tool to emphasize the need for the passage of the ordinance to decrease crime and violence in our city." "Whenever an elected official sees [news] videotape, they know it's noteworthy," explained Works.

Good organizing is essential.

Ultimately, media advocacy was just one tool which contributed to a successful campaign. The coverage reinforced the messages lawmakers were getting from community members, but it did not substitute for their participation. According to Works, "The real hammer was the people who made it their priority to take the time and energy to demonstrate they wanted a neighborhood free from blight, alcohol and drug-related problems."

Journalists are most likely to cover community initiatives which have garnered strong local support. As media sociologist Gaye Tuchman notes, "the more members, the more legitimate their spokesperson."¹⁰ The media paid attention to CAOI because it was clearly a group with broad-based community support. The people organized by CAOI spoke with one voice, fully amplified through the mass media. Their efforts forced all of Oakland's alcohol outlets to operate according to community standards, and gave the city of Oakland an innovative mechanism for enforcing those standards.

¹⁰ Tuchman, Gaye. (1978). *Making News: A study in the construction of reality.* New York: The Free Press.

Epilogue: “Oakland Shows The Way”

The media continue to report on the local control issue in Oakland. In March 1997, almost four years after the City Council passed the one-year pilot ordinance and one-year city-wide moratorium on new licenses, local television reporters were at City Hall to hear the City Council’s Public Safety Committee report on the status of the now implemented one-year pilot program.

On March 27, 1997 in an editorial titled “Oakland Shows the Way,” the *San Francisco Chronicle* highlighted the importance of the effort. It emphasized that city government now has a “useful tool” in its hands. “This law, born of grassroots frustrations with an ugly part of urban living, could give citizens and City Hall a common cause to improve everyday life.”¹¹

After five years, scores of meetings and the involvement of many dedicated community members, the landscape changed. One lesson is that social change requires not only a committed group of individuals but a media strategy to support what may seem like the invisible day-to-day work of community organizing and policy advocacy. And after all this, the Coalition now turns its efforts to ensuring that the ordinance they fought so diligently for will be fully implemented.

In 1993, alcohol industry analyst Marvin Shanken warned that passage of the ordinance was only the beginning of a long struggle. “What’s happened in Oakland is particularly troubling,” he wrote, “since many top industry executives see it as a bellwether for similar moratorium-type legislation pending in other cities in California. And as the cliché goes, what starts as a trend in California often ends up spreading through the country.”¹² Shanken was right to worry.

Against the odds, Oakland’s residents decided what they wanted, made the commitment to get it, and as a result, made history.

¹¹ Oakland shows the way. Editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*. March 27, 1997, p. A26.

¹² Shanken, op cit.

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