TAKING A STAND

Parent Revolution’s Christina Sanchez is one of a rising generation of advocates building power among the people.
It turns out that giving spray paint to a bunch of teenagers can actually be a good thing. Walls That Teach, an after-school mural-arts program founded by teachers Magdalena Gross (Chicago ‘04) and Gaelen Smith, combines a ’90s graffiti aesthetic with Diego Rivera’s social consciousness. The program, which serves low-income kids in California’s East Bay, starts with workshops on local civil rights history, drawing and design, perspective, and color theory, among other subjects. Students then design and paint each mural themselves. Already, Walls That Teach has seven murals in Richmond, East Palo Alto, and the surrounding communities. “The idea is for the students to create something that reflects their experience in their communities,” Gross says. “That way, we can transfer the role of educator from us to them. They become public historians in roughly 16 weeks.”