

MOVEMENT STRATEGY CENTER

BRINGING IT TOGETHER



**UNITING YOUTH ORGANIZING,
DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES FOR
LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY**



LETTER TO THE FIELD

In 2001, The Movement Strategy Center set out to provide the youth organizing community with innovative tools to work collaboratively and build holistic alliances for social change. Over the last three years, we've used facilitation, documentation, field research and one-on-one coaching to build the youth organizing movement, encouraging collaboration, and prioritizing self care and collective long term thinking.

Over the last ten years, the youth organizing community has wrestled with how to run successful campaigns while providing for the basic needs and development of its constituents. At MSC, we are interested in how groups move to a place of integration, recognizing that meeting basic needs and organizing for change are interrelated efforts that benefit both individuals and community. The groups profiled in *Bringing It Together* present different creative models for integrating direct services into organizational programs and philosophies. Their organizational cultures, contexts and structures differ and their capacities to provide direct services vary. Some groups work with like-minded social services partners, others have developed in-house programming. All have found their work strengthened through integrated approaches that see individual and community needs as interdependent rather than in competition for time and resources.

All of the groups profiled have identified the need for holistic models for change, the need to take care of the totality of young people's needs as their leadership and engagement in social change builds. These findings echo the anecdotal findings of MSC, whose Spirit In Motion program works regularly with current and former youth organizers on issues of sustainability. Overwhelmingly, these activists talk about their burnout rates, their need for rest and reflection in their work. The results of this report show us that young activists are calling for this support earlier and creating healthier organizational structures for the generations of activists yet to come. They are changing the culture of the way we organize.

We hope youth development and service providers, as well as funders, will find this to be a helpful tool in building partnerships with youth advocates and organizers. The report illustrates how youth development principles have been taken up by organizers, and improved both their individual health and organizational effectiveness. Youth organizers and their funders will see convincing arguments and case studies on the positive and necessary side to implementing direct services into their organizations.

In today's political climate, progressive communities are looking for the leaders who will guide the next 50 years of social change in this country: we point to these individual and organizational examples of how to create sustainable organizing cultures and powerful leaders.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Taj James', written in a cursive, fluid style.

Taj James, Executive Director
Movement Strategy Center
Oakland, California
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INTRODUCTION

The field of youth organizing has grown exponentially in the last decade. Young people are actively improving their schools, protecting the environment, preventing incarceration and building stronger communities – with youth-led or youth-driven organizations serving as their base. But the young people involved in these efforts to change their world have usually had their personal lives negatively impacted by systems that neglect or deny many of their fundamental needs. They are struggling

to find jobs, succeed in school, handle poverty and financial burden, resolve social and familial stresses, and survive racism and a culture that criminalizes them. How can such young people be expected to participate in systems change when their basic needs are not being met? When difficult life issues continue unaddressed, the abuses and traumas young people experience can have a detrimental effect on organizing efforts. Until recently, helping young people to meet their basic needs and develop their potential has been largely viewed as the role of youth development or service organizations – private institutions like churches and non-profits, and public institutions like schools, health clinics, the foster care system and the juvenile justice system. The government has played a huge role in providing monies for support in both public and private settings. This study reveals how many youth organizing groups are now also incorporating innovative approaches to support the development of their members – hand in hand with their organizing campaigns. This is based on a growing understanding that this support is essential for young people as individuals, as well as for the ultimate success of any efforts to improve communities. Youth organizing groups are a natural (and, for the young people, often safer) place to reach youth. Many groups have been pioneering their own developmental components, as well as partnering with more traditional service organizations to improve their members' lives. The models profiled in this report provide a new

framework of community change, in which organizing and development models come together to provide service and long-term policy change for impacted youth.

At the same time (but not as quickly) some youth service organizations are seeing the value of basing youth organizing efforts within their walls, as a strategy to promote not only positive development of young people, but to achieve real social and structural changes in society. Gaps and challenges remain between the fields of youth organizing and youth development, and little research has looked at what is happening and why, or why not.

The young people behind the organizing profiled in this study have an evolved understanding that people need to attend to their lives holistically. Health care, safety, education, and broadened options are necessary for people, not only to achieve their organizing goals, but also to strengthen entire individuals and communities. Ultimately, this approach will lead to a more sustainable movement for social justice, one that is less divisive and that doesn't require its members to sacrifice other parts of their lives. The message is: individuals can and must take care of themselves as they risk to take care of their community. These groups did not view this as a new idea, but as a return to a basic understanding of life, harmony and balance – a nod to past wisdom that has allowed a community to thrive for generations.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Movement Strategy Center (MSC), in partnership with the Young Wisdom Project, conducted research on the spectrum of organizations bridging the youth organizing and youth development fields. Our study focused on the following questions:

How are youth organizing groups working internally to meet traditional youth development needs of youth? What learnings and challenges emerge for each as they broaden their usual reach and approaches?

What kinds of partnerships are youth organizing groups forming with traditional youth development and service groups to meet youth development needs in the community? How have these developed and what conditions make it possible for partnerships to succeed?

How has the work of youth organizing groups changed the climate and resource base for improving youth development opportunities in their communities?

How do these questions differ and build upon what has been addressed in other recent research?

METHODOLOGY

In order to most effectively pursue these questions, we developed detailed profiles of organizations that represented innovative models of different approaches to addressing youth development needs. To identify the groups, we conducted a review of key literature, press reports, community based organization websites and publications. We also conducted interviews with a diverse group of youth and youth organizing practitioners from around the country.

The six organizations profiled here form the heart of our study. They include:

Youth Making a Change (YMAC), San Francisco, CA
 Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ), Bronx, NY
 Youth Justice Coalition (YJC), Los Angeles, CA
 The Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD), San Francisco, CA
 Lummi CEDAR Project, Lummi Nation, Bellingham, WA
 Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), Salem, OR

The six groups are diverse in geography; issue areas; race, gender and immigration status of their constituents; and organizing models. They also represent a range of structural approaches: independent intergenerational groups, independent youth-led groups, adult-led service providers to youth constituents, and adult-led community organizing efforts with a significant youth constituency. We conducted extensive multiple interviews with the lead organizers or directors of each organization.

YOUTH ORGANIZING AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Responding to the Crisis Facing Young People and their Communities

Young people in the U.S. today live in an increasingly difficult environment. Over a third of all children live in low-income families and sixteen percent live in poverty, a rate that is 2-3 times higher than other Western industrialized nations. Poverty statistics are double for youth of color – putting their experience on par with developing nations. Poverty statistics are not always indicative of a person's outcome, yet poor youth are much more likely than their counterparts to drop out of school, enter the juvenile justice system, and be trapped in poverty as adults.

Significantly, they are also less likely to be engaged in political and civic processes, leaving them voiceless in the institutions and policies impacting their lives. For many youth these interlinking conditions create negative cycles of development and engagement – cycles that reinforce social and economic inequality. For example, as schools fail young people, they are less able to participate in pro-active decision-making and more likely to be institutionalized.

National and state-level policies have fueled this cycle. Over the last twenty years, policy makers have legislated widespread divestments in public education and social welfare, massive increases in prison and juvenile detention spending, and laws that criminalize youth of color and block access to education for poor and immigrant youth. With the current economic crisis, tax cuts and increases in military spending, these trends are growing. Schools across the nation are facing major budget cuts, massive layoffs, and

closures. In some cases, school has become an experience to survive, rather than a place of development. Barriers to development and growth – including hunger, lack of access to jobs, transportation and health care, and unsafe and toxic living conditions – seem to get higher and higher. The field of youth development was created to justify the humanity of young people of color faced with a history of structural racism that has denied their basic human rights to education, health care and support. This during a period in which disparities and inequities were being blamed on the moral, intellectual and genetic inferiorities of the mostly black and brown “underclass.”

In this climate, youth-led and youth-driven organizing groups are growing more effective at involving youth to address urgent community issues.¹ Young people are increasingly becoming agents of change dealing with real-world issues, such as the toxicity of their environments or the educational system itself. When accompanied by the necessary organizational structures and capacity building, these models provide a rich environment for individual and community development. They also foster young peoples' development with skills, knowledge and behavior for success in higher education, life long learning, employment, and civic engagement. Young organizers learn research, planning, creative thinking, critical analysis, collaboration, writing, financial management, and relationship-building. Ultimately, these efforts cultivate vital communities, healthy democratic processes, and new leaders and citizens.

¹ James, T. & McGillicuddy, K. 2001. “Building Youth Movements for Community Change,” *Non-Profit Quarterly*, Vol 8:4.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN YOUTH ORGANIZING AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Before we look at new ways youth organizing groups are moving to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of young people, it is helpful to review the youth development benefits that have already begun to be accepted as part of youth organizing. These include providing resources and services essential to meeting the development needs of youth and to addressing urgent broader community concerns.

The Movement Strategy Center has been at the forefront of developing a social justice model for youth development, with a specific focus on the unique role of youth organizing in the broader field.

- ◎ Youth organizing groups create youth development opportunities for their own members.
- ◎ They also provide civic engagement opportunities to youth in traditional youth development organizations, by engaging them in the democratic practice and in the process of rebuilding their own communities.
- ◎ Youth organizing groups also play a research role in identifying urgent and unmet youth development needs by conducting regular needs assessments of their peers in schools and programs. Through focus groups and surveys, these groups paint an ongoing picture of the shifting developmental needs of young people.
- ◎ Another important role youth organizing groups play in the youth development process is increasing the available supply of youth development resources and opportunities.

Youth groups from across the country have waged successful campaigns to increase city funding for

recreation and park programs, and to create annual city budget set-asides that guarantee ongoing funding for youth development services. Other examples can be found inside the schools. Many youth groups are working to create health clinics or student centers in the schools. In general, youth organizing groups work to bring more caring adults into the lives of children. These are only a few of the examples of the unique role that youth organizing groups play in serving the broader youth development field.

A participant interviewed for the LISTEN, Inc. study, *From the Frontlines: Youth Organizers Speak* by Burrows and HoSang, successfully articulated the relationship and critical importance of youth organizing to youth development:

The reason why I say organizing is the best model of youth development is you're not just focusing on one specific issue or area. You want to develop a young person...in a very holistic way and at the same time really raising their consciousness so that they can see that they're not just an individual. They're not just one person that's becoming better and then they can better their lives – but that for them to better themselves they also need to better the community as well. [Youth organizing] really changes the concept from an individual to a collective and I think that's really important to the person's development.

Burrows and HoSang make the point that youth organizing at its best values the development of its members equally, to the benefit of any campaign: “Perhaps the singular most unifying characteristic identified by youth organizers is the attention paid to the political, personal, academic, cultural and community concerns.”²

² HoSang and Burrows. 2003. *Occasional Paper Series on Youth Organizing*, Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

A participant in their study captured this well:

I think youth organizing incorporates so much youth development work, which broader community organizers don't do. I think because we really do focus on...helping young people with some of the issues as they become adults and figuring out where they want their lives to go and learning skills...My sense is generally that there is kind of a community that exists among youth organizing groups, that this is people's family in a way that I don't necessarily see in adult community organizing groups.

It is a time of growth for the field of youth organizing and youth services, that offers great opportunity for the next generation. The challenge is how to address the fragmentation of the different youth fields as the numbers of young people engaged in this work continues to grow.



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE RESEARCH

Shared Strategies and Common Themes – Youth Organizing Groups Seeking to Meet the Developmental Needs of Young People

This report looks at how youth-oriented organizing groups are building infrastructure or partnerships for providing services to the young people with whom they organize. The range of services and supports are broad to match the needs of their constituencies. We have described this scope of services in full detail in the accompanying organizational profiles. Some groups in this study have developed organizational capacity to provide academic tutoring, college guidance counseling and resource libraries for higher

education. Others have developed relationships with academic organizations and school staff to access relevant support. Some organizations have developed relationships with physicians and other health care providers to provide, sometimes for the first time, medical, dental and vision care to members. There are groups who facilitate access to alternative medicine such as acupuncture and herbal medicine. Some groups have brought in professionals to provide emotional and spiritual counseling to address a wide spectrum of issues such as domestic violence, death in the community, colonization, oppression and self-worth. Some groups have returned to traditional ways, regenerating culture by bringing back ceremony and rituals to their healing and support work. All these groups are breaking the unhealthy cycles of poverty, exploitation and systemic oppression, and creating new cycles that blur the lines between healing, art and self-expression; and culture, political organizing and movement building. They are finding more sustainable models for both their organizations and their members.

Weaving Lives for Sustainability and Movement Building

Another theme shared by groups is the steady move towards integrating healing from historical oppression with political organizing. They see interconnecting these elements as vital to building a sustainable and effective social justice movement. Organizations are bringing traditional ways and practices to their supports and services, and reclaiming dignity and self-worth temporarily lost to oppressive systems. This shift moves away from individuals “living for the movement,” to a more collective responsibility for ensuring that youth workers and organizers get their emotional, physical, spiritual and political needs met – so that the young people themselves as well as the movement will ultimately be stronger and more successful.

Organizations are becoming more sophisticated and relevant to the lives of their youth constituents, by offering a range of support and services: from academic help to grief counseling to learning how to balance work, family and their lives. Young people are

learning how to change the odds, not simply beat the odds. Reconnecting the parts of life that were separated by colonization, slavery and forced migration, these organizations are returning to ways that connect stability, healing, and knowledge with organizing work. The results have shifted the way adults and young people connect, and young people’s ability to do organizing. There is a wave of new leaders who have the capacity to change their environment as part of both healing and building a sustainable movement.

Counseling and Ongoing Support

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in the Bronx offers ongoing access to both peer counselors and pastoral counseling, even as their members graduate from their arts and political education centers to their organizing center. To instill skills for the long-term, YMPJ requires youth members participate in the wellness center. Lummi CEDAR in Bellingham, WA recognizes the importance of dealing with the historical trauma and impact of oppression on their community members. Some of their healing and support work is woven into trainings that pass on indigenous tradition based on a family relationship model. Trainers are often called ‘aunties and uncles.’ Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS) of Salem, OR, which primarily works with Latino youth, holds monthly gender-specific healing circles and requires ongoing attention be put on supporting family relationships during the tenure of members’ participation. In San Francisco, the Center for Young Women’s Development (CYWD) introduces their members to daily writing sessions, retreats, grief counseling and access to weekly healing circles.

Academic Supports

For some groups, it became vitally necessary to provide academic support and tutoring for their youth members. All groups work primarily with young people of color, most of whom struggle to stay engaged in an education system that continually marginalizes, excludes and disempowers them. But organizing groups understand that supporting their youth members in learning how to better navigate that system and assisting them in graduating from high

school has tremendous benefits. In these ways, groups not only retain members, but improve their members' life chances outside of school and beyond the organization. Youth Making a Change (YMAC) has developed relationships with college access programs such as Upward Bound and has built relationships with college and university staff. YMPJ requires student members to meet weekly with an Academic Support Point Person and provides three hours a day, Monday through Friday, when any member can receive help with homework. LUS prioritizes academic development and provides support for graduation and college access.

Internal Structure to Provide Services and Healing Support

Groups have a serious commitment to designing ways to address the broad range of needs of their youth members. After initial planning and reflection phases, groups map out methods to build an infrastructure, meet staffing needs, and find the resources to sustain the internal structure or partnerships for services. Among the six organizations highlighted, each has developed an infrastructure that is unique to its youth membership, and aligned with their social justice framework and access to resources. They are in a continual process of evaluation and improvement and spend time reflecting on how to provide services in empowering, respectful and mindful ways. Often the

infrastructure to meet the personal needs develops at the same time organizing and campaign work is being done, therefore slowing down its development. One trend we observed is that the more capacity for personal development infrastructure an organization had, the more healing remained at the center of their approach to community change work.

Commitment to sustainable models also required groups to be open to experimentation and taking risks in trying something new for their organizations. The Youth Justice Coalition in Los Angeles spent considerable time with youth members on visioning what their "healing center" would look like, identifying priority needs and designing how it would be structured once funding was secured. YMAC also invested structured time to pre-plan and vision how to build their personal development infrastructure, in tandem with their leadership development structure.

The internal roadmap to provide services and supports differs in each organization. As mentioned above, some groups have delineated levels of participation and criteria for ongoing participation, as a means to ensure constant access to healing and support work that may otherwise fall by the wayside. Other groups have developed different points of entry in order to increase accessibility for different young people. Young people at YMPJ are introduced to politics and leadership development through art and self-

Emotional and Spiritual Healing: At the Center of All the Models

The primary backdrop for organizations included in this report is an acknowledgement that their youth constituents have significant pain to heal, and that their groups need to play a role in directly, or through partnership with service organizations, providing necessary support. They share an analysis of where that pain comes from: a legacy of historical and systemic oppression in their communities that has seriously injured self-perception and interactions among family and community. Youth organizing as the single vehicle for internal or institutional change is not considered a complete picture or strategy, even if it does include cultural components. Youth organizing groups are working to address the range and depth of needs their youth members hold, not just to make them more effective organizers or agents of change, but for building the internal skills for life-long healing and balance, as part of a very long-term vision for social justice movement building and healthy living.

expression. Young women at CYWD begin with the “Sisters Rising” program, which has an initial phase of developing community and team building for three months, before moving onto political education.

Groups have also chosen a deliberate and gradual development and healing process, much like steps of a ladder, with sustainable and effective community organizing as the eventual goal. In CYWD’s Sisters Rising program, young women transition from political education to action research to issue identification and campaign organizing, and finally to the opportunity to put their skills to use by applying to be a Sisters Rising Senior Leader or staff member, or by continuing on to next steps in their life, such as college counseling. YMPJ also has a graduated development process from art to political education to campaign organizing, while integrating constant support for academic and wellness support.

To meet the immense capacity needs to effectively provide both support and organizing work, organizations have needed to increase their organizational budgets to hire staff to specifically focus on health and other developmental needs. YMAC has hired two former YMAC youth leaders to provide peer-to-peer mentoring and support to younger members. They would like to hire one full-time staff person to specifically focus on building partnerships with other service organizations, to access additional support. The CYWD is hiring a case manager while also redefining for themselves a model of case management that is an appropriate match to their approach.

Population Specific and Culturally Relevant

An important shared theme among the groups is making sure their approach to service and support is population specific and culturally relevant. One of the major reasons groups take up the immense challenge of building internal systems to support their youth’s healing, development and personal growth, is that many of the mainstream and public services available are insufficient in a number of ways. The traditional social service approach generally views young people as ‘subjects’ or ‘cases’ to be fixed or repaired. Often treatment excludes an analysis of how history,

culture or language has played a role in young people’s trauma or healing. Generic programs such as these are generally not helpful and may even further hurt the young members of more social justice-oriented organizations. Sometimes services were geographically not accessible, such as for YMPJ. Sometimes social service agencies are not trusted because of their Eurocentric approach to medicine and care.

For example, for the indigenous community that Lummi CEDAR works with, it is of vital importance to find support that does not further harm the self-esteem of their young people. Lummi CEDAR incorporates traditional Lummi values and leadership models into their programs and brings in elders to inform the organizing work of their youth. They also focus on passing on cultural teachings as part of the healing and reconnection work of their community among youth and elders. For groups like the Youth Justice Coalition, there is a deep distrust of sending their youth members to institutions that are part of the larger, racist system that incarcerates and further institutionalizes young people of color. The CYWD has a standing policy to only refer their young women to trusted individuals with proven track records of respectful and sensitive services to poor young women of color. LUS’ model prioritizes family issues and rebuilding the family connections, and provides services that acknowledge the reality of where their youth members are in their lives by offering DJ classes and social connections as an alternative to gang involvement.

For these groups, their supports have been defined or shaped by the community they directly organize with, and therefore, their service approach is not in conflict culturally, generationally or politically. YMPJ’s staff and membership are primarily people of color, many with strong indigenous roots. Their approach to healing and support takes into account the experiences, history, and diverse needs of their neighborhood residents. The Youth Justice Coalition honors the work of their ancestors by the way they have structured their member organizations. As they envision and map out their internal support systems, they look to the four directions to bring their youth

members into balance. Lummi CEDAR and the Center for Young Women's Development both integrate traditions and practices based on spiritual history, culture and the multicultural context of their youth members. YMAC's hiring of 'graduates' of their program to provide direct support and mentorship to newer YMAC youth members, enables a connection between people who share similar cultural and neighborhood experiences.

Redefining Intergenerational Relationships

An integral part of healing and support work that integrates culture, tradition and spirit, is the redefining of relationships between youth, adults and elders. Many traditional service providers and some adult-centered organizing groups perceive youth as 'juvenile delinquents' or thugs. Groups in this study have worked hard to redefine the roles of young people in community work and their relationships with adults as part of a strategy to reconnect and heal intergenerational relationships. The sense of community and trust between the generations has been deeply hurt by the exclusion of people's history, culture, and healing ways. For many of the youth at YMPJ, their involvement with these social justice organizations is their first safe and healthy interaction with adults. Both youth and adults learn to honor and respect each other. At Lummi CEDAR they walk a balance of asking elders for support and insight, while also protecting youth-led spaces for young people to grow and develop. The work of the YJC has helped adult allies to recognize the powerful role youth can play in juvenile justice organizing; they are moving away from a 'rescue youth' approach to more of a collaborative relationship. YMPJ services and supports are available to the whole family, and LUS prioritizes addressing family issues, so that youth members don't try to use the organization as an 'escape.' What results from this reconnection is that young people play a unique role in intergenerational healing, helping adults move through places they have been stuck, and helping young people learn to trust themselves, not just relying on adults for wisdom. This has enriched their organizing models.

INTERNAL AND PARTNERSHIP MODELS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH ORGANIZING

In this section, we outline in greater detail the structural models that organizations are using to address youth organizing and youth development. We also look at themes for how their models developed and how their contexts informed their models.

Half of the groups we profiled have models for addressing youth development needs internally – with their own programs and staff – and the other half are doing the work through formal partnerships with other organizations. While all of the organizations in this report do have partnerships with other individuals or organizations, the emphasis is different between those who primarily handle support work internally, and those who rely on their partners to meet the service and youth development needs of their youth organizers. The following sections describe some of the different models in each category.

Single Organization Models:

These organizations are structured to house and coordinate many of their youth organizer's service and development needs internally. However, they still represent a range of strategies.

- ⊙ **YMAC: Single program, different staff roles**

YMAC has structured itself internally to have a single program, their youth organizing group, but with staff roles that meet different needs. Some of YMAC's staff are focused on helping the team with their organizing strategy, and others are focused on their individual and academic development. While YMAC members do participate in other programs and use other services outside of YMAC, YMAC itself does not have any formal partnerships for this purpose.
- ⊙ **CYWD: Integrated programs and staff**

CYWD has two primary programs, both of which have youth organizing and youth development components. CYWD's programs are developmental; they help young women meet

their personal development and community building needs while they prepare to do organizing. CYWD staff support young women in both youth development and organizing. They supplement this by having partnerships with individuals who feed into and support their programs (such as therapists, acupuncturists, writers).

- ⊙ **YMPJ: Different programs, different staff**

YMPJ is similar to CYWD in that it has a developmental model for young people inside its own walls. Young people come into YMPJ and do personal and academic development work before they move into being organizers. However, YMPJ has created different programs that focus on different types of activities: art, education, and organizing. They also have different staff for their programs.

Partnerships Models:

- ⊙ **Lummi CEDAR, Latinos Unidos Siempre and the Youth Justice Coalition**

The three organizations that are using partnership models also illustrate a range of how youth organizing groups are setting themselves up to do the work of youth development. With all of these models, the youth organizing groups rely on their partners to varying degrees to provide services and youth development needs to their youth organizers.

- ⊙ **Lummi CEDAR: Strong core program with 1-2 external partners**

The Lummi CEDAR Project model represents a bridge between the internal organizational models and the partnership models. Lummi CEDAR has a strong core program, similar to CYWD, however they also have a strategic partnership with a youth employment program that provides job training and academic support to

their young people. In the summer, the Lummi CEDAR Project works with their youth organizers for half the day, and the youth employment program youth for the other half.

◎ **LUS: Close formal partnerships with different organizations playing different roles**

LUS is an example of organizations that form tight, sister-organization relationships with other groups. LUS grew out of a community-based social service center serving the Latino immigrant community. LUS has remained close with the center and other affiliated organizations, and relies on it to provide support to its youth organizers and their families.

◎ **YJC: Alliance/Coalition partnerships organizing**

YJC has developed a model that organizes youth service and youth development organizations as a method for organizing young people. In this alliance-based model, the young people who are accessing services from partner organizations become involved in youth organizing through YJC. YJC provides the vehicle for organizing, and the youth get support and development opportunities through their “home” organizations.

HOW DO GROUPS DEVELOP TO MEET BOTH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND CONDUCT YOUTH ORGANIZING?

Several themes emerged in our interviews:

- Building an organizing component into service organizations**
 Some organizations, such as CYWD, started as service or youth development organizations, and built in a youth organizing component as they matured. These groups all started with a social justice framework, and organizing was the natural next step after the core needs of their members were addressed.
- Independent organizing groups growing out of a community base of social services**
 A slightly different spin on the first model is LUS, which grew out of a community of well-established social service organizations.
- Organizing groups that are building a service model/component**
 Other groups like YMAC, which began with a focus on organizing, soon realized that they needed to address the youth development and social needs of the young people they are working with. These groups have worked to build supports into and around their core organizing work.
- Alliances of service organizations created to do organizing**
 The final model was a coalition model. YJC created a new, umbrella organization to organize young people and adult allies in service and youth development organizations, who were concerned about a common issue: the juvenile justice system.

Some Themes to Explore Further – How Context Informs Models

Some interesting ideas emerged from our interviews on how context impacts the models that people create to integrate youth organizing and youth development. While we did not interview enough groups to come to any conclusions, the following could be areas to further explore:

- Models in immigrant communities**
 We interviewed two groups for this study that were based in immigrant communities (one which we profiled, LUS, and one from which we drew learnings, Providence Youth Student Movement). Many immigrant communities have an immediate need to set up basic services for their members. This is often a first step preceding community organizing. The community may create a rich infrastructure to provide community-driven services for housing, food and culture. In the case of LUS, the local community had developed a strong base of services before community organizing groups, including youth organizing, emerged. A question for further study is whether or not this model is a trend in immigrant communities.
- Indigenous communities**
 In our interviews with Lummi CEDAR, the organizers spoke about how organizing needs to look different in Native communities given both their history and cultural context. They have created a youth organizing/youth development model based on relationship-building and community youth development.
- Conflict-stressed zones**
 Some of the organizations we interviewed were operating in communities with a high level of stress and conflict. YJC is a coalition-based model that demonstrates the potential to build unity across organizations and neighborhoods

that are in (potential) conflict with each other across a large urban city. CYWD spoke about their model as one that helped a community of racially diverse, economically poor young women who were often in conflict with each other, build community and do organizing together.

◎ **Under-resourced communities**

In our interviews, we noticed that organizations in areas with few youth development resources or services, like YMPJ in the Bronx, tend to build community infrastructure for youth development and youth organizing from the inside of their organization out. They serve as islands to recreate and rebuild culture and community. How they do this and whether they are successful at taking this infrastructure/culture beyond the walls of their organization and into the community, is a question for further study.

PARTNERSHIP DYNAMICS

One of the key themes explored was the nature of partnerships that youth organizing groups form with youth development and service organizations. We wanted to know:

- ☉ What are the conditions that allow healthy partnerships to emerge?
- ☉ Why do groups partner with service organizations/youth development organizations?
- ☉ How do groups decide with whom to partner?
- ☉ What factors lead to successful partnerships?

The following sections detail the answers that emerged from these questions.

How Does Context Impact the Ability and Decisions to Partner?

The environment in which a youth organizing group is based greatly impacts if and how they partner with other groups. Youth development research has shown that young people generally get supports from a variety of institutions. The youth organizers we interviewed echoed this research. However, depending on the conditions in the community where they are based, the picture of how this actually happens may look very different. In resource-dense areas like the San Francisco Bay Area, one young person might belong to a cultural dance group that helps them build positive self-identity and a sense of history. They may also be involved in a school-based mentoring program where they get academic support, a community clinic where they receive counseling for mental health

support, and an organizing group where they develop political identity and a range of skills related to community organizing. This one young person may be connected to five different community institutions and receive different kinds of support in each place. On the other hand, many young people live in areas where there are few to no institutions that serve youth, other than local organizing groups. Still other youth are located in areas where various organizations exist, but are disconnected from each other.

For example, one of the groups in this study, Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, is located in an urban neighborhood, the Bronx, where they are the only youth organizing or youth development organization. As a result, they are building the youth development infrastructure for their neighborhood within their own organization. Under one roof, they offer arts, education, wellness, and youth organizing programming. Their partnerships consist mainly of healers and health care providers who have joined in the creation of their Wellness Center. In contrast, the Youth Justice Coalition is based in Los Angeles, a city with many organizations but little infrastructure to bring them together. YJC has created a partnership model that helps a diverse range of youth groups come together as a coalition around common goals. These goals include juvenile justice organizing and advocacy, securing resources for positive youth development resources, and the creation of a wellness center. Lummi CEDAR project has created partnerships with several adult-led departments of their Tribal Government. As the only

Why are groups developing partnerships?

The groups we interviewed developed partnerships for several different reasons: to provide additional supports for the young people they organize and their communities; to offer a resource and community for base building; to increase their ability to be part of community and political decision-making; and to be leaders in community planning and community development.

non-profit 501(c)3 organization, and the only youth development and youth organizing group of the Lummi Tribe, Lummi CEDAR plays the important role of integrating young people into all areas of tribal life and decision-making. As such, they are bridging intergenerational divides and establishing youth presence and new youth organizations in different areas of the Lummi Tribe. All of these models not only help the organizations and their partners achieve their missions, they also reflect the youth development infrastructure needs presented by their context.

How Do Groups Decide with Whom to Partner?

Even in areas where youth development infrastructure is more dense and varied, youth organizing groups report very mixed experiences in trying to link the young people in their organization to other supports, or to build partnerships with service providers.

According to the groups we interviewed, some youth development organizations have been excellent partners to youth organizing groups and others have been very unhelpful. However, it is not always easy to predict which organizations will be allies and which will not be, from the perspective of the youth organizing groups we interviewed.

Perceptions of and Experiences with Traditional Service Providers

The organizations profiled often made a big distinction between “traditional service providers”, which they had difficulty and mistrust in partnering with, and allied groups or individuals with whom they did partner for services and supports. This difference was not always easily articulated. In fact the very term “service provider” often held negative connotations when interviewees used it. At the same time, every group we talked to had a vision of services and supports they would like to see in their communities. Some of these were in existence and some were still visions. It became clear that the questions for all these groups was not whether they wanted services and supports for youth in their community or whether or not they wanted to partner with support providers. The key questions that groups used to make their decision were:

- ⊙ What is the social/political orientation of this service providing group?
- ⊙ What is its relationship to our community and constituency?
- ⊙ What is the quality of their work?
- ⊙ How does all of this complement the orientation and work of our own organizing group?

Most organizers interviewed have had negative experiences with traditional service providers. Their experience taught them that traditional or government-run service provision views young people as clients, objects, or problems to be solved. In the extreme they over-medicate, isolate, and institutionalize youth in their communities. Often these institutions are coming from outside of the community to provide services to clients inside the community. The “othering” that happens within these organizations comes from not understanding or valuing the experience and potential of youth in the community. As a result, many of the organizations we profiled are protective of the youth organizers in their communities and reluctant to refer them to these services.

A Shared Commitment to Community Empowerment and Self-Determination

Implicit in all of our interviews was the youth organizers’ desire and vision for services and supports that grow out of the community itself. Consistently, the service providers and youth development organizations that youth organizing groups felt most comfortable and allied with, shared their own commitment to social justice, community/youth empowerment and positive development. Self-determination emerged as the common concept underlying this discussion. Who owns, leads and runs the services? What is the relationship to community? When the services were of the community – designed from and run by community members – the youth organizing groups felt that they were both more effective and better partners.

The following are three types of motivations behind partnerships that groups formed with other organizations and agencies:

PARTNERING WITH INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE SIMILAR VALUES

Several themes emerged about how groups decided with whom to partner, based on this motivation:

◎ **Find people you trust**

Many groups developed partnerships on an individual basis with people they trust, rather than with a whole institution or organization. Their strategy was to find people within organizations and direct young people to those people, whether they were therapists, health providers, academic tutors, etc. Most of the groups in our study spoke about how institutions are an abstraction, and what is most important is the quality of the interaction between the individual service provider and the people in their constituency. These groups tended to build partnerships based on relationships to specific people and the reputation of those people. For example, CYWD and YJC discussed trust as the main priority they use when they choose their partners. Both CYWD and YJC are working with populations of young people who are often institutionalized and mistreated by service providers, and so they develop partnerships with an eye of protecting their youth and community. CYWD explicitly develops partnerships on an individual basis, not an institutional or organizational basis. They work with individuals in organizations who they feel will share their philosophy and approach to working with young women. LUS, on the other hand, grew out of a cluster of organizations that all came from their community. As such, they are working from a deep foundation of trust that is almost unquestioned.

◎ **Find partners who have flexibility, support and agency within their own organizations**

In addition to trust, organizations described the need for their partner individuals to have flexibility and agency to do the work at hand. Individuals working within institutions must have the freedom to make decisions and build

relationships that support the partnership and the young people involved. Again, CYWD talked about how they make decisions to partner with individuals based on their ability to work for the best interest of the young women in their community, regardless of the organization in which they work.

◎ **Find partners who share your organization's values, particularly a commitment to social justice and young people's leadership**

Youth organizing groups describe the groups and individual organizations they have effectively partnered with, as having a genuine commitment to social justice and youth empowerment.

◎ **Partner with people who support and connect to your constituency**

Many of the groups explicitly or implicitly expressed the importance of finding partners who understand and respect their constituency. YJC expressed this by talking about negative experiences with service providers who are disconnected from the local community and treat their youth as clients, versus the positive experience of working with their partners who share a commitment to the young people and their development.

◎ **Find people who complement what you offer**

Many groups find successful partnerships with individuals or institutions that help them achieve something that they cannot do on their own. For example, in terms of economic empowerment, Lummi CEDAR, in their partnership with the Tribal Youth Economic Development Department are able to provide youth with paid jobs in their program.

PARTNERING WITH THE INSTITUTIONS YOU WANT TO CHANGE

Some of the groups have actually developed partnerships with the very organizations that they are seeking to change. These partnerships are of a different nature than service-providing institutions.

Both Lummi CEDAR and CYWD have developed partnerships with organizations that they are trying to influence. In the case of Lummi CEDAR, it is the Tribal Government they seek to change. In the case of CYWD, it is the juvenile justice system. Both of these institutions are service providers, governmental institutions, and decision-makers. While some groups decide that they don't want to work with juvenile hall because it is part of "the system", CYWD has decided to work with this institution because it has material control over the women they work with and there are people inside that agency who share their values and will help them achieve their goals. CYWD has found that they have a lot of power to impact change with this type of partnership. They have become advocates and experts in relationship to the system, and also partners in making change happen.

A key reason youth organizers are forming these partnerships is to shift decision-making and the way resources are allocated in their community. In Lummi CEDAR's case, decision-makers started coming to them and inviting them to be part of planning groups for the Lummi Tribe. In CYWD's case, policy makers and service providers now require that they are consulted when they make decisions that will impact girls in juvenile hall. In YMAC's case, youth organizers are now on planning boards around the city and there is an assumption that they will continue to be involved at this level.

- ◎ **Creating the groups you want to partner with**
Many of the groups helped to establish new organizations that filled gaps in service, youth organizing or decision-making functions in their communities. They are **institution-building institutions**, able to identify a missing need in

the community and fill it by starting and incubating new organizations.

- ◎ **Start service organizations you want to partner with**
Many groups develop a sense of trust among constituents by actually creating an organization in their community to fill a void. Because the organization is "coming from the same place" it can be accountable to the same community of people and values. For example, YMPJ's creation of their own wellness center allowed them to create partnerships with other groups such as churches, health care providers, and a community garden organization that brings organic food to the neighborhood.
- ◎ **"Outsider groups" create "insider" groups that they want to partner with**
Lummi CEDAR Project is creating an official youth decision-making body within the Tribal Government while they maintain an outsider role. YMAC has created the Youth Commission in San Francisco, a new part of city government. CYWD has placed young women in decision-making roles within the juvenile justice system, and they have programs that provide services to young women in the system.
- ◎ **Starting organizing groups in neighboring regions**
For example, LUS has sparked the development of youth organizing groups and chapters all over Oregon.

Do Partnerships Ever Negatively Impact the Ability of Youth Organizing or Youth Development Groups to Do Their Core Work?

One of the questions we asked was whether or not close partnerships ever negatively impacted the organization's ability to do their core work, whether that work was organizing or service provision. For the

most part, we found that partnerships expanded the groups' ability to do their work, rather than inhibited it. For example, CYWD started as a constituent-run service provider that later became an advocacy and organizing group. In that transition, as CYWD became more involved in advocacy, we wondered whether or not they still had the same level of access to young women inside San Francisco Juvenile Hall. In fact, CYWD has gained more access to young women in Juvenile Hall, as they have been recognized as "experts" in juvenile justice and gender issues. Much of this is a result of their approach to advocacy and partnerships. CYWD approaches their relationships with Juvenile Hall and the Juvenile Justice Commission as partnerships, rather than simply oppositions. They look for ways to build opportuni-

ties to be involved in decision-making within the system.

Another example of a mutually beneficial partnership is LUS's relationship with Mano a Mano. LUS is a youth organizing group that was created from and incubated in Mano a Mano, a community services center. Mano a Mano continues to house not only LUS, but two other community organizing groups as well. This relationship has cost Mano a Mano a few grants by foundations that were not comfortable with the organizing work of their partners. However, this has not prevented either organization from doing their core work. The relationship between the organizations is so much like community and family that it far outweighs this cost.

What Factors Lead to Successful Partnerships?

- **Healthy organizations, independently funded**

With the exception of YJC, most of the groups profiled in this report found funding for their work as individual organizations first, and then built partnerships with other organizations, as opposed to seeking funding to start partnerships. YJC is different in that part of its work is to find and coordinate funding for its member groups. The organization is leading the partnership with service organizations and helping them get additional resources individually and as a coalition. Overall, this theme reflects the principle that healthy partnerships require healthy individual partners. While this theme points to the potential to create funding sources that specifically support partnerships, it is also clear that organizations need to have a basic level of health and stability to be good partners.

- **Adequate human and financial resources to manage partnerships**

Partnerships require resources in and of themselves. Many of the groups we spoke with referred to the structural, staff, and financial resources they had in place to maintain good partnerships. Without resources, potential partnerships can dissolve. For example YMAC realized that it took more resources than they had available, to stay involved with the planning of the wellness center it helped to create and that this center took resources away from their other organizing work. In order to maintain their core work, they decided to not stay involved in the wellness center.

- **Overlapping leadership and political/cultural community**

In some of the organizations we interviewed, such as LUS or YJC, an overlapping leadership and political/cultural community between their own organization and those of their partners helped to build a foundation of trust and a common framework for their work. While not all partnerships have this, when it did exist it created deeper relationships and coordination between the groups.

- **Shared values, analysis, and/or culture**

Across youth organizing groups, the strongest partnerships were formed when their partners shared basic values of community empowerment, youth leadership, and self-determination with them. For CYWD, this assessment happens on an individual basis by evaluating whether or not individuals are good partners for them, based on their how they approach their work and the young women in the organization. In the case of YJC, the coalition or partnership culture went much deeper. They have created a training curriculum for all their partner organizations that helps everyone develop a common language and analysis around the juvenile justice system.

- **Approach partnerships as relationship-building**

Whether they were building partnerships with service providers or with institutions that they were trying to change, many of the youth organizing groups we spoke with talked about approaching partnership as a relationship-building activity. Lummi CEDAR took this approach with their Tribal Council and Departments, YJC with the members of their coalition, and LUS with their partners. Lummi CEDAR spoke most directly about their conscious decision to approach their work in this way. By building relationships with the Tribal Government and Departments, they are able to actually shift culture and decision-making in a way that they could not if they took an oppositional approach. Besides being culturally appropriate, they also create intergenerational alliances that are important to the Lummi Tribe's future. Likewise, CYWD has taken this approach in their work with Juvenile Hall. By approaching partnerships as relationship-building, they were able to turn potentially oppositional relationships inside the system, into allies that help them achieve their goals.

INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONS ON CLIMATE AND RESOURCES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

In similar and unique ways, each organization profiled has had a significant impact in their community, from creating innovative services where there were none before, to gaining respect for youth voice and input in civic decision-making processes, to running successful campaigns for increased funding and improved youth services. The impact of the groups can be felt powerfully at the local level and in some cases reach broader regional and even national scope.

CYWD has had a major impact on the juvenile justice system in San Francisco, and is seen as a model for alternative sentencing nationally. Judges regularly instruct probation officers to talk to CYWD before decisions are made about young women's futures. By building a relationship with a Juvenile Justice Commissioner, they were able to draw attention to and improve issues facing LGBTQ young people in the hall. Most importantly, girls in the juvenile justice system are now on the map in San Francisco. They are organized and present for conversation and they have a sense of entitlement that they need to be involved.

LUS has had a major impact in Oregon, spawning over 30 new youth organizations. Because of its coalition-building work, LUS is now in a position to connect these groups with other youth organizing groups in their local community. They have shifted perceptions of youth of color and led adult decision-makers in schools, organizations, and even policy making bodies, to start thinking about and seeking out young people's perspectives. Their work has led to young people being named to decision-making boards.

YMAC's long-time organizing presence has made a pioneering difference in the climate of youth development in San Francisco. They have secured resources and funding for youth-serving programs, increased student governance in district policies and developed many outstanding youth leaders. The sidebar accom-

panying their profile (on page 43) provides a roadmap for other organizations to build upon to advance youth development in their communities.

Within the Youth Justice Coalition in Los Angeles, young people have earned a level of respect and faith from adults that didn't exist before. Adults are seeing the value of allying with young activists. For example, adults have witnessed youth successfully generate media attention for direct actions, increase public officials' responses and accountability, and win organizing victories on a greater scale than some adult advocacy efforts have been able to in the past. The media and public officials now recognize a growing youth movement in L.A. that is demanding education over incarceration, jobs not jails, and a place for youth in program planning, decision-making and implementation.

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice has had a profoundly fundamental impact in their community: they created a center for youth healing and empowerment in a neighborhood where nothing existed before in the interest of young people.

As the only group that is doing youth empowerment work in the Lummi Tribe, Lummi CEDAR is shifting young people's views of themselves, their future, and their role in the Tribe. They have also been successful at building relationships with adults and elders, and shifting perceptions about young people. Lummi CEDAR has paved the way to establish youth leadership on the Tribal Council, youth involvement in developing a 20 year economic plan, and youth participation in other major decision-making bodies of the Tribe. They are bringing youth, adults and elders together to solve problems and heal the community. From the Community Mobilization Against Drugs, to the Economic Planning Department, adults are now approaching the CEDAR Project to secure young people's participation in their initiatives.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES



YOUTH MINISTRIES FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

BRONX, NEW YORK

Reclaiming what is theirs – starting with dignity

In the South Bronx of New York there is an organization that is helping to reclaim, block by block, its neighborhood. Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) is a church based community wellness center founded in 1994 to address the emotional, spiritual, physical and developmental needs of young people in the community. YMPJ creates a space that truly speaks to the wide-ranging needs of the neighborhood's young people, a space that provides opportunities for leadership and mastery of skills, and a space that is safe,

loving and connected in deep ways to the community. Staff acknowledge and actively support the holistic dimensions of young people and offer many different kinds of support to develop their political, emotional, physical and spiritual selves. The highest articulation of their youth development work comes through youth organizing and campaign work – which YMPJ recognizes is only possible after the essential needs of their youth are met through such avenues as arts for activism, education for liberation and community wellness. It is a place where young people can have safe relationships with adults to rebuild and reclaim what is theirs – starting with their dignity.

History, Context and Mission

Before she founded YMPJ, Alexie Torres-Fleming was already organizing with her local church to address issues in the community, especially the needs of young people. There was not a single organization or agency in the neighborhood providing young people services, let alone support in their need to heal and become agents of positive change within their community. Nothing existed there that was for them – a low-income community of Black, Latino, mixed and indigenous families living in a neighborhood whose schools, hospitals and other public services were either absent or sadly insufficient in meeting their diverse needs. Agencies and services outside the neighborhood maintained a traditional approach that the children and youth who came to them needed to be fixed, that something was wrong with them, and their best chance to succeed in life meant getting out of their neighborhood.

Two weeks after Alexie helped to organize a march to shut down the local crack houses and drug dealing,

her church was torched by two youth who had been hired by drug dealers. The irony of this act was not lost on Alexie – youth who tried to burn down her church were the same constituency on whose behalf she was organizing. But Alexie's analysis of the conditions in her neighborhood vastly differed with outside agencies, and she set out to create a very different approach. She founded Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice to create a space for young people to heal and grow in mind, body, and spirit in a way that was not separated from the community they lived in. She and others engaged in building a space of the sacred, a place for young people to look at themselves holistically and really take time to heal the deep wounds of racism, police brutality, homelessness, illness and a legacy of exclusion and dehumanization. She created a wellness center – not a place to “fix kids” or make them “palatable to mainstream society” – but a place to honor and acknowledge what is happening in their neighborhood. YMPJ does not focus on the dysfunctions or deficit models so many mainstream agencies and large institutions base their services upon. They choose, instead, to look at their community for the goodness that exists and define themselves by the strengths and gifts within their grasp today.

Structural Model for Youth Organizing and Development

YMPJ has developed, and continues to strengthen, the ability of individuals and the community to reclaim a sense of self-worth, reclaim their neighborhood institutions (such as the police, the waterfront, schools) and engage young people in a healing process to gain the strength and leadership to change the world around them. Youth Ministries has a clear

In order for members to participate in any of the 'centers' they must adhere to the following ongoing requirements:

- Sign up with either the Arts for Activism or Youth Leaders and Organizing center
- Meet with an Academic Support Point Person weekly
- Participate in the wellness center

process for young people to go through that begins with art and the power of art to affect social change, healing and health services, an assessment of academic needs and, finally, entry into community organizing and leading campaigns. The organization has set up four “centers” providing distinct services and trainings, but interwoven in their vision to sustain and nourish the whole person in mind, body, spirit and community.

The four “centers” are called:

- ⊙ Arts for Activism
- ⊙ Education for Liberation
- ⊙ Community Wellness
- ⊙ Youth Leaders and Organizing

The centers are not separate offices or organizations, but a way to acknowledge the priority needs of young people into specific areas of focus, and to provide clear markers of progress and growth. Everything – classes, workshops and services – is housed within one building. Youth Ministries is a membership organization and is open to children, youth and adults, with most of their services geared toward young people. On any given day about a hundred members from 6-21 years old come through the doors. What enables YMPJ to provide such a wide range in workshops to so many is their clearly articulated infrastructure and organizational capacity. They have 9 full-time and 5 part-time staff and many volunteers to carry out the day-to-day programs.

As part of their entry into YMPJ, each young person is assigned an Academic Support Point Person to assess how they are doing in school and identify social and academic support needs. Then they are allowed to sign up for centers and workshops that they are committed to for a full semester or three months. On an ongoing basis, members are expected to be doing well in school, or getting help for their class work – this is part of the Education for Liberation Center’s work that will be discussed later.

Arts for Activism Center

New members are initially drawn to YMPJ through

the Arts for Activism Center where they can learn hip hop, dance, popular theater, spoken word, and mural making, and they can create their own forms of media such as public service announcements aired locally on cable channels. Arts for Activism is an opportunity for members to represent themselves, their voices and opinions. Youth members relate to local and global issues in their art production such as in the dance and theater workshop which has developed a piece about the Israeli wall that divides and keeps out Palestinians.

Arts for Activism is a transformative process where young people begin to realize the potential of art as a powerful tool for change. Many of the youth who complete a semester of the Arts for Activism Center stay active YMPJ members and move onto the Center for Youth Leadership and Organizing. It is this foundation and understanding that the Arts for Activism Center work provides that so much of YMPJ’s healing, leadership development and organizing work is built upon.

Community Wellness Center

The community Wellness Center provides health support for the mind, body and spirit. Young people can receive regular physical health assessments, dental and body work – often for the first time. Youth members can also receive mental health support through pastoral care counseling – a tradition from the church that is a facilitated process of helping young people know themselves. Different religious and spiritual traditions are intentionally included as well. They have created a meditation room and bring in spiritual teachers such as a Japanese Reike master who both teaches and provides healing support. To get this kind of traditional and alternative healing care, most of the YMPJ families would have to leave the South Bronx and go to Manhattan. Part of reclaiming their neighborhood is recognizing that many of the indigenous medicine and healing ways are actually from their ancestors.

YMPJ’s Community Wellness Center has multiple layers of support and services. They have intentionally built the infrastructure to manage needs ranging from moderate to emergency crises. Recently, a Single-

Stop Center was started to provide services, referrals and advocacy support. It is open all day to members and families. Lawyers come in twice a week to provide legal assistance and financial advisors teach financial literacy. There is also the Brotherhood and Sisterhood program where youth can dialogue in facilitated discussions about issues like sexual health and mental health. According to YMPJ's philosophy, it would be irresponsible to deny the needs of their neighbors – even though the work is so resource-intensive. Members' participation in the Wellness Center is ongoing and a significant part of the healing process that allows their young people to remain active for the long-term.

To make sure members get and stay healthy and strong, Youth Ministries commits a significant amount of organizational resources and time to strengthening the Wellness Center. They have begun planning partnerships and coordination with other programs and organizations to expand health services based on their principles of mind, body, spirit and community. They are working with The Food Project to create a sustainable and organic source of fresh food and provide youth opportunities to learn gardening, diet and nutrition. YMPJ is coordinating referral and access to alternative health services with the Riverside Baptist Church Wellness Center, and working with another faith based organization to develop a curriculum on sexual health and abstinence. They are also building relationships with the New York Open Center to help bring interns to the Wellness Center.

Education for Liberation Center

All members must be connected to the Education for Liberation Center to keep their membership, this means, at the very least, meeting with the assigned Academic Support Point Person to make sure members are doing satisfactorily in school. For many of the young people who finish a semester in the Arts for Activism Center, their next move is to the Education for Liberation Center for its workshops on "Violence and Peace," "Freedom Forum," and "Dangerous Minds." Here the emphasis is on

improving literacy, and analytical and other academic skills through political, popular education.

YMPJ staff have trained themselves to be popular education trainers, moving away from the traditional method of teachers giving knowledge to students. Each semester is a different project using peer-based team projects that connect context, history and indigenous roots. For example, youth can learn about math through farming, gardening, and cooking workshops. They can also take a class on "People's History" that teaches members literacy skills through learning about Puerto Rican, Dominican, Caribbean and African American heritage.

In addition to Education for Liberation classes and workshops, YMPJ provides daily academic support to members beginning at 3:00pm until 6:00pm. Any member can come in during this period and do their homework, work in the computer lab, sign up for college visits, get referrals for job training, and conduct research about colleges in the Sankofa Center's college library. Young people can also set up appointments with adult staff and volunteers to get help with applications for scholarships or colleges.

Youth Leadership and Organizing Center

Youth Ministries' philosophy is based upon the belief that young people can devote time and energy to community organizing only when they are healthy and free in mind, body and spirit. After completing workshops in the Arts for Activism and Education for Liberation Centers and beginning and continuing to address holistic health issues in the Wellness Center – young people are able to move onto the Youth Leadership and Organizing Center. This is where the campaign planning and organizing work emerges. YMPJ's program model sets up the Youth Leadership and Organizing Center as a reward, an achievement to be proud of. This added incentive encourages youth to go through YMPJ programs and workshops in order to reach the Youth Leadership and Organizing Center.

YMPJ members who have graduated to this center, tend to spend the majority of their time on campaigns, even though they can still participate in

other workshops or center's programs. Their organizing work is not a separated effort of youth-only or adult-only. Elders and adults play a vital role in mentoring, teaching and partnering with young people. YMPJ rejects the notion that adults are not needed in young people's lives or not needed to build institutions and strong social movements. Instead, they recognize that real community change cannot happen on a young person's schedule and will require the support and active involvement of adults and elders. They walk a balance of honoring young people, adults and elders – of sitting at each other's feet.

The Youth Leadership and Organizing Center teaches youth members organizing skills; how to collect research and data; street outreach; and other campaign skills. Campaigns are generated from within the community and address locally relevant issues such as policing, housing, access to open space, jobs and housing. One long-term campaign of Youth Ministries' has resulted in cleaner waterfront property, and now they are considering opening a 5th center that would engage in the development planning process of the newly-attractive waterfront property.

Partnerships

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice began because there were no culturally relevant service providers or youth-serving organizations in their South Bronx neighborhood. They have built an organization that provides services and education alongside community organizing work. Their capacity and infrastructure has

been carefully planned and implemented, and they continue to build their services and organizing strength both internally and through relationships and partnerships with other organizations and local businesses.

YMPJ has successfully partnered with the Children's Defense Fund to make sure that 100% of their members have health insurance. They have also developed informal relationships with teachers, principals, and guidance counselors so that they can keep abreast of what's going on inside schools and how to better support their members. These relationships with in-school staff also help YMPJ staff to get a better sense of the curriculum and can give informed academic support for their daily homework needs.

They have not developed formal relationships with many youth service agencies, but do refer members to people and places they trust. These referrals come out of personal experiences and word-of-mouth reputation in the community for being reliable services. Finding culturally and linguistically relevant services from public agencies is a constant challenge. To their best ability, YMPJ tries to establish in-house services for their members. Some of this is done through planning and coordination with other faith based organizations to share services among their organizations, providing important local access to health services, fresh food and education.

YMPJ hopes one day soon to hire a doctor who can come two days a week and provide holistic and traditional medicine to their members.

Impact on Climate and Resources for Youth in the Community

YMPJ's impact on the climate and resource base for supporting youth services in their South Bronx neighborhood has been simple and profound: where there was nothing before they have created a vibrant, multi-faceted center for youth development and community improvement.



LATINOS UNIDOS SIEMPRE SALEM, OREGON

Valuing education, family, community building and intergenerational relationships

LUS is a Latino youth-led organizing group based in Salem, Oregon whose reach stretches throughout the state and into other parts of the Northwest. Membership-based, its mission is to advance the educational, cultural, social and political development of Latino youth by empowering them to take leadership roles in their community, advocate for social and political change and combat racist stereotyping. LUS can claim as one of its great strengths that it successfully creates a space for young leaders to develop and assert their

power, while being connected to a web of intergenerational relationships, their community and culturally relevant supports. LUS thrives in large part due to very tight partnerships with three sister organizations: it is housed within and fiscally sponsored by Mano a Mano, a community center and service provider, and works closely with two other adult-led community-based organizations: CAUSA, an immigrant rights coalition, and PCUN, a farm workers union.

Of all the organizations profiled in this report, LUS is the one that most clearly integrates and partners with social service organizations and adult community organizing groups in its community. This can be credited to LUS's base within a tightly knit immigrant community that had in recent years developed a strong network of social service organizations where none existed before – a model that reflects the conditions, patterns and needs often found in immigrant communities. The impact of LUS's partnerships is way greater than each individual organizations'. The LUS model successfully helps young people to meet their own academic and personal development needs while they are growing as organizers. LUS and its partners have successfully fought anti-immigrant initiatives in their state, developed a network of over 30 youth organizing chapters across the state, and organized to develop a new housing and community center complex in Salem. These groups have learned the power of collaboration, intergenerational partnership, and of having organizations that play different roles in their community. Ultimately, they have helped the community create networks, visibility and power in a white-dominated, sometimes anti-immigrant, environment.

History, Context and Mission

The Latino community in Salem, Oregon has tripled in number in the last decade and now accounts for almost 15 percent of the city's total population. As the community grows in numbers and visibility, they also face an intense legacy of racism and electoral conservatism in the state. In the 2002 election, 22 of 36 Oregon Counties (including Salem's Marion County) voted Republican. Just one hour east of Salem is the town of Dalles, the former home to the state's KKK

headquarters. Dalles' high school mascot, the dragon, is a salute to that history. Latinos in Salem have been personally targeted with hate crimes. In this context, the Latino community, and Latino youth in particular, need a space to build community and organize for change.

The groundwork for this organizing began in the early 1990s, when Mano a Mano was established in Salem. Mano a Mano was founded as a community center to deal with the most immediate needs of local immigrants – from emergency services to ESL and citizenship classes. At the time it was founded, it was the only center for the Latino community in Oregon outside of Portland. In addition to services, it provided a natural hub for community members to come together and strengthen relationships. As a result, it became a space where the community could respond to its changing needs, including political education and action. Mano a Mano began to sponsor and house community organizing and political engagement initiatives that needed a home. Two of these projects were CAUSA and LUS.

LUS grew out of a statewide coalition to defeat anti-immigrant legislation in Oregon. In 1995, soon after California passed 187 (a measure denying undocumented immigrants access to federally funded health care and social welfare programs) a similar policy came before Oregon voters. Progressive organizers in Oregon formed CAUSA, a statewide immigrant rights coalition, to move forward a coordinated organizing strategy across the state. They used lessons from LGBT organizing in the state that had successfully defeated several right wing ballot measures.

Over the first two months of the campaign, CAUSA held meetings and presentations in 35 cities across the state. At one presentation at Chemeteka Community College in Salem, several students approached CAUSA organizers and said they wanted to be part of the campaign. A few days later 15 youth showed up to organize and LUS was born.

The eventual defeat of the ballot measure energized the youth and brought them closer to their coalition

partners. LUS now works closely together with CAUSA, Mano a Mano, and several other community organizations in Salem, including both social service organizations and community organizing groups. All share LUS's mission to advance the educational, cultural, social and political development of Latino youth, to advocate for social and political change and to combat racist stereotyping.

Rather than being "outsider" organizations run by people not based in the community, these services had been developed and are run by community members to meet real community needs. Many of LUS's member's families have used services provided by these organizations, or have worked in them. As a result, these organizations are literally part of LUS's extended family. Additionally, LUS values education, family, community building, and inter-generational relationships. This orientation helps them see the service organizations in its community as valuable partners, rather than competition. The service organizations help LUS to develop, and sustain, its base.

Structural Model for Youth Organizing and Development

LUS believes that young people cannot help the community unless they are first helping themselves. In order to be organizers in the community, LUS requires that young people pay attention to their family and their education first. LUS organizers are clear that they do not want LUS to be a place for young people to escape other parts of their lives. Instead, they want their organization to be a support system to help young people do well in their families and school and to become active community members and activists.

LUS members participate in weekly 2-hour membership meetings and in committees that focus on specific projects and tasks. At any one meeting, LUS will have up to forty members attending. They also have five staff people who are all under twenty five. All of the staff were originally LUS organizers.

Additionally, the director of their sponsor organization, Mano a Mano, is one of the original LUS members.

LUS is structured to support a medium-high turnover in members. It lets youth stay or move in and out of the organization. The key component of this structure is LUS's weekly membership meetings, which form the backbone of the organization and are the place where members organize, get peer support, do community building, and do political education and skills training.

Wednesday Membership Meetings

The first half of every membership meeting is dedicated to a special presentation or activity and the second half is a general meeting where committee members give updates on their projects and ask others for the support they need. Members often come to the office early before the meetings and on other days of the week to do their committee work. This is also a time when members approach staff to get personal and academic support around issues at home or school. Before every meeting, they also hold DJ sessions, where members learn how to DJ and share music.

The presentation/activity component of LUS's membership meetings goes through a four-week

LUS has the following priorities:

- **Family:** supporting young people to be connected to their family and deal positively with family issues.
- **Education:** supporting young people to graduate from high school, then college.
- **Leadership Development:** helping young people become community leaders through whatever career they choose.
- **Community Organizing:** helping young people learn how to make a difference in their communities and society.

rotation every month. Each week of the month has a special theme and purpose: week one includes an issue-oriented presentation, week two a skills training workshop, week three a community building activity, and week four a co-ed support circle discussion. Everyone is welcome to the first three meetings – first time and old members – but the fourth meeting is closed to members who have been coming regularly.

☉ **First Meeting of the Month: Presentations**

LUS staff and special guests do presentations on a range of topics including cultural empowerment, sex education, The DREAM Act. These workshops are designed to keep all members, new and old, educated on different topics.

☉ **Second Meeting of the Month: Trainings**

Trainings are designed to give members tools in whatever they need to do. Topics include how to organize a small campaign, how to structure a big campaign, how to do fundraisers or events like dances, how to do media and PR work, and how to fill out a resume. Currently 50% of the LUS members are high school seniors, so many of the trainings are designed to help them where they are in their life process. These trainings include how to get ready for college and do scholarship applications.

☉ **Third Meeting of the Month: Community Building Activities**

Community building activities are designed to strengthen relationships between old LUS members and to bring new youth into LUS. LUS sees these activities as a way to get new youth hooked on LUS's environment and social connections. Many of these youth are young people who would potentially be part of gangs. LUS helps youth create many of the positive things they could get from gangs – the sense of belonging, safety and identity – without the negatives.

☉ **Fourth Meeting of the Month: Closed Meeting**

The fourth meeting of each month is a closed meeting for committed, ongoing members. This meeting is dedicated to gender-specific support circles where members talk about personal issues

with each other. *Mujeres Con Poder* (women with power) is the group for young women in LUS and *Vatos Only* (men only) is the support group for young men in LUS.

Through these support circles young people have a place to feel comfortable to express themselves. Group members develop a contract with each other based on some core values of confidentiality, responsibility and action. Many of the discussions get really intense as members open up and drop trying to be cool. For example seniors share their worries about school, family, and graduating. Topics of sexuality and sexual identity come up often. The circles integrate discussions, Q & A sessions and trainings on topics such as sex education with Planned Parenthood.

Committees and Organizing Projects

Committees in LUS are organized around ongoing tasks – such as fundraising – and around special projects or campaigns. LUS sees all of these projects as opportunities for young people to develop individually, build community, and do organizing. LUS supports new members who are new to organizing to plug into smaller projects first, and build up their skills. LUS also puts a big emphasis on supporting new members' ideas, and helping them develop their idea into a project or campaign. The following are some examples of LUS committees:

☉ **Fundraising Committee:**

LUS believes that almost every community or organizational need is an opportunity to teach young people organizing. This extends to

Seasonal Changes

In the summer LUS activities are more recreational. This is a time when they focus on bringing in new members and helping folks stay off of the streets. They do more activities focused on building leadership and relationships between people. They go hiking and do projects that bring them together as a team.

fundraising. LUS believes that they cannot be dependent on foundations for their own survival, and their members need to be engaged in fundraising for the organization. They do this through car washes, dances, and other events. LUS leaders have found that this is a great way for youth to learn all the steps of organizing through a very concrete project. As members prepare for their event they need to do everything from getting security to securing volunteers to creating a clear plan.

© **DREAM Act Committee:**

Committee members work on the campaign for the DREAM Act with sister organizations. The DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act is a bi-partisan federal bill that would allow immigrant students who have lived in the United States for five years or more to receive legal status upon graduating from high school. LUS is leading the Oregon component of the bill.

© **Voter Education Committee:**

The Voter Education committee is a new committee that is working on voter education by specifically targeting and mobilizing Latino youth. They are collaborating with Vos Hispana, a progressive issue PAC, and providing the youth focus to the larger campaign. The committee is made up of a small group of LUS youth who do phone banking to register voters and other activities to mobilize youth. They receive trainings in the importance of voting, especially for communities of color, and how to do voter mobilization. LUS says that without knowing it, committee members are getting advanced political education.

© **Oregon Criminal Justice Coalition Representatives:**

This committee represents LUS on the statewide criminal justice coalition. The coalition is an umbrella that also includes other coalitions like the Salem/Kaiser Coalition for Equality.

The Role of Graduates

Once a person has been part of the LUS family, they are always part of it. Graduates play an important role in LUS as mentors and resource people. LUS graduates have gone on to play important roles in the community and they bring these connections back to LUS. One graduate is the Assistant to the Oregon State Senate President, another is the president of MEChA (a national organizing group of Latino college students), another has become an advisor at the local community college, and others work at LUS and its sister organizations. Others have started businesses, and most have gone on to college. Many of those in college have also joined MEChA, and are organizing in college. Through this process LUS is seeing its network “grow up”. As LUS organizers go to college, they are taking their skills with them and creating a college-age network of organizers. In turn, they are connecting LUS to other organizing networks, like MEChA.

While the priorities of graduates change over time, they also become mentors to current LUS organizers. Graduates help LUS with resources; they donate their time, and do workshops on topics such as higher education.

PARTNERSHIPS

Local Partnerships

LUS has developed and maintained particularly strong partnerships with its three sister organizations Mano a Mano, its fiscal sponsor, CAUSA, an immigrant rights coalition, and PCUN, a farm workers union. Both CAUSA and PCUN are also housed within and sponsored by Mano a Mano. Lead organizer Jose Sandoval describes the relationship of these four organizations, “like a body with different organs doing different things, but all to keep the body, the community healthy.”

- © **Mano a Mano** is a community center that provides social services to the local community. This includes everything from emergency services, translation services, a job bank, a food bank, writing classes, citizenship classes, Tae Kwon Do, a new mothers support group, guitar classes, ESL

classes, tutoring and education support. Both youth in LUS and their families get support and education through Mano a Mano.

- ◎ **CAUSA** is an immigrant rights coalition that does organizing around immigrant rights issues. LUS collaborates with CAUSA on their campaigns, and receives campaign organizing support and mentorship from CAUSA's adult organizers.
- ◎ **PCUN (Pineros Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste)** is a farm workers union. LUS collaborates with PCUN to address farmworker issues from a youth perspective and to mobilize young people to get involved with PCUN campaigns. PCUN adult organizers also help to mentor and support LUS's organizing efforts.
- ◎ **NAACP Salem Youth Chapter.** LUS membership has included African American youth as well as Latino youth. The African American members recently started a youth chapter of the NAACP with LUS support. Now, the groups share membership and strategy for how to address local issues and unite their communities.

The tight partnership between these groups has many benefits:

- ◎ **Shared space and resources**
All of the groups are housed within Mano a Mano's building which has office space, rooms for classes, a computer lab, counseling spaces, and more. Additionally, they share common offices supplies and resources.
- ◎ **Increased visibility and resources**
While each group secures its own funding, Jose says that they do help each other secure resources. Through LUS's and CAUSA's organizing, Mano a Mano increases its visibility and the numbers it serves and the political will to support the center. Mano a Mano provides the infrastructure and support to the organizing, and helps to attract new members to LUS and CAUSA through its services. The increased

visibility and role in the community also helps these partners attract new funding and resources. Mano a Mano gets state and private funding. LUS gets private funding and money from grassroots fundraising. There are some risks with this partnership. At one point in time one of Mano a Mano's funders decided not to fund them because of LUS's political activity. But all three groups say that the benefits of their partnership to each other and the community greatly outweigh this risk.

- ◎ **Mentorship and shared strategy**
Adults in Mano a Mano, CAUSA and PCUN, provide mentorship support to LUS members on an ad hoc basis. While LUS members are developing their campaigns, they will meet with elders in the other organizations to flesh out their campaign ideas, map out the political terrain, and plan ways to collaborate. Afterward, LUS members will decide what makes sense and what needs to change in order to reach young people.
- ◎ **New leadership**
LUS has been instrumental in building new leadership in the local community and its partner organizations specifically. Many of the staff members in Mano a Mano, CAUSA, and other local and state organizations have come out of LUS.
- ◎ **Common community development projects**
These four sister organizations also recently learned that they secured money to build a brand new housing complex for immigrant families in Salem. This project is particularly exciting, because they will build a community center as part of the complex, which will house organizations and activities. Jose sees this as a major step for the community and their organizing. By having families, services and community organizing groups all housed in the same complex, they will be able take their youth development and community organizing work to the next level.

Regional Partnerships

- ◎ **Y QUE (Youth on a Quest to Unite and Educate)** was the first regional conference of Latino youth organizers. LUS sponsored and organized the conference, which was held in Boise, Idaho, as a way to jump start a regional youth organizing network. The conference pulled out 60 representatives from all over the Northwest, including Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.
- ◎ **Salem Kaiser Coalition for Equality.** LUS partners with this coalition which focuses on reforming the local education system. LUS's educational justice projects focus on helping the local schools rewrite their history and ethnic studies curricula and their dress codes.
- ◎ **MEChA.** LUS has a strong relationship with MEChA at different levels of the state. Its college-age members go to MEChA meetings and use the network to do political education and campaigns.
- ◎ **Individual service providers.** LUS has developed partnerships with individual high school and college counselors to support LUS members in their schools.

In general, Jose says LUS has shifted the climate for how adults in Oregon see youth, youth of color in particular. When LUS started, they would often hear adults talk about their fears and stereotypes of youth. Adult decision makers in schools, organizations, and even policy-making bodies, have now started to think about and seek out young people's perspectives. Now, LUS often gets calls from different organizations, asking for a young person to be on their board. Because of its coalition-building work, LUS is now in a position to connect these groups with other youth organizing groups in their local community.

Impact on Climate and Resources for Youth in the Community

LUS has had a major impact on the climate for youth in Oregon. Jose says that since 1996, when LUS was born, more than 30 new youth organizations have popped up in every nook and cranny of Oregon. With the YQUE conference, LUS has helped to mobilize youth across the state to share information and strategies, and put youth of color issues on the table in Oregon. Even in Dalles, the home of Oregon's KKK, young Latinos started a group after they heard about LUS and the Y QUE conference. Many other youth have been inspired by LUS and have started chapters in their towns. While LUS's organizing is controversial with some officials, several schools have acknowledged that LUS organizers have helped them do their work better. In turn they have pledged to support LUS's work.



YOUTH MAKING A CHANGE (YMAC)

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Building the bridge as they are crossing it

Youth Making a Change (YMAC) has a long list of campaign victories and achievements that have influenced the political climate in San Francisco – changing the way young people are part of the decisions that directly impact them, and changing the flow of resources back into schools and youth-serving groups. Long before it became popular, YMAC was putting low-income youth and youth of color in the forefront of leadership and demanding that students have meaningful input into school planning and shaping of programs

that serve their peers. Their steady organizing and campaign work ensures a constant youth leadership voice in school board meetings, supervisors meetings and media outlets.

After years of being an organizing group that performed triage to meet the emergencies and daily challenges in the lives of young organizers, YMAC has recently created an infrastructure called the “personal development structure” that seeks to address the various needs of their youth members. This has, inevitably, changed the capacity of the organization. The initial investment to assess young people’s needs and design the infrastructure took considerable time and resources, drawing away from direct base-building and organizing work. Now YMAC is busy implementing their new youth development component design, and essentially, building the bridge as they are crossing it. This first year of implementation has presented successes, challenges and a wave of new ideas for how to do things better next year. YMAC’s openness to the needs, the dreams and the hopes of their youth to continue growing the personal development structure promises an organization that can truly develop their young people’s health, consciousness and long-term ability to resist oppression.

History, Context and Mission

YMAC and its supporting organization, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, have been at the forefront of fighting for increased public resources for children and youth. The organization is most well known for passing the first ever initiative budget set aside that guarantees city funding for Children and Youth Services in San Francisco, called the Children’s Initiative.

YMAC focuses particularly on involving youth in policy-making, program development and implementation processes of institutions that directly impact their lives and experiences. Their campaigns have won them increased student participation in district governance and increased resources allocated to youth services such as the investment in school-based health centers. Their current campaigns target policies and practices that criminalize and unnecessarily institu-

tionalize youth by placing them in the juvenile justice system. Their approach to organizing has been fluid and organic, and not always confrontational. If they could negotiate their demands respectfully with decision makers, they would. What was needed for a particular issue, was found or created – an approach that YMAC followed in building their internal capacity to meet the needs of their youth base.

Coleman and later YMAC’s efforts to build public will for local investment in children and youth development services has moved through distinct stages (see chart at end of this section). These stages can serve as a road map for other organizations to think about how to link a series of reforms into a long-term strategy for improving the lives of young people.

“Personal Development Structure” Infrastructure

After ten years of organizing and building youth leadership, in 2003 YMAC began implementing its internal “personal development structure” to address the academic, physical health, emotional and other needs of their young members. As is the case for many youth organizing groups, the tremendous needs of their members not only compromised the capacity of organizing campaigns, but also created an unsustainable load on staff. There was also a contradiction that the organization had to address. Sometimes the same youth who were core leaders of YMAC, were not attending their classes at school; sometimes star youth organizers did not have the requirements to graduate or had serious academic needs that endangered their ability to remain in high school; sometimes youth organizers were still caught up in the system and needed legal and emotional support. YMAC staff were practicing case management with no infrastructure to support their work, providing emergency services they did not have prior knowledge about, and it was quickly burning them out individually and organizationally.

After long periods of reflection and planning among adults and youth, YMAC has begun developing the infrastructure to sustain staff in supporting the needs

of the YMAC youth more holistically. Their organizing component had long involved a “leadership development structure” training youth on public speaking, facilitation, campaign planning and other crucial organizing and leadership skills. Participants meet weekly and have regular one-on-one meetings with youth staff who help build out their leadership development process. Parallel alongside this now runs a “personal development structure” that one full-time staff member is responsible for coordinating. This track is open to every member of YMAC, including paid organizers, and is optional. Support includes four major components:

- ⊙ Academic support
- ⊙ Career goals
- ⊙ Health
- ⊙ Family life

YMAC youth have and continue to identify resources they need from staff to achieve their goals – politically, academically and personally – and staff have begun organizing a referral and case management structure to meet these needs. This has meant a huge investment in developing relationships with case managers, college access programs, health clinics and other social service agencies throughout San Francisco County. YMAC staff have given presentations and hosted workshops to strengthen these relationships, and have successfully created both formal and informal partnerships to connect and refer YMAC youth with these resources. In their office is a resource binder full of information on these “partner” organizations with flags and markers for which person to call for what specific support.

Youth at YMAC prioritized academic support as their greatest need and staff have subsequently developed relationships with Upward Bound and are developing a college student mentoring program. They held presentations at community colleges, ethnic studies departments and community service components of higher education institutions. But even the higher education institutions don’t have the infrastructure in place to carry out the mentor program even though there is considerable interest on campus.

Youth at YMAC meet weekly on Mondays and Wednesdays to attend trainings or work on campaign tasks. The personal development track mirrors this. All members are required to attend Wednesday meetings and each cycle of trainings takes about six months. Part of the logic behind this structure is not just to build capacity, but also to increase the likelihood of effective follow-up support. YMAC staff are systemically trying to move away from the ‘crises-to-crises’ mode, and deal with more sustainable methods of support that actually hold the organization more accountable.

Bi-annual retreats are another key component of YMAC’s internal ability to meet the vast needs of their youth base. It is at these retreats that the foundation is built for all the other work to grow from. It helps make the one-on-one work with members possible. At the retreats there is intense group-building, people sharing their life stories, and opportunities for more experienced youth organizers to support newcomers. This peer support is important, not just during the retreat, but for the basis of their personal development and campaign work. Experience has taught YMAC staff to keep this retreat relatively unstructured and let the connections between and among the youth participants occur naturally.

To strengthen the overall leadership and personal development in the group, YMAC has hired two “graduates” – previous core leaders of YMAC who are now about 19 years old. Still young enough to relate, but with greater maturity and stability in their lives, they play an important role in building relationships and providing peer mentorship. These additional part-time staff provide significant internal support to youth members and as a result, have made a dramatic improvement in the whole group dynamic. Also, having veteran youth organizers on the team modeling positive behavior and providing relevant peer support (such as applying to colleges, getting summer jobs) for ten hours a week – also relieves considerable strain on staff.

Potential Partnerships

As described above, YMAC builds partnerships with a variety of youth service and academic support organizations into its personal development structure.

It would seem that an obvious partnership for YMAC to form would be with the wellness centers based on high school campuses in San Francisco – since it was YMAC’s years of organizing and campaigning that helped to secure funding and their establishment in the first place. After YMAC won the health center campaign, the city established the process for implementation. YMAC held a seat at the planning table and every other Wednesday prepared their youth representatives to fully participate at the meeting. The process was extremely time and energy consuming, and after the first year of meetings, capacity was beginning to fade.

The YMAC representatives were aging out and graduating from high school and transitioning elsewhere in their lives. New stakeholders were brought onto the planning work who were not familiar with YMAC or the crucial role they played in their establishment. And as the next generation of YMAC youth joined and another older generation moved on, the eroding institutional memory of the health center campaigns competed with the seemingly more urgent juvenile justice campaign. Eventually, YMAC was unable to maintain the level of investment in time and resources to keep youth representation at the health center meetings.

As they pulled back, so did the health center’s sense of accountability and connection to YMAC. Today, the health centers are dealing with capacity issues of their own and are struggling to meet the demands of the students who come to them. When approached to discuss the possibility of collaborating with YMAC, the health centers did not feel as though they could make a new commitment that would take away from their primary service role. The complexity of potentially partnering with public agencies in community change work is that they often feel the need to remain politically neutral, while organizations like YMAC have an explicitly progressive and social justice agenda.

The tension was made very clear during a recent political battle when the presence of police officers on high school campuses was challenged. YMAC wanted them off school grounds, while the health centers wanted them to stay. If YMAC had had sufficient

capacity to keep youth representation in the health centers over the years, the political orientation of the centers may have been different.

Building potential partnerships is extremely time consuming, even for well-established and respected organizations like YMAC. Ideally they could hire a full time staff member who would focus solely on developing relationships with youth-serving agencies and organizations and provide dedicated advocacy at schools for more services. This added capacity could also mean starting youth recruitment as early as middle school – before students get wrapped up in street economies or other dangerous activities.

Impact on Climate and Resources for Youth in the Community

YMAC’s organizing and presence have made a significant difference in the climate of youth development in San Francisco. They have secured resources and funding for youth-serving programs, increased student governance in district policies and developed many outstanding youth leaders. YMAC hopes more youth-serving agencies will support their organizing work and actually become a part of their base largely because they have helped to bring so many resources to this field.

Support includes four major components:

- Academic support
- Career goals
- Health
- Family life

A Roadmap for Building Public Will for Local Investment in Children and Youth Development Services

Coleman Advocates and YMAC's efforts can serve as a model for other organizations to think about how to link a series of reforms into a long-term strategy for improving the lives of young people in a community. Here is a look at the steps and strategies of their journey.

STAGE 1: Support Extremely Marginalized Youth

Coleman was created after a 3-year-old was discovered in a caged crib in Juvenile Hall. This led advocates to work to get small children and youth incarcerated for status offenses out of prison and into family environments. The organization went on to help pull community members together to create organizations that served homeless youth and supported LGBTQ young people.

STAGE 2: Raise Public Awareness about Young People's Needs

As the field of youth development was being born and there was increasing awareness about the effectiveness of after school activities for supporting youth development and preventing youth from getting into trouble, Coleman initiated a public education campaign. Called YouthTime, the campaign focused on raising awareness for providing service in the after school hours and laid the foundation for the Children's Amendment as well as a major Beacon Schools initiative (modeled off the success in New York of turning schools into community centers by housing services in school sites). Coleman continues to use a variety of other strategies, including regular communication with member and voters, using candidate elections to highlight the policy agenda for young people. The strategy is to encourage voters to reward or punish politicians for implementing or not implementing a pro-child agenda.

STAGE 3: Guarantee Funding for Children and Youth Services

After years of fighting every budget cycle to increase funding for children's services or protect existing services from cuts, Coleman decided to ask the voters to guarantee a basic level of funding for children and youth. Coleman ran a successful initiative to change the city's charter to require that any city-run or city-funded program involve youth in the program's planning and evaluation. The campaign led to the first ever youth-led evaluation of city youth services.

STAGE 4: Create a Body to Institutionalize Youth Voice

After the success of the Children's Amendment, Coleman and YMAC – the formal youth-led advocacy arm now housed within the organization – worked to create a City Youth Commission. They knew that other cities had from time to time set up youth commissions and budget set asides for youth programs, but because they were created by a particular mayor or city council, when those officials were out of office, often

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the commitment to children and youth would go with them. YMAC used a voter initiative to ensure a children's fund and youth commission be written into the city's charter so that no administration could eliminate them. By creating this official city body, YMAC has been able to effectively use an insider/outsider strategy to move policy. The commission provides YMAC with insider information about what is happening at City Hall and also provides support for YMAC's policy proposals. YMAC in turn has been able to be an ongoing advocate for protecting the power and integrity of the youth commission, ensuring that their budget remains intact and that the members who are selected represent the diversity of youth in the city, not just youth from elite or privileged backgrounds.

STAGE 5: Create Quality and Accountability through Youth-Led Planning and Evaluation

Members of YMAC observed that the city was failing to evaluate youth centers and hold them accountable for providing quality services, and so decided to undertake their own evaluation. YMAC youth visited the youth centers undercover, used the services, returned to interview other youth, and finally interviewed staff. They found that many centers were not providing quality programs. They also found that the highest rated programs were the ones that had the highest levels of youth input in program planning and implementation.

YMAC initially planned to publish a report card of their findings in the newspaper as a way to create accountability and to pressure the centers and the city to take action. It was later decided that a more sustainable way to build quality programs was to propose a city policy mandating youth involvement in program planning and evaluation at all city-funded and run programs. This policy organizing effort helped lay the groundwork for an ongoing city initiative run by the Department of Children, Youth and Families and Youth in Focus that trains and supports youth in evaluating programs funded by the city.

The YMAC effort has inspired a similar youth-led project in Alameda County, California that involves an evaluation of youth living in group homes in order to hold agencies accountable for their duty to provide safe and supportive environments to youth. This emerging project is also a tool to collect data for an effort to change state policy and practices on how group homes are evaluated, funded, and held accountable.

COLEMAN ADVOCATES & YMAC DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

Confront Abuse	Raise Public Awareness	Guarantee Funding	Ensure Access	Institutionalize Voice in Government	Create Quality & Accountability in Services
»	»	»	»	»	»
Support Extremely Marginalized Youth	Raise Public Awareness About Youth Needs	Guarantee Funding For Children And Youth Services	Make Sure Youth Know What Services Exists	Institutionalize Official Youth Voice	Create Quality & Accountability Through Youth Voice
Create Programs For Unserved Populations	Youth Time Campaign	Children's Amendment	Youth Line	Create The Youth Commission	Youth-Led Planning and Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Get status offenders out of the juvenile justice system and into "family like" care. ✓ Advocate for the creation of programs serving homeless youth, LGBTQ youth, and young women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A public awareness campaign about the importance of the after school hours and investing in youth services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Successful voter initiative to set aside 3% of the City's budget for children and youth services above what is already being spent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community mapping project to create a database of services. ✓ Support creation of hotline run by youth for youth to find services and support in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Successful voter initiative to create official city youth commission that is required by law to review any policy impacting youth, with the power to call official city hearings where officials are required to testify. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Campaign to establish city policy requiring that any city-run or city-funded program involve youth in the programs planning and evaluation. ✓ Campaign led to first ever youth-led evaluation of city youth services.



YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Defying the limitations of how coalitions can work together

The Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) is an umbrella organizing network that connects young people from 55 youth organizing, youth service and other community organizations in Los Angeles. Since its inception two and a half years ago, the YJC has made a commitment to building youth leadership by promoting a voice, vision and action plan for juvenile and criminal justice that is developed, led and staffed at all levels by people who have experienced the justice system first-hand. The project represents one of the nation's few justice

initiatives led by young people (ages 8 to 24) who have been, or are currently under arrest, on probation, in detention, in prison or on parole.

YJC is an exemplary model of how to build real-life, effective alliances and relationships between groups that may otherwise be at odds with each other over turf, gang affiliation, funding or any other group dynamic. While the young people come from their “home” bases at the various community organizations to engage in the empowering work of YJC, the participating organizations are benefiting from a new and viable vehicle for sharing resources with one another and working for improved youth outcomes in the community. YJC’s existence defies the traditional criticisms and limitations of how coalitions and networks can work together to meet the very urgent and holistic needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated young people. As they move forward with their organizing work to dismantle the juvenile justice system in the county, they have also set their sights on the creation of a community-based-owned-and-operated center that would provide holistic support to young people.

History, Context and Mission

In March of 2002, 38 people from a variety of youth-connected organizations throughout Los Angeles County – comprised mostly of young people of color who had direct experience with the juvenile justice system – came together to share their stories, concerns and opinions. Over three meetings, they mapped out 13 areas in juvenile and criminal justice that they wanted to impact (for example, ending zero tolerance policies in schools, eliminating the use of gang databases, challenging racist practices that result in the disproportionate arrest, detention and incarceration of people of color). These initial planning meetings gave rise to the Youth Justice Coalition’s campaign work to dismantle the juvenile justice system by mobilizing young people in Los Angeles County.

The Goals of the YJC are to:

- ⊙ Build a well-trained, county-wide youth movement that is united in its vision, clear and

consistent in its message, powerful in its ability to demand change, and able to respond quickly and efficiently in times of crisis.

- ⊙ Mobilize the voice, vision, talents and power of young people through direct action organizing, advocacy, political education and activist arts.
- ⊙ Unite the YJC’s youth membership with organizational allies in order to challenge the race-and class-based inequities in the Los Angeles County juvenile and criminal justice system.
- ⊙ Dismantle a system that has ensured the massive lock-up of young people of color, police brutality and corruption, vast disregard for youth and communities’ constitutional rights and the build-up of the world’s largest prison system.

The YJC believes that the system cannot be effectively reformed since it is rooted so deeply in discrimination, punishment and dehumanization, but must be replaced with a system that is fully committed to equality, problem solving and restorative justice, and that is intent on bringing peace to youth, families and communities.

Current organizing campaigns include:

- ⊙ Changing police policies on the use of gang databases and gang injunctions.
- ⊙ Creating and expanding alternatives to arrest, court, detention and incarceration.
- ⊙ Improving conditions of confinement for youth in juvenile halls, county jails, California Youth Authorities and state prisons.
- ⊙ Challenging the mass incarceration of young people of color, with a goal of reducing L.A. County’s reliance on lock-up (detention and incarceration) by 75% within 10 years.

Over the past two years, the YJC has worked to recruit youth and youth-serving organizations throughout L.A. County to join this effort. YJC’s

emphasis on youth leadership and organizing has attracted many youth from service and traditional youth development. Since the passage of Proposition 21 (a 2000 statewide ballot initiative that allows youth as young as 14 to be tried in court as adults, allows groups of three youth or more to be identified as a “gang”, and includes other unjust policies that encourage the criminalization of youth of color), a significant number of young people have been put into the criminal justice system, and they are finding YJC to be the right place for them to respond and act on their own behalf.

The current membership represents an organizational base of many youth-serving organizations and includes more than 1,000 youth that have received leadership training, legal and political education. Participating groups represent a mixture of small community-based gang-prevention and street outreach programs such as those that belong to the L.A. County Gang Workers’ Association, some traditional youth development groups like Youth Build, larger community-based youth centers like the Pico Youth and Family Center, several continuation schools and job training centers.

A small percentage of the coalition members have done adult-led advocacy work before, but youth organizing, and in particular youth-led organizing, is new to all the groups.

The organizing work and political trainings built the coalition from 3 groups to 55 in a very short period of time. Their staffing remains very small with only two full-time staff members (one youth and one adult), and 14 youth organizers receiving a stipend.

YJC’s model reframes how groups can work collectively to share and, more notably, amplify their resources. Groups have often been forced to compete with each other over scarce and insufficient resources, but the YJC has figured out a way to use the skills and knowledge of their coalition members to struggle together for a better collective. They are able to conduct their expansive work without undermining the service or youth development groups in the coalition, adding, instead, a vital element of youth

organizing and youth leadership to the development of their members.

A key component to building trust and relationships among members is sharing an analysis of root problems and needs. Each member goes through a series of history and political trainings that builds a common understanding of the criminal justice system and its relationship to youth in urban cities. A shared analysis, a bigger vision for what their community could be, enables members to reach beyond typical surface conflicts that often plague coalitions, to building working and fruitful alliances. They are a present-day example of people living their revolution, modeling the changes they seek for tomorrow, today.

Youth Development Approach and Plans

Los Angeles County has a reputation for under-resourcing services and support to young people. One glaring example is that Los Angeles ranks first nationwide in prison spending, but 49th in educational spending per student. L.A. County also does not have a public department (such as the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth or the San Francisco Office for Children and Youth) that addresses the needs of young people. There is no stipulation in the county’s budget that requires them to set aside a percentage of funds to be allocated towards investing in youth development. The majority of the youth development money from the local tax levy, federal or state funds goes to Police and Sheriffs’ Departments or L.A. County Probation Department. A tiny allocation of funds that is contracted to community-based non-profits is allocated according to the vision and monitoring requirements of law enforcement, making many of the most effective programs ineligible for funding support.

The YJC sees current conditions of traditional youth-serving agencies in L.A. County as shameful. Mental health groups often over-medicate young people, services are culturally irrelevant, and isolate young people either in prisons and institutions that promote gang and race conflict and violence, or in non-profit treatment centers run by large, white-run

institutions usually located outside of the young person's home community.

The 55 member organizations in the Youth Justice Coalition work to patch together resources and supports for their youth members, but since the coalition has only been in existence for two years, the needs of youth far exceed available resources.

Seeing this void, the YJC went through an intense process to identify the needs and visions of their membership base, and are actively working to raise the resources to make that vision into reality: a community-based-owned-and-operated center that would provide holistic support, serve as an alternative to incarceration and placement, and build a code of conduct and truce process to address conflicts in the street.

The YJC vision for the holistic center includes:

- ⊙ A social justice and organizing school for youth who have dropped out or been pushed out of the school district due to arrest or expulsion. Students would earn high school and college credit towards a joint high school, GED, or Associates Degree.
- ⊙ Economic development leading to the creation of several cooperatives. Youth have identified auto and bike detailing, a graphic design house, a barber shop, a recording studio, and a skate park as the businesses they want to initiate on-site.
- ⊙ The creation of alternative media including CDs, a radio show and continued publishing of the YJC's newsposter – Interstate 5 – and Loud Mouth Comics.
- ⊙ A library and web café with internet access.
- ⊙ A daycare center with parenting classes and certification for youth interested in childcare or early education.
- ⊙ Activist arts education that would work to develop murals and a mobile public education team using spoken word and street theater to politicize and mobilize youth and communities.

- ⊙ An apprenticeship program to match youth with veteran gang workers who have been engaged in prison and street outreach as well as truce work for as many as 40 years. The work of these elders is quickly disappearing as they age out without the resources to pass on information and relationships to a younger generation.
- ⊙ Building local models for restorative justice that can impact L.A. County's understanding of community justice as a more effective and less costly alternative to the traditional system.

In the meantime, as YJC is raising resources to establish the center, it has developed some in-house services. So while the "home" organizations provide job training and placement, opportunities to escape gang life, and some advocacy services, it is the coalition that provides a space for youth to be leaders, agents of their own change. YJC members receive trainings and experiential learning (through campaign development and direct action organizing) that includes grant writing, budget and finance, public speaking, graphic design, journalism, media analysis and creation, public policy development, and movement history. Many YJC members have gone back to school with renewed confidence, skills and an interest in education gained from their involvement in the coalition.

The YJC also provides members with some services essential for helping people deal with immediate crises – for example, they have 10 beds available for members who need housing due to safety issues, homelessness or to allow for release from lock-up. They are able to provide court support for youth and their families to reduce sentencing and increase youth chances of receiving a community placement or alternative to incarceration. They also host legal education for youth and community members that aim to train people how to keep youth out of the system (such as understanding and handling police contacts), or pull youth out of the system by better negotiating court, probation, and parole.

The YJC has avoided developing a hierarchical structure. Instead members look to their ancestors for an indigenous model that is more relevant and

connected to their constituency. Great respect is given to the four directions (North, South, East and West) to bring people into balance, and the circle to keep people centered.

On the last Wednesday of every month, YJC holds a county-wide meeting where coalition members have dinner together, plan the direction of the Coalition, have a chance to speak through an open mic to the whole group, and break out into working committees (listed above). Youth development also happens through partnerships young people build within these committees as they bring to life the goals they have set. For example, the RESPECT Project is a vehicle for adults and young people to join together to address the school policies that force young people into jail. Member groups and youth have collaborated to develop a curriculum that includes the history of public education and the origins of police on school campuses, what people can do about zero tolerance policies and the increasing militarization of schools, and lessons on school-based organizing (see chart below for a detailed class schedule). RESPECT also seeks to address gang and race conflict, homophobia and sexual harassment on school campuses – issues prevalent in Los Angeles Unified School District. RESPECT partners are currently planning to host cross-trainings among the partner organizations.

The committees, county-wide meetings and YJC actions bring people together who work in the same county, but have most likely never met before. Often coalition members are working in isolation of one another – it could take four hours to drive across the city to meet various colleagues; YJC provides a regular and accessible forum for people to gather. The benefit of networking helps to drive the momentum of coalition work.

Member organizations have begun to develop their own partnerships and share support and resources. Youth Build sites are spread throughout L.A., but they weren't coordinated before. Now they share construction supplies, techniques, programming and even applicants to their organizations. Other member organizations receive peer support and peer trainings

on their youth development work, and have begun writing joint proposals to expand their funding.

Chapters meet weekly, and both youth and adult sponsors attending chapter meetings complete 15 weeks of workshops on the history of policing, law enforcement, social movements, restorative justice and understanding local and federal government.

Potential Partnerships

YJC is itself a partnership model for youth organizing and development as described here. But until YJC can secure funding for its vision of a holistic center, members still find themselves required to send young people who need services to public agencies. It's a difficult choice as they feel many of the services provided are contrary to their political framework, and often oppressive and damaging to young people, families and communities. Probation or detention services or programs tied directly to the system are often the only support out there for their youth members, and they have tried to rely as little as possible on these services.

Potential partnerships with such traditional social service agencies are not a feasible option for YJC

FREE L.A.!

Organizing to Resist the 200-year-long
Lockdown of Poor People and People of Color
in Southern California

Session One - Two, 4 hours:

Oppression Breeds Resistance – Opening roleplays look at the common discrimination youth face followed by a discussion of how both public and private institutions often further stigmatize and disempower youth. Youth organizing will be introduced as having a different perspective of young people based on their strengths and roles as community leaders. This discussion will also look at

the history of education and social services -- language, theory and practice – that often silences communities and squashes action, and the role of social justice movements in challenging oppression.

Video documentary: *Malcolm X*

Session Three, 2 hours: LA Lockdown – The history of law enforcement in L.A., why was it created and for whose benefit?

Session Four, 2 hours: Califas Chained – The build up of the prison industrial complex in California and the Nation, 1970-2002. Join the Struggle – The YJC's Local Campaigns/County-wide Movement

Sessions Five - Seven, 6 hours: Self Defense – What to do if you're stopped by a cop; negotiating the juvenile and criminal justice systems from court through sentencing; providing legal defense and court support to other people; understanding legal terms and concepts; and building alternatives – (the use of restorative justice, graduated sanctions and community building as alternatives to massive incarceration).

Film: *Once We Were Warriors*

Session Eight, 2 hours: Youth Movement – Understanding the history and theories of youth organizing. What is organizing? What is it not? Video footage as well as distribution of several articles and definitions from different organizations. Games to explore the stages of activism: silence/isolation; naming oppression, voicing injustices; action. **Video:** *We Have the Force*

Session Nine, 2 hours: Attitude Check – What are your motives for doing this work? The role of the organizer in the running of community organizing campaigns and institutions. Addressing barriers to youth/community involvement, the play of race/gender/class prejudice in the work of an organizer, undemocratic decision-making and structures and strategies to overcome them.

Session Ten, 2 hours: Serve the People – Who are we as leaders? What leadership skills and qualities do we have? What do we want to develop? What is our commitment to constituency and community?

Sessions Eleven, 2 hours: Organizing Tools and Tactics – Review organizing strategy as demonstrated through *Pa'lante Siempre Pa'lante*, a film documenting the Young Lords Movement in New York's South Bronx and East Harlem communities.

Session Twelve, 2 hours: Power Building – Illustration and discussion of power relations, competing agendas, difficulties in forging alliances, and the historic importance of both nationalism and coalition. **Video:** *Eyes on The Prize, Attica*

– continued on page 54 –

Session Thirteen, 2 hours: Action Planning – Building an organizing campaign including needs assessment, identification of problems or injustices, goals, target identification and power analysis, identifying allies with agenda/motive identification, action strategies with order of escalation. **Video:** *Books Not Bars*

Sessions Fourteen - Fifteen, 4 hours: Politrix – Understanding government structures and impacting electoral politics and public policy.

given the lack of a viable youth development infrastructure in L.A. They have developed their own support network of 55 organizations and hundreds of individuals to meet the needs of their youth community. The YJC struggles daily to increase their capacity, understanding and connection of their groups to the larger youth development field. Often people in L.A. need to travel to other cities in order to imagine what is possible – in youth development and social justice theory and practice. While YJC members know all too well that money is fundamental to creating viable programs, they would not consider an infusion of youth development dollars to the existing system of youth services in L.A. County to be a solution to the conditions in communities. The Coalition has unwavering goals about what their youth development work is trying to accomplish, and runs counter to so much of the youth services currently available in the county.

Adults in the member organizations are already seeing changes in the youth who participate in YJC. They see an improvement in their leadership ability and better performance in their home organizations. Meanwhile, youth have begun to apply pressure on staff of their home organizations to regularly attend YJC meetings and actions. Clearly, YJC is making a positive difference for youth, home organizations and the coalition itself toward meeting the young people's needs in a holistic manner.

Impact on Climate and Resources for Youth in the Community

Within the Coalition, young people have earned the respect and faith of adults that didn't exist before. Initially, the attitude of adults in many of the

member organizations was “do for youth” and protect them as much as possible. It is now changing to “you can do work beside young people, and many times they can be in front of the adults.” Adults have witnessed youth turn out the press at actions more successfully, increase public officials' responses and accountability, and win organizing victories on a greater scale than some adult advocacy efforts have been able to in the past. The climate has changed from one that not only respects elders, but is beginning to respect young people as well.

In addition, the media and public officials now recognize a growing youth movement in LA that is demanding education over incarceration, jobs not jails, and a place for youth in program planning, decision-making and implementation. Most importantly, youth are demanding that they be recognized as “human beings not criminals or animals.”



LUMMI CEDAR PROJECT BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON

When the wisdom of elders is united with the dreams of youth

The Lummi CEDAR Project is a youth-led, elder-informed non-profit organization based on the Lummi Reservation/Nation near Bellingham, Washington. Lummi CEDAR promotes youth development, community health and healing, and organizing among youth in the Tribe. This work is especially important given that almost half of Tribal members are under the age of 25. The Lummi CEDAR Project believes that Native American values and traditions that have existed for generations can be used as tools to

rebuild the community. Elders carry the community's Schelangen – the Lummi way of life – and youth carry the Tribe's future and dreams. When the wisdom of elders is united with the dreams of youth, community healing and transformation is possible. Through youth-led organizing that is informed and supported by elders and tradition, young people help to heal and sustain the community.

The acronym CEDAR stands for Community, Elders and Education, Drug-and-Alcohol-free, and Respect. While most organizations on the Lummi Reservation are departments of the Tribal Government, the Lummi CEDAR Project is one of the only 501(c)3 non-profit organizations in the Tribe. They thus have a great amount of autonomy to make their own decisions and to advocate for changes they want to see in the Tribe and Tribal Government.

Lummi CEDAR young people do their work with a strong understanding of the responsibility that comes with being leaders within the Lummi Tribe. One of the key roles of Tribal Council members is to protect the Lummi people's treaty rights, their right to self-determination, their resources, and their way of life. At the same time they are also responsible for helping the community and individuals in healing. Lummi CEDAR is also focused on these priorities. For various reasons, many young people on the Lummi reservation are not aware of the Tribal constitution, their treaty rights, how the Tribal Government is set up and how the council makes decisions – nor are they connected to supports for healing and a healthy lifestyle. The CEDAR Project is the only group currently teaching and supporting young people around these issues. While youth organizing groups in other geographic and cultural contexts may focus on single issues, Lummi CEDAR focuses on helping young Lummi people become Tribal leaders to address the many issues impacting their Tribe.

History, Context and Mission

The Lummi Nation has a proud history, rich in culture with an abundance of traditional knowledge. The social fabric of the Lummi People was interwoven with the vast natural resources of the region, resulting

in a subsistence-based economy that was flourishing when the traders and settlers first arrived in what is now the Pacific Northwest and Puget Sound. Although the Lummi People represent a proud Indian Nation, it still struggles daily with the effects of colonization and the forced assimilation policies of the federal government.

The CEDAR Project's community includes more than 5,000 Lummi and other Native people that live on or near the reservation. The Lummi Indian Business Council (LIBC) is the governing body, or Tribal Council, of the Lummi Indian Reservation (Reservation) by the authority of the Constitution and by-laws of the Lummi Nation. The LIBC is made up of eleven members that are elected to serve three-year terms. The Tribal Council is responsible for meeting the financial, social, spiritual, and cultural needs of the Lummi people and has appointed nine commissions to assist them in overseeing the administration of services to the people.

The Lummi Nation is a sovereign nation and a signatory to the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855 (Treaty). As a signatory to the Point Elliot Treaty, the Lummi Nation is a federally recognized Indian Tribe. At the time of the Treaty the Lummi people had twenty-six village sites throughout the San Juan Islands, not including the five village sites located within the existing Reservation and the several located throughout what is now Whatcom County. Following the Treaty, Lummi people were restricted to living within Reservation boundaries and the cultural way of life began to change as a series of Federal Indian Policies forced Native people to assimilate to a mainstream American way of life. As these changes occurred over time, the community experienced the breakdown of the essence of how Tribal members live as Lhaqtemish Elhtalnewx (Lummi people), and a myriad of social ills crept in that have impacted the health and well-being of several generations.

The first four generations following the Treaty, Lummi children were forced by law to attend boarding schools. These experiences varied from student to student, but were often described as a

traumatic experience. The boarding schools were designed to remove the Indian children from their families and the community, thus segregating those Indian children from their way of life and culture. This fundamentally changed the way Lummi people lived by systematically separating children from the knowledge of who they were as Lummi people. As often documented in the boarding schools, children were not allowed to speak their own language or practice their spiritual traditions, and there were incidents of continuous abuse. In the wake of this trauma, the boarding school generations were the first to become plagued by cycles of drug and alcohol abuse and other social problems that remain major issues for the Lummi people today.

The Lummi CEDAR Project believes that it is important to understand this historical context and has designed their work to address and begin a healing and educational process around these historical issues. At the same time, they also recognize that young people need to understand the power and responsibility they have over their own lives and the life of the Tribe. In this current generation, young people in the Tribe deal with many social problems that are similar to those in other communities, but amplified. Substance abuse, addictions, drug and alcohol related deaths and accidents, high unemployment, drug trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, abandonment and neglect are examples of some of the hard issues that impact the lives of many young Tribal members. These social problems continue to chip away at the core of Lummi identity, leaving many Tribal leaders, elders and community activists

searching for practical and healing solutions to complex issues.

Originally started in the early 1990's, the CEDAR Project arose out of a need to help youth to reconnect with Lummi Schelangen (way of life). The CEDAR Project first focused on reviving the tradition and sport of war canoe pulling and racing as a means to a healthy lifestyle and community well-being. The organization built a new canoe shed to store the Tribe's older canoes, supported coaches and families to teach youth the art of canoe pulling, and provided seed money to start up new canoe clubs. New canoes were built and the new generation of youth returned to the water in single, six-person and eleven-person canoes. It also organized youth and families to travel to different tribes to race. Canoe pulling allowed a space for elders to pass on traditional teachings. Through this experience, many youth learned the importance of traditional Lummi values and positive leadership models – such as healthful living, supporting one another and working together, respecting the ancestors and being of one mind. After about five years, the canoe pulling project became self-sustaining and spun off from CEDAR. With this opening, the CEDAR Project began to shift its focus to youth empowerment and leadership.

Two main programs provide the setting for carrying out these strategies with young people: the 8-week Native Youth Leadership Program (NYLP) in the summer and the youth organizing group that works together through the fall, winter and spring seasons. The summer program is the entry point for youth to

Structural Model for Youth Organizing and Development

The Lummi CEDAR Project uses three strategies:

- Preserving Schelangen: Tradition-based education, training, and organizing
- Youth-led, elder-informed organizing: Young people affect change by developing campaigns and working with different parts of the community to implement them
- Building a network of youth and adult allies

get involved in the CEDAR Project and provides participating youth a foundation for personal, cultural and political development. The organizing group builds off of NYLP and allows young people who have participated in the program to plan and do community organizing on the Lummi reservation.

Native Youth Leadership Program: 8-week Summer Program

The CEDAR Project believes that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a person to be part of healing the larger community if they are not a healthy person themselves. The most important goal of NYLP is to give participants a strong base so they can lead a healthy lifestyle as an individual and a community member. NYLP helps participants feel good about who they are and learn how to respond to difficult issues in their lives in a positive and constructive way. It also helps them develop a basic understanding of issues impacting their Tribe, treaty rights and the Tribal political structure, and how to do community organizing in their Tribal context.

Young people who have been former participants in NYLP are hired to be trainers in the summer program. In the late spring, early summer trainers receive training for trainers. Trainers then help to co-design the summer curriculum based on their past experiences as NYLP participants. The CEDAR Project directors also take the curriculum to community elders to get input into its design. The youth trainers facilitate the summer training and also invite guest speakers and elders to lead parts of NYLP.

The curriculum is organized around several themes:

- ◎ **Individual youth development: leading healthy lifestyles**

Trainers help participants look at destructive and positive ways that they as individuals deal with individual, community and historical grief.

They talk about issues like substance abuse and violence and their impact on the community.

Trainers help participants learn more healthy and constructive ways to address their grief and live their lives. Participants learn skills in conflict

mediation, prejudice reduction, healthy diet, and more.

- ◎ **Cultural teaching**

Cultural teachings resonate with and support healthy lifestyles. The CEDAR Project incorporates teachings from elders who are the community's cultural resource people as a key part of their youth development strategy. The youth trainers identify elders in the community who have good teachings on such topics as traditional tools and work (like traditional fishing), foods, sacred sites, traditional leadership models, and cultural values. In this part of the curriculum, young people also learn about current and historical cultural misappropriation by people outside of the Tribe.

- ◎ **Community mapping**

Participants map out what makes up their community including organizations, neighborhoods, and people. They identify common concerns and issues for the community.

- ◎ **Tribal political education**

This year CEDAR Project is adding more tribal political education to the NYLP curriculum. Participants will learn about tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, government processes and federal Indian policy. The participants will also explore the difference between government-given treaty rights and the inherent rights that the Lummi have as people. The two youth directors of CEDAR worked in the Tribe's constitution office and so are familiar with this information. They along with guest speakers provide the training.

- ◎ **Community organizing**

Finally, participants learn basics in community organizing and choose an issue they would like to work on during the year.

Fall-Winter-Spring Campaigns

After NYLP ends, about 10 to 15 of the participants stay on as youth organizers. With the support of older staff, the organizers take the lead on planning

and organizing a campaign. Their primary goal is to find opportunities to build youth involvement and voice in tribal decision-making. They are also responsible for recruiting other youth to be involved in the campaign. This has been challenging for CEDAR for a number of reasons including having a limited number of staff and needing to develop an organizing model that works in their indigenous context and culture. They are currently working on developing a better structure to support and train the youth organizers. They are looking at creating paid positions for youth organizers.

One of the main projects that CEDAR is working on is creating an official youth governance structure in the Tribe. Two other CEDAR organizing projects aim to protect Lummi safe and sacred spaces and to develop a youth-run center for Lummi youth on reservation land. The youth governance structure would help young people have an official voice in Tribal decisions, especially those that involve youth. As the majority of Tribal members are under the age of 25, Lummi CEDAR sees this as a crucial opportunity to get more young people involved officially in improving the well-being of all the Tribe and creating better circumstances for coming generations. CEDAR Project youth organizers are currently conducting research and identifying adult allies who can help them make this happen.

Lummi CEDAR's current relationship with the Tribal Council and other community leaders/activists is very important in all their work. The young people respect the wisdom and authority of the Council members who in turn understand the importance of new leaders emerging from the younger generations. One of CEDAR's board members has been active in the community for 40 years and sits on the Tribal Council. This person is a good connector for the CEDAR young people – always knows what's going on, is at meetings, and knows the traditional leaders.

The young people understand that leaders want them to be involved, but the leaders often don't know how to make this happen. For example, leaders have invited Lummi CEDAR to Tribal Council meetings to

give input on issues under discussion, but often they will not give young people the background they need to really participate. This can be aggravating and make the youth feel stupid. As organizer Sharlaine LaClair says, "When this happens young people are like, 'I don't know what I think yet, because I don't know what they are talking about.' Involving youth in Tribal decision-making could be simple, but there needs to be an effort. Tribal leaders are so busy. They are spread thin. So this is not to make them look bad. They have a lot of pressures on them and they need CEDAR Project to help them."

By working for youth to get involved in the Tribal Government and departments, Lummi CEDAR is helping the whole Tribe protect its self-determination. Many of the Tribal departments deal with issues that directly impact youth including youth outreach services, the domestic violence center, the youth safe house, crime support services, children and family services, and drug and alcohol services. There are also community-based initiatives that young people want to take part in, such as the community mobilization against drugs and the comprehensive planning process for the Tribe, which includes creating a 10-year economic development plan. Young people learn how to protect the Tribe's rights and heal the community.

Partnerships

Lummi CEDAR Project has partnerships with some agencies inside the Tribe and with a network of other youth-led organizations outside the Tribe.

◎ Lummi Tribe Youth Educational Social Services Department

One of Lummi CEDAR Project's main partnerships is with the Youth Educational Social Services (YESS) Department, whose goal is to help high school students graduate. Each summer the Department organizes a program that combines academic support and job training. In the morning, high school students participate in academic classes for which they receive school credit. In the afternoons, young people are placed in an internship where they

receive job training. All participants in the Department's program are paid and learn how to get and keep a job. The Department's summer program is huge and the majority of youth on the reservation participate in it.

Lummi CEDAR Project partners with the YESS Department so that young people can participate in NYLP as their job placement for the summer. Young people sign up to indicate their interest, and then the CEDAR Project goes through a selection process.

This partnership helps Lummi CEDAR on a number of levels. Through the Department, young people are paid to be in NYLP which validates Lummi CEDAR's work and helps young people who otherwise couldn't participate. Additionally, young people receive different supports from the Department than CEDAR can offer them, such as academic and other social assistance referrals.

◎ **Lummi Tribal Government**

As described earlier, the Lummi CEDAR Project has a partnership with the Lummi Tribal Government. Lummi CEDAR is currently located in Tribal Government office space and the Council provides some funding support for Lummi CEDAR's work. However, Lummi CEDAR would like a stronger partnership with the Tribal Government, specifically around the youth governance campaign.

◎ **Lummi Economic Development Commission**

The Lummi Nation recently received a major grant from the Northwest Area Foundation to create a 10-year strategic plan to eliminate poverty in the Lummi community. The CEDAR Project is very interested in partnering with the Commission to integrate young people's voices and ideas into the plan. Economic depression is a serious issue for the Tribe, and for its young people. Lummi CEDAR believes that young people need to be a part of developing the plan because they will be most deeply impacted by it. Young adults in particular can help to plan the

types of education, training, and jobs that are most interesting to them so they will feel invested in staying in the community. Tribal Council members and the Commission have expressed interest in Lummi CEDAR Project's involvement and they are exploring a partnership together.

◎ **Youth Speak Out Coalition**

Lummi CEDAR has developed a partnership with the Youth Speak Out Coalition (YSOC), a network of youth-run organizations across the country. Through the YSOC, Lummi CEDAR staff and trainers get peer support in organizational and program development.

Impact on Climate and Resources for Youth in the Community

Lummi CEDAR is having a major impact on the climate for young people in the Lummi Nation. As the only group that is doing youth empowerment work in the Tribe, Lummi CEDAR is helping to shift young people's views of themselves, their future, and their role in the Tribe. The CEDAR Project has been successful at teaching young people about their Tribal rights, about the Tribal Government Process, and how to do culturally appropriate organizing. As a result, they have also been successful at building relationships with adults and elders and shifting perceptions about young people. Lummi CEDAR is helping to pave the way to establish youth leadership on the Tribal Council, youth involvement in developing a 10-year economic plan, and a voice within other decision-making bodies in the Tribe.

Lummi CEDAR is helping people build relationships across the generations, bringing youth, adults and elders together to solve problems and heal the community. Together, they strategize how youth can be more involved in decision-making processes. CEDAR Project does consultation and holds workshops featuring board members, Tribal leaders and youth activists on how to create intergenerational partnerships and improve communication between elders, youth and adults.

From the Community Mobilization Against Drugs, to the Economic Planning Department, adults are

now approaching the CEDAR Project to help them get young people's participation in their initiatives. Lummi CEDAR recognizes that it takes a long time to create a foundation needed to shift adult-youth relationships. Before CEDAR existed, Tribal leaders wanted youth involvement, but did not know how to make it happen. Establishing the CEDAR Project was in itself a big step for getting young people involved in the community. Now, leaders contact CEDAR for ideas.

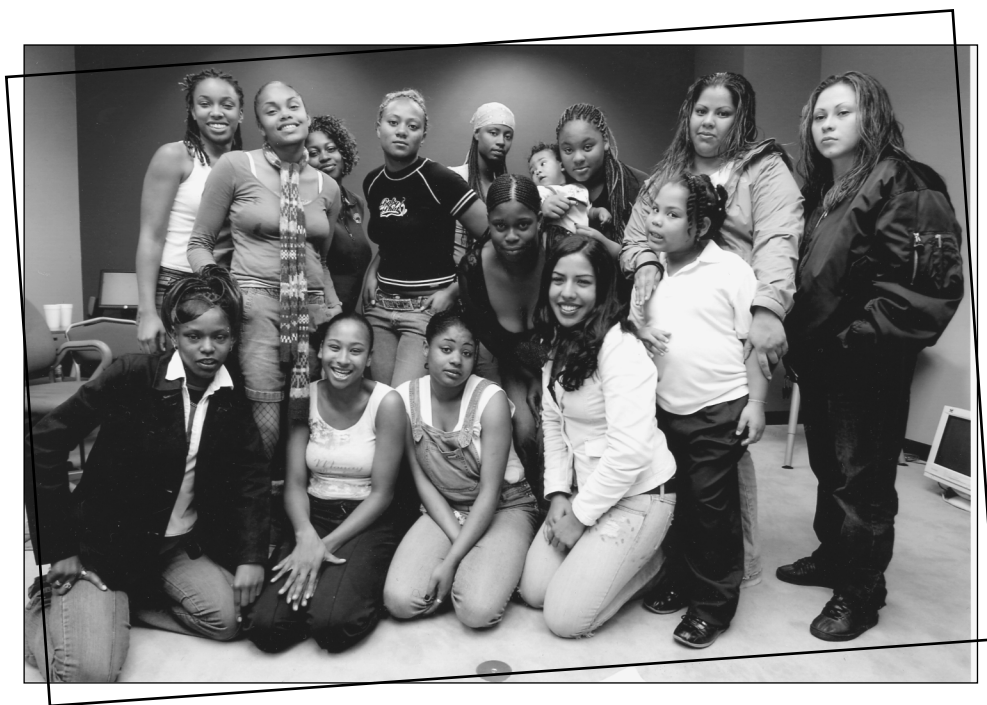
A Focus on Relationship-building

The CEDAR Project is in a unique position to facilitate youth development and organizing in the Lummi Tribe. Because they are not formally part of the Tribal Government, the CEDAR Project has the freedom to develop their internal program model and to advocate for change in the Tribe. Their status as the only 501(c)3 on the Lummi Reservation allows them to seek and utilize outside resources to support their objectives. While a respected and connected part of the community, their unusual autonomy has helped them build a core of youth leaders and a strong, authentic youth voice within the Tribe, which had not happened within the adult-led, governmental system. This has enabled the CEDAR Project to work with other departments and even the Tribal Government as partners and collaborators.

Much of the CEDAR Project's success may be attributed to their view of organizing as relationship-building rather than oppositional in the context of their Tribal community. For example, the relationship of the CEDAR Project to the Tribal Government and departments is different than that of most non-native advocacy groups to local, state or federal government bodies. Often, in non-Native settings there is a sense of "us" and "them" when community organizing groups address governmental organizations. Government in these settings is not seen as fully connected to the community. However, on the Lummi Reservation this is not the case – the Nation is relatively small and the Tribal Council is made up of Tribal members. Members of the Council often personally know the CEDAR Project organizers or their families. As a result, even when Council members may be out of tune with the

needs of the community at large or youth, the CEDAR Project trusts that the Council fundamentally cares about the community and about them. CEDAR Project staff and organizers will work with their adult allies throughout the Tribe to help pave the way and open doors for their ideas and organizing projects.

A challenge with this context is that it can be difficult to speak the truth at times for fear of offending people. The CEDAR Project walks the line of working to get young people's needs met, while being respectful of Tribal leaders and elders. As with any government body, there can be members who have been on the council for a long time and are afraid to leave or are afraid of change. However, by approaching organizing as a relationship-building process, the CEDAR Project is able to build allies within the different institutions they are seeking to impact. This helps them to develop the base they need to affect change in a positive way, and speak truth when it is necessary. They take a very long view, preparing younger generations to step into the leadership roles now held by the adult allies with whom they are collaborating.



CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
Defining new solutions to old problems

The Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD) is one of the first non-profits in the United States run and led entirely by young women. From the beginning, CYWD organized young women who were the most marginalized in San Francisco – those in the street economies and the juvenile justice system – to design and deliver peer-to-peer education and support. Today the Center offers a vibrant model for linking youth development and youth organizing, with a mission of providing gender-

specific, peer-based opportunities for high-risk, low- and no-income young women to build healthier lives and healthier communities. The Center's programs work to ensure that young women who have been deeply hurt and excluded – who have been homeless, incarcerated, or otherwise severely impacted by poverty – have a place to heal, achieve self-sufficiency and become positively engaged in their communities. All CYWD programs have been designed using a holistic approach that recognizes each young woman as a whole person who already has the experience and strength necessary to become a powerful leader and agent of change.

Key to the Center's success is that it is population specific – a diverse group of young women who share very explicit experiences that are severely marginalizing and traumatic. This program helps dissuade the notion generic youth programs can truly serve all young people, when their lives vary so greatly. The liberal notion that everyone is welcome in any program usually means that only some will make it while those most in need will fall away or never walk through the doors at all.

History, Context and Mission

CYWD was founded in 1993 by a coalition of service providers working with young and adult women in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. The guiding principle was that young women are the experts on the issues impacting their lives and they should be involved in running and directing programs that serve them. In 1997 the founding director left and the Center became fully led and directed by young women of color under age 26. Building on a model for self-determination, they began to organize to change the power dynamic in San Francisco itself. Their goal was to create a citywide environment where young women were involved in all major decisions that impact their lives – using their ideas to find new solutions to old problems. This model meant that young women who were formerly incarcerated or working in the street economies had the support to become leaders, policy-makers, researchers, employers, and activists. As a result, they have created a place for young women to come together, heal from

past experiences, dream and achieve their visions for the future.

Structural Model for Young Women's Empowerment and Development

The Center's organizational and program structure reflects its concerns with individual development, community building, economic empowerment, and self-determination. The model of the Center is integrated. Rather than having separate programs to address the political, spiritual, and social needs of young women, the organization and its activities are designed to be holistic, based on the understanding that the young women themselves need to integrate all parts of their lives. As young women move up through a program or the organization, they continually receive resources, training and support to develop on a personal, spiritual, and political level.

Leadership Development Model

As a young women-led organization, a priority for CYWD is to support young women to develop and

The Center believes that in order to achieve real social change, it must address community empowerment in a holistic way. To help young women heal and become activists and organizers in their community, they focus on three main goals:

- **Healing and Personal Development:**

Young women who have been homeless, incarcerated, and workers in the street economy, often need places to be physically, spiritually, and emotionally safe. The Center has always known that the first step to facilitating community and political empowerment is to provide young women with culturally relevant support to heal and grow. Their approach to service is girl-by-girl. They focus on where each young woman is in her life and help her find what she needs to move forward.

• **Economic Empowerment:**

Many of the young women at the Center are facing issues that stem from extreme economic oppression and poverty. An important lesson the Center learned early on is that employment is critical for the young women with whom they are working. If young women are to be politically empowered, they need to be economically empowered and stable. The Center provides jobs for young women and helps them learn employment skills so they can begin taking care of themselves better – and develop economic power.

• **Political and Community Empowerment:**

With a foundation of personal healing and economic empowerment, young women who have been severely marginalized are ready to take on broader policies and issues that impact them. The third goal of the Center is to engage young women in community organizing and advocacy.

Based on these goals the Center has developed a framework with three principles:

- Push the Sisterhood – develop community between young women who traditionally don’t like each other through group interaction

- Build Young Women’s Intellect – provide comprehensive political education and training so that young women feel better and think clearer

- Develop Power – take more control over their own physical bodies and change the world around them.

By developing young women’s community, intellect, and power the Center makes an impact toward changing some of the dynamics of oppression. Girls come to them thinking they can’t be in community with one another, that they can’t feel good physically, and that they can’t change anything. CYWD’s programs aim to turn these beliefs around and heal young women from the inside out so that they can be in community, be healthy, think critically, and develop power to change things for the better.

move up through each leadership tier. They see this process – of young women taking on increasing levels of responsibility and sophistication – as an important part of their youth development model. There are three tiers of the Center’s leadership:

- ⊙ Young women from communities, Juvenile Hall, and the neighborhood who participate in the core programs (Sisters Rising and Girls Detention Advocacy Project)
- ⊙ Coordinators and volunteers – young women who are trained to play a leadership role in planning and facilitating programs

- ⊙ Executive management and core leadership – young women who manage programs and provide overall leadership and management in the organization.

Currently the Center is working to further develop and define this leadership development process. Two key areas they are focusing on are:

- ⊙ Creating clear expectations and training for how young women will grow personally, spiritually and politically at each of the three levels of leadership. The central question here is, “What is the Center’s responsibility to young women at each level of the organization?” More speci-

cally, they want to think about questions like, “How do we bring a sister from being in an abusive relationship to pushing for change in juvenile hall?”

- ◎ A clear map of criteria and responsibilities for each level of leadership, and criteria for how women move into the next leadership role. Core questions for this point are, “What skills and responsibilities do young women need for each position, and how do we hold each other accountable for their responsibilities?”

Sisters Rising

Sisters Rising is the core program of the Center. Young women join Sisters Rising as the first step to being part of the organization. It embodies and is structured around the Center’s framework – weaving together personal development and healing, political education, leadership development, and organizing.

- ◎ **First Phase: Developing community and team building (3 months)**

The first phase of Sisters Rising involves building the team and breaking down historical barriers that divide girls including race, neighborhood, sexual orientation, etc. In this phase, the Center introduces the team to sweats, retreats, and ceremony; they have weekly classes in healing and arts including yoga, capoeira, and self-defense classes; and they have writing sessions on a daily basis. Team members also have weekly access to a massage therapist, psychotherapist, and immune enhancement treatments. Finally, through a partnership with Saving our Sisters, Saving Ourselves they have a once a week healing circles with the whole group. This level of team building and healing continues through the duration of the program.

- ◎ **Second Phase: Political education**

After the first three months, the girls begin political education sessions to learn and think about different political issues related to their experiences. Political education sessions continue through the rest of the program timeline.

- ◎ **Third Phase: Action research**

After completing a round of political education sessions, the team identifies issues that they want to explore further. They develop a survey and conduct action research to learn the opinions and concerns of other young women in the community. Then they conduct their survey with young women in their community. Each team member has to bring back 100 completed surveys. As a group they analyze the surveys for important themes.

- ◎ **Fourth Phase: Issue identification & campaign organizing**

In the fourth phase, Sisters Rising uses the findings of their action research to identify an issue for a campaign. The Center staff does not tell the team how to organize or what issue they should take on but it supports the team with resources to plan and complete their campaign. In the most recent round of Sisters Rising they found that girls wanted to focus on violence. Through analyzing their action research they discussed why it is harder to talk about violence than pregnancy. In the surveys 70 girls talked about violence, which made sense given that the survey was conducted during the same period when many young men were being killed in San Francisco. As a result, they chose to organize their campaign around violence, forgotten children, and dealing with dying. A key question they are asking themselves in their process is, “What is a better way to honor the dead than revenge?” They are organizing actions targeting city and school district decision makers.

- ◎ **Fifth Phase: Next steps – applying to be a Sisters Rising senior leader, staff member, and planning for the future**

At the end of the year, young women who complete Sisters Rising have the opportunity to apply to other projects and positions in the organization. Young women from the current Sisters Rising group are qualified to be senior leaders in the group the following year. For those selected to be senior leaders in Sisters Rising,

CYWD provides a training of trainers over the summer. They become an integral part of planning and facilitating the next year's program. They develop core skills in facilitation, program design, leadership, and organizing. CYWD developed this position to create a link to the next step of leadership in the organization. Senior leaders and coordinators also receive intensive healing and support services.

The staff also supports team members to think about other next steps in their life, like going to college. One staff member has been trained to work in partnership with PACT to do one-on-one college counseling. This year fifty girls received counseling and applied to college.

Girls Detention Advocacy Project (GDAP)

GDAP is the other core Center project and focuses on working with girls inside Juvenile Hall. The project is strategically staffed by 1) a director with strong programmatic skills and connection to the community who coordinates the program and provides some case management support, and 2) two interns who have been in the system themselves who conduct the organizing and outreach work. One of these interns brings organizing experience and one has just come out of the system. The Center came up with this staff structure by thinking about who would be most efficient to do organizing inside – with the understanding that the girls have to build a circle of support and politics together. They also saw value in a director who would be sensitive to the issues facing the girls but who did not necessarily have major challenges to surmount in her own life at present and could focus on keeping the program moving.

GDAP activities include the following:

- ☉ Sister Circles: Re-entry support and education groups that involve discussions for young women at both Juvenile Hall and CYWD
- ☉ One-On-One support: Young women are connected to supportive Center staff for discussion of, for example, how to stop selling, push for campaign issues, and getting their lives together

- ☉ Court Outreach and Support: GDAP staff do direct outreach at the courts with young women around know your rights/peer education
- ☉ Advocacy: GDAP staff communicate with judges, probation officers, lawyers and the District Attorney's office about issues impacting the young women
- ☉ Organizing: GDAP staff help girls on the inside and on the outside develop campaigns that relate to juvenile justice issues for girls.

GDAP Organizing and Support in Juvenile Hall

The work inside Juvenile Hall reflects the same commitment to both organizing as well as healing and development as the other work of the Center. One of the GDAP interns serves as the young women's advocate inside Juvenile Hall. She goes inside the hall on Friday's to do Sister Circle groups and does one-on-ones any time during the week. She also organizes young women in confinement to do education and talks outside. The Sister Circles are utilized for campaign issue identification. Issues identified recently by young women in the system are: accountability for how queer and transgender youth are treated inside the system, young mothers' rights and the problem of young women being denied reunification rights, and issues related to girls being sentenced to the California Youth Authority (CYA).

One of the more recent campaigns that they completed was creating a Bill of Rights for young women in the hall. CYWD collaborated with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights to do internal and external focus groups and then wrote the document with girls and lawyers.

Another project focused more explicitly on healing for the young women inside. They created a ceremony to mark the closing of a young woman's stay at Juvenile Hall as she is being sent to serve a sentence with the CYA. The process helps both the girls inside and staff left behind to say good bye. Everyone from the counselors who locked her up to the other girls who

were with her inside gather to say their good byes and wish her a safe return. The process helps the young woman who is leaving to know she has a community to return to and to understand what she needs to do to prepare while she is gone. The ceremony is simple, using a river stone to symbolize the girl's journey. In the river the rock starts off rough. As it gets knocked around and polished by the water, it comes out smooth. Every girl and staff member in the circle passes the rock around with sage and copal and gives their wishes to the girl leaving.

Confronting and Transcending Case Management

A very challenging issue for the Center has been confronting and transcending the prevalent model of case management. Mainstream models have been very objectifying to the Center's communities and, until recently, the Center never considered providing case management because they felt it was oppressive. Agencies that utilize case managers generally refer to girls as their clients and attach many restrictions and conditions on services. The Center has often received 6 or 7 calls per day from girls relaying negative experiences in these kinds of programs. While Center staff realize they cannot provide support for all of the needs of the young women – and therefore cannot always help them avoid other agencies – they seek to empower girls with the skills to advocate for themselves and make sure they get what they need in a respectful way.

Recently the Center has developed an in-house model for case management that seeks to be empowering. In the beginning, while the concept was exciting and needed, staff realized they did not yet have the infrastructure or people to do the work. To date, the core management has taken on this role, but they are not able to do it well as it is on top of their other work and is also often crisis-oriented. This year, they are planning to bring on a staff person who will be dedicated to developing case management resources for the organization – both the staff and the Sisters Rising girls. This person will work girl by girl and ask questions like, “What do you need to do to be at work on time?” and help people figure out how to take the next steps in their lives.

Partnerships

In general, CYWD forms partnerships and collaborations with organizations on an individual basis – not the institutional level. They've done this because they strongly believe that the people they work with need to be on the same page with them about principles, methodology, approach and how to work with young women in the Center's community. For example, the methodology that their partners use has to fit with the Center's ideas of youth leadership and empowerment; it cannot be adultist or come from a “service mentality.” They hand pick people to work with and expect their organizations to support them in their work. If the individual is not working with the Center's approach they do not continue to work with them and they will not keep up a collaboration for the sake of keeping the partnership with the organization.

Potential collaborations

CYWD also identified some partnerships that they would like to develop. Specifically they would like to collaborate with people doing very local, neighborhood-based work, groups that have grown up organically from the neighborhoods. Shawn Richards, who founded Brother Against Guns (BAG) in San Francisco, is an example of such a potential collaborator. BAG is doing neighborhood peacemaker organizing, trying to figure out, “How do we disarm the neighborhood?” Shawn has 26 young boys on payroll doing outreach and organizing. They are working with police because it's essential. But, Shawn says he is not part of, “Organizing conversations because I am a black man from the hood and because I am communicating with police. It's not snitch work. But, many organizers don't understand it. Partly because they are not really coming from the neighborhoods.”

Influence on Climate and Resources for Youth

CYWD has had a major impact on the juvenile justice system in San Francisco, and even nationally. Because of their work:

© CYWD is at the table or an advisor on a system level

According to the Center, they now have a relationship with the courts where juvenile

probation can't do anything about young girls sentencing without talking to CYWD first. The Judge regularly asks probation officers if they talked to CYWD about their recommendations first. CYWD helps both probation officers and service providers make decisions about changes and new developments in programs. For example they are helping to develop a strategy for San Francisco-based Walden House to expand their Sister Kin Program.

Another example of this work, is how CYWD developed a relationship to the Juvenile Justice Commissioner, Jessie Williams. In one of their campaigns, CYWD did a direct action and brought 60 girls to do testimony for the Juvenile Justice Commission about being LGBTQ in juvenile hall. The testimony was very intense and moving. Williams became nervous from the power and publicity around the testimony, and told CYWD directly, "Come to me first, and I will fix it." The lesson that the CYWD learned from this action, was you go to the "big dogs" first, and then use the District Attorney to follow up.

© **CYWD looked at as model for alternative sentencing**

CYWD is now looked at as a model for alternative sentencing. For example San Francisco's Judge Mahoney organized a juvenile justice training for 85 people using materials from the Center. He has been hoping that CYWD would become an alternative sentencing/development program. Currently he uses it as a model with other judges for what could be.

© **Young women's agency, power, voice**

The biggest contribution that CYWD has made is that girls in the system are now on the map in San Francisco. They are organized and present for conversation and they have a sense of entitlement that they need to be involved. Girls now regularly come to them with systemic issues they are dealing with in order to organize for change.

The following are partners with which CYWD has worked at various levels:

Individual practitioners:

- Massage therapists
- Mental health therapists

Individuals in organizations:

- Huckleberry House
- SOS/Leadership Excellence
- Immune Enhancement Project
- Girls Justice Initiative: W3, Health Department, United Way
- PACT Inc.
- Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights
- School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL)
- Break the Cycle

Organizing:

- Books Not Bars/ Family Advocacy Project
- Homeless Prenatal
- Families with a Future

System level:

- Juvenile justice system, lawyers, social workers, commissioners, etc.

APPENDIX A

MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES – WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

This report looks at the question of how young people receive supports and services that assist in their development and the development of their communities. As we ask the question of how, we should also ask whose job is it to provide those services and supports? The individual? The family? The government? Churches? Non-profit organizations? Private organizations? The community? Some combination of all? This is not just a philosophical question – how young people and their communities get their needs met has implications about how power and influence operate in communities. This is the climate and idea-scape that we are engaged with – and it has changed dramatically, essentially requiring that youth organizing groups step in to fill gaps as other traditional players withdraw.

The End of the New Deal

We are living at the end of the era of the New Deal. A conservative movement focused on destroying government has significantly undermined the basic principle that government has a role in providing services. There is a reason why conservatives want to

replace FDR's face on the penny with Ronald Reagan's. Though FDR, in the view of many historians, helped to stop the growth of communism, he also helped locate systems of social support to lessen the burden for the poor within capitalism. Conservatives view all government intervention such as social support, as a form of communism that limits individual freedom and liberty.

Ironically, progressives were also initially critical of government services like welfare for creating dependency and not really empowering people or moving them out of poverty. But while progressives called for improving these programs, conservatives took advantage of the honest criticism by their adversaries and moved decisively to eliminate social programs altogether.

Education

Public education is a major backdrop for these debates. Do we define the “problem” that leads to needs going unmet as bad parents, teacher and students, a lack of resources, a lack of competition? The conservative mantra that “more money is not the

answer” has become the public consensus and has helped to obscure the fact that money remains a huge factor in determining the quality of education that students receive and the student performance that results from that education. Many progressive educators and scholars have argued that we do know what it takes for all children to learn and succeed and the biggest thing lacking is the political will and investment in resources to put those strategies in place. Despite the overwhelming amount of research that shows this to be the case, the public consensus remains that money is not the answer. To be clear, progressives argue that money is not the whole answer, but provides the essential and necessary strategy for any effort to guarantee a quality education for all students.

But at the heart of the dialogues about “urban education” and youth development is the larger cultural war being fought to define the role of government. Anti-government conservatives have been working to shrink the size and role of government and limit restrictions on corporate power. The goal of the conservative movement has been to reduce or eliminate the public service and supports being provided to low-income and even middle-income people. This movement has been at war, not just with the victories of the civil rights movement but also with the advances of the New Deal.

The strategy has been to privatize public services by either turning them over to a for-profit corporation, or a private non-profit corporation (like a church). In either case the public has much less capacity to have

direct influence or control over what the institution does, and how it provides that service.

Other Community Needs

Different communities approach the question of whose responsibility it is to meet basic needs in different ways – and meeting needs is always a political question as well as a material one.

When the manufacturing sector was strong in the U.S. and often a single corporation provided the livelihood for the entire population of a town, services were often provided by the company itself. Due to its economic position, the corporation also had a great amount of control over the local government. This dynamic significantly impacted citizens’ ability to question or make demands of government or services provided by the corporation.

The Mormon Church created its own welfare system so that its members do not engage with what is left of the public welfare system. This capacity to provide a social safety net for its members not only impacts members’ relationships with the church but also with the government. The church has also developed numerous corporations that can support its religious, economic, and political goals. In this case, a private institution, the church, is helping to meet basic needs and to powerfully define the role of the family in this process.

The family and church are the two institutions that conservatives point to as the places where needs are to

be met and services provided. The Bush administration's recent efforts in this regard are not only about strengthening the church's role as a private service provider. Paradoxically, they also weaken the role of government, and strengthen the power of the Republican Party and the conservative movement within government and society.

Progressive organizations with a critique of government dependency have also employed the strategies of community self-help. The example of the Black Panther Party's free breakfast program is but one of many ways that groups have sought to meet basic needs both out of a desire to alleviate suffering and a desire to exercise influence over people and power in communities. Radical political organizations on the left have often tried to link basic services with building a base and movement for change.

Elected officials have also been known to use government contracts to pacify community leaders and prevent communities from expressing their democratic rights to dissent. Communities that have no independent sources of revenue for the social safety net other than local government, often struggle to build independent democratic movements.

The New "New Deal": Youth Organizing Takes Up the Fight for Social Supports in Communities

It cannot be taken for granted that whether groups like those featured in this report chose to or not, they are fighting a culture war. They are arguing that

government has a role and a responsibility to provide services, supports and opportunities to its young people and communities. The movement must respond to the needs of the people.

In taking up this fight, the youth organizing sector joins with other social sectors to form what some are calling a new "New Deal" coalition. These partnerships could provide a unified voice to counter the conservative consensus that the New Deal is a failed approach of a bygone era.

For example, the youth organizing sector has often advocated for health services in schools, rather than police officers. Groups have sometimes gathered the power to achieve this – but not the power to control those schools and govern how services are administered. Many youth organizers therefore view these services as part of the problem or ignore them altogether.

This report begins to explore some of the ways that youth organizing groups are negotiating these dynamics and helping young people and their communities get their needs met.

APPENDIX B

RESOURCE POWER TRIANGLES

Resource Power Triangles

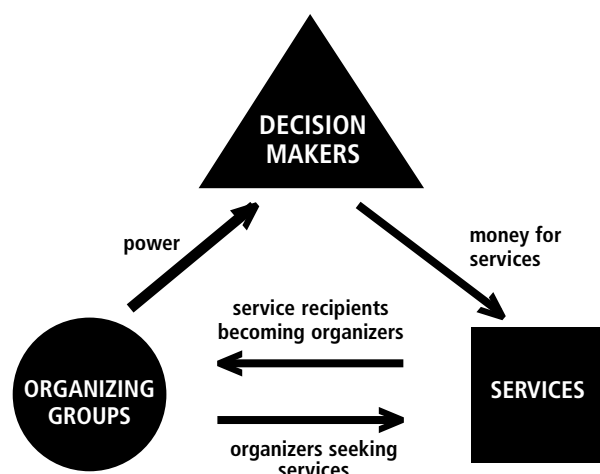
In order for youth empowerment and youth organizing to be effective, youth need adequate access to resources, opportunities and support. While youth development or service organizations ostensibly provide these things, it is important to recognize that the continuing availability and access to each of these depends on real social change. That change can be achieved by youth development and, ultimately, by youth organizing to impact social policies and broader social institutions. In this way, youth services and youth organizing are not separate but extremely interdependent.

We wanted to explore whether youth organizing and service groups structure their partnerships strategically to:

1. Strengthen one another's ability to fulfill their goals and better support young people.
2. Leverage the power to influence decision-makers to invest greater resources into programs that truly support the development of young people in their communities.

As the “triangle strategy” illustration at right suggests, the potential for these kinds of outcomes to emerge from organizing-service group partnerships is real. Some veteran community organizers are intentionally partnering with service groups with just this flow of benefits in mind. Organizing groups draw in new members by connecting them with much needed services, offered via their partnership with a service organization. Concurrently, the service organization receives referrals of new clients from the organizing group. Both organizations are strengthened and constituents become a stronger power for exacting change in the community. Specifically, constituents are more able to secure resources for new (and better) services and supports for youth, and more able to change the policy/climate for youth and youth organizations in an area.

For example, while not a youth-driven effort, the story of the Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS)-Metro Alliance partnership in San Antonio, Texas, illustrates just such an intentional use of a triangle strategy. Here, two community organizing groups joined forces to win political will and financial support for a new job training program in the



community – called Project Quest – that they would control. During the campaign, COPS-Metro Alliance attracted new members enthusiastic about the potential of a job training program that was actually based on the real job market in the community. This job program would provide needed supports such as stipends and child care for participants. Once Project Quest was up and running, it became the service providing “point” of the triangle, already a guaranteed partner and ally to the COPS-Metro Alliance organizing “point.” Today, Project Quest continues to channel new members to the Cops/Metro Alliance, which in turn benefits their constituency by connecting them to the job training program. This has strengthened COPS-Metro Alliance’s overall ability to win campaigns and secure resources for further needed improvements in the community, based on their constituents’ real needs. The full story of this long and hard-fought campaign appears as Appendix C in this report.

We wondered whether youth organizing and service groups are aware of or even in some cases intentionally practicing triangle strategies? And if so, are they strategically allying themselves to take advantage of some of the benefits that can be found between the points of the triangle – i.e. increasing their constituency bases and better serving them? This question is important for youth organizing and development workers to consider, because the right wing is already using triangle strategies to achieve various outcomes that are generally not in the best interest of, or harmful to communities that the groups represent.

Right Wing Triangles – Profit Driven

Here is an example of how a harmful triangle works. Right wing think tanks conduct research that shows the need for an environmental policy that protects an industry. Industry uses this research to influence policy makers and public opinion to support their policy. Then that industry funds the think tank for providing the information-based power that has freed them to increase profits. Right wing think tanks attack the policy, then get money from the companies that benefit from the changes in those politics. These triangles are profit driven, with the goal of increasing the freedom and capacity of corporations to increase profits and minimize expenses.

Progressive Possibilities – People Driven Triangles

The right wing dynamics described above show powerful relationships between different kinds of social actors and institutions. Progressive organizations are beginning to recognize the need for pursuing a similar strategy, but are building triangles that are people driven, with the goal of supporting human development and community wellness and empowerment.

In addition to the COPS-Metro Alliance example above, progressive triangles include attempts to advocate for shifting public investment in corporations from those that are not socially or environmentally responsible to those that employ environmentally sound business practices. The businesses that benefit from this shift in public priorities can then fund the

non-profits that generated the political will to shift the public investments. These triangles can build the power of progressive constituencies in communities. These partnerships also support the greening of capitalism by replacing low-wage jobs with green jobs and ensuring those jobs benefit those who are currently shut out of the economic opportunity structure.

Findings from Our Featured Groups

None of the organizing groups that we interviewed were intentionally trying to implement progressive triangle strategies. Perhaps the closest to an intentional triangle strategy is being implemented by the Lummi CEDAR Project. They are advocating for the Lummi Tribal Government to support the creation of a youth center that Lummi CEDAR will operate. While not an intentional triangle, this work is strengthening relationships and ultimately will benefit all in the Lummi Tribe from all the points of the triangle.

In fact, some groups were intentionally not involving themselves in triangles. For example, YMAC's commitment to movement building meant creating new institutions, but then stepping away and allowing the new group to operate in its own way.

In relation to service organizations, questions for further study include: Do they understand the political organizing that was done to create and sustain their own services? Are they in conversation with their partner organizing groups and being intentional about these relationships? Do the people who use their

services understand the political action that was taken to create and sustain these services? The labor movement offers a powerfully simple example of educating new supporters about their impact through the bumpersticker that says, "Unions – The Folks Who Gave You the Weekend."

In the meantime, youth organizing must be recognized as not only central to community organizing, but in some cases as offering more than traditional adult-based community organizing. Youth organizing is therefore a prime hub for engaging in progressive triangle strategies. It plays a crucial role in securing resources and services for the benefit of youth and entire communities, as well as for as creating, supporting and sustaining youth services. Likewise, the importance of service organizations that initially attract youth to civic participation must be understood as a critical component of building community bases for organizing. For example, young people may initially engage with youth service organizations seeking job training or other services. However, this initial engagement may lead to participation in community organizing that will ultimately secure further services for themselves and their communities. The dynamic is cyclical, in that youth participation in youth service programs may lead to the building of a community base from which youth engage in organizing, and thus exert pressure for the creation or continued availability of the resources and services they sought initially.

APPENDIX C

PROJECT QUEST – AN INTENTIONAL PROGRESSIVE TRIANGLE STRATEGY

While not a youth-driven effort, the story of the COPS-Metro Alliance of San Antonio, Texas illustrates the intentional use of a progressive triangle strategy. Here, two community organizing groups joined forces to win political will and financial support for a new job training program in the community – Project Quest – that they would control. During the campaign, COPS-Metro Alliance attracted new members enthusiastic about the potential of a job training program that was actually based on the real job market in the community and would provide needed supports such as stipends and child care for them to be able to participate. Once Project Quest was up and running, it became the service providing “point” of the triangle, already a guaranteed partner and ally to the Cops Metro Alliance organizing “point.” Today, Project Quest continues to feed new members to the Cops/Metro Alliance, which in turn benefits their constituency by connecting them to the job training program. This has strengthened COPS Metro Alliance’s overall ability to win campaigns and secure resources for further needed services and improvements in the community based

on their constituents’ real needs. The full story of this long and hard-fought campaign follows.

In 1990, Levis Strauss corporation pulled its last manufacturing plant out of the city of San Antonio, Texas, to relocate to Costa Rica, leaving in its wake more than 1,000 workers suddenly unemployed, mostly Mexican-American women with little formal education. These women joined those who had already suffered from the loss of 14,000 medium-wage jobs during the 1980’s in several sectors of the city, including manufacturing, textiles, and transportation. Out of this crisis and the dedicated work of two local community organizations, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) and the Metro Alliance, Project QUEST was birthed – a job training program based on the real needs of the community. The history of these organizations and their collaborative work to create Project QUEST offers powerful lessons about the interdependence between community development and community organizing.

Ernesto Cortes, Jr., director of the Southwest Region of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), describes

COPS-Metro Alliance, as “confederations of institutions – congregations, schools, civic associations – that have been organizing for power for over 20 years,” around issues such as education, infrastructure, jobs and other issues impacting working-class families.³ In immediate response to the 1990 layoffs, COPS-Metro Alliance organized house meetings to gather testimony identifying the work experiences and needs of its community members. Leaders invited small groups of eight to ten neighbors to their homes for these house meetings, in which people shared their testimonies.

People told stories of their frustrations and disappointments with existing job training programs: instructors were uncertified, and no jobs were available in the labor market after training was completed, short-term training failed to prepare people for jobs that paid a living wage, and high-skill training programs required more time and resources than low-income families could afford.⁴

Through these house meetings, leaders identified the historical obstacles to effective job training and established three goals to overcome them:

- ⊙ Training must be long-term to meet the demands of mid-to-high wage jobs;

- ⊙ Training must be job driven and;
- ⊙ Financial support must be provided to those participating in training.

In addition to house meetings, forty COPS and Metro Alliance leaders formed a job training core committee, who consulted with state and city officials, economists, and job training experts nationally, and met bimonthly for two years.

A central principle identified through this research was the need for participants to train for jobs actually available in the local economy. Thus, COPS-Metro Alliance leaders met with local employers to assess their needs and secure job commitments for participants prior to beginning their trainings. Their research revealed that while there had been an exodus from the city of low-skill jobs like those at Levi’s since the 1970’s, there had also been a growth in higher-wage jobs in fields such as health care, education, auto repair and legal research. Yet employers reported that they could not find enough trained workers to fill these new positions.⁵ The existing training programs, such as the Federal Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs, failed to provide adequate training, served instead “to build the budgets of the training providers,” and left trainees with “debts but no jobs”

³ Cortes, Jr., Ernesto, “All Organizing is Constant Re-organizing,” Shelterforce Online, September/October 1996. <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/89/organize.html>

⁴ Cortes, Jr.

⁵ Campbell, Brett, “Job Training that Works,” *The Progressive*, August 1993, 57 (8), p. 14.

or stuck in low-paying, temporary jobs, as Virginia Ramirez, COPS co-chair pointed out.⁶ In the effort to avoid these problems of past job training programs, COPS and Metro Alliance designed QUEST to offer training for up to two years, unlike the JTPA programs that typically lasted eleven weeks.

In addition, efforts were made to ensure that secure, higher-paying jobs would be available for QUEST participants once they finished this training. As Cortes, Jr. reported, “Leaders from these two organizations have held hundreds of conversations with business leaders and employers in order to develop the strong relationships that secure commitment,” and connected employers with each other to enable them to make collective job commitments they could not have made individually.⁷ One observer noted that COPS and Metro Alliance had a history of twenty years of organizing working-class people, and had “thus gained enough credibility in addressing other community issues over the years to make the city’s political and business establishments listen to its plans for a job training program, and, eventually, to commit \$7 million to fund it.”⁸ This observation might be somewhat optimistic. While the previous work of COPS and Metro Alliance were indeed influential in gaining the ear of local government and employers, the two organizations partnered to exert the signifi-

cant pressure needed to secure these funding and job commitments.

Funding from city, state and federal governments was needed to provide the elements that COPS and Metro Alliance leaders understood would sustain the project and its participants effectively. The program was designed to offer money or vouchers directly to the trainees, provide income-support stipends, day care, and counseling as needed. These components were costly, and thus COPS and Metro Alliance leaders had to sell Project QUEST to businesses that were skeptical because of past job training failures, and tight public budgets on every government level.

Indeed, after pulling together over \$4 million from various federal job training funds for the program, QUEST designers still lacked the funds for day care and other critical support services to launch the project as envisioned. COPS and Metro Alliance looked to the city council for these funds, and mounted the pressure it took to secure commitments. Mark Warren’s study of Project Quest’s history and the strategy of the Industrial Areas Foundation, deployed by COPS-Metro Alliance, gives a vivid account of the action staged by the two groups outside the city council meetings in September of 1991:

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Cortes, Jr.

⁸ Campbell, Brett.

“Invest in Us! Invest in Us!” chanted the 600 community residents as they marched out of buses arriving from Catholic and Protestant churches across San Antonio. Inside, at the heated city council meeting, the leaders of ... COPS and Metro Alliance lobbied San Antonio’s mayor and city councils for the funds When the indoor meeting ended in stalemate, COPS and Metro Alliance leaders invited the mayor and councilors outside to meet their supporters. COPS leader Patricia Ozuna recounts... “Once we were outside I turned to the mayor and asked him publicly to support QUEST with \$2 million, including a specific pledge to find \$1.6 million in the city budget. He looked at our people and agreed on the spot.”⁹

In a public gesture, the mayor and six city council members (a majority), signed a pledge inscribed on a large placard carried by the protesters, solidifying their commitment. The work to secure this commitment, however, stretched well before and far beyond this moment outside of the city council meeting. Warren identifies two strategies developed by the IAF to obtain the public funds needed to launch and operate the project for its first two years.

First, the IAF garnered allies within local business and government who had been critical of how the federal JTPA funds were spent and administered by

the local Private Industry Council. This approach secured allies such as Tom Frost, a local banker and initial opponent of COPS, as well as city officials from the Department of Employment and Economic Development and state officials from Governor Ann Richards’ office. In July of 1991, Frost gathered forty major employers in the city for COPS-Metro Alliance to make a pitch for the Project, and these connections yielded 650 job commitments for QUEST trainees once they graduated.

Second, as San Antonio city officials were operating from a small and shrinking budget, the IAF set out to demonstrate the significant public support for QUEST embodied in the COPS-Metro Alliance congregations. The two groups sponsored “accountability nights” focused on mayor and city council candidates and timed with the spring elections. Through a variety of means including announcements at religious services, leaflets outside churches and publicity in church bulletins, IAF, COPS-Metro Alliance leaders were able to mobilize hundreds of QUEST supporters to attend the accountability events. Congregation leaders had quotas to meet for overall congregational turnout, ensuring that hundreds of supporters attended the sessions focused on city council candidates. COPS-Metro Alliance brought 2,000 supporters to a citywide session for the mayoral candidates on April 14, 1991.

⁹ Warren, Mark R., “Community Building and Political Power,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, September 1998 42 (1), p. 78.

While these accountability sessions did produce pledges of support for QUEST from most candidates, the IAF realized from private conversations with the mayor and city manager that the city's limited general revenues most likely could not yield the \$5 million it was seeking. COPS-Metro Alliance changed focus and looked to the state government for additional funds, relying on the power of the Texas IAF network to exert influence on state officials. The Texas IAF had already elicited a commitment of funds from Governor Ann Richards, whose election rested in part from the support of low-income Mexican American and African Americans assembled through the Texas IAF. Almost \$5 million was secured through the Governor's commitment of \$2.5 million in discretionary job training funds, and the reorganization of federal JTPA funds of \$2.3 million. None of these funds could be used for support services such as child care and living stipends for trainees, however, so \$2 million still had to be raised from city funds.

Knowing that city officials were still reluctant to commit this sum in the context of a \$9 million budget deficit, COPS-Metro Alliance came up with another plan to make it more palatable. They conceded to allocate \$400,000 of Community Development Block Grant funds for other projects of the two organizations, thus reducing the commitment demanded from the city to \$1.6 million. While this commitment was secured in the September 3, 1991 rally outside of the city council meetings described earlier, the mayor and councilors still neglected to vote the funds by November of that year, prompting COPS-Metro

Alliance to stage another rally. Only after the IAF held one more rally in March of 1992 did the council and mayor vote the city funds for QUEST.

The history of the design and initiation of Project QUEST, detailed in Warren's account, reveals a multitude of approaches used by the Texas IAF, COPS and Metro Alliance to apply public pressure to city and state government officials and to key local business figures for the resources essential to the launching and initial operation of the project. The two organizations mobilized their bases to organize effectively for funding for services and job commitments for QUEST trainees in the face of tight public budgets and business leaders who were initial opponents or unlikely allies. The project's history offers a valuable model in how community organizing groups can mobilize to exert the political pressure and demonstrate the political clout necessary to secure resources and services for its community base.

These desired services function in turn to attract more community members to the work of these organizations. While people may come initially seeking only to meet their individual needs for resources, they may in the process be "recruited" to become active members and leaders in community organizing efforts. In his study, Mark Warren describes the IAF's relational-organizing strategy, used by COPS-Metro Alliance to build their community bases. Warren praises this strategy and sees the value of house meetings as accomplishing "more than gathering information and

ideas,” but a way in which, “the IAF sought to engage community residents in conversations to find a common ground for action on the problem and to identify and recruit new participants into its developing campaign.”

Warren cautions us against viewing the work of COPS-Metro Alliance as limited to community building. He argues that the example of Project QUEST demonstrates a form of community-building that “takes a decidedly political turn,” seeking to, “develop the political capacity of church leaders to reach beyond their neighborhoods to influence powerful political and economic institutions.” COPS-Metro Alliance members did indeed exert political power beyond their own neighborhoods and congregations in fighting for the resources to launch and sustain Project QUEST. Warren argues that this is crucial, as “communities cannot be reclaimed solely by mobilizing their own internal, communal resources,” but instead “have to exert political power to demand a greater share, if not a restructuring, of societal resources.” He faults community development corporations (CDCs), for example, for becoming too focused on developing and later administering housing programs to be able to sustain broad political participation.¹⁰

In addition, he observes that community building efforts that rely solely on building consensus or cooperation with financial institutions and public officials will rarely develop, “an independent base of power capable of demanding broader change when resistance occurs.”¹¹ Without a strategy for developing this base of power, Warren says, community building in its traditional sense will be limited and localized. Thus, he says, “The IAF represents an important alternative both to most community-building initiatives and to most forms of political intervention because it attempts to connect community building with political action, addressing both conflict and cooperation.”

In many ways, the model or alternative lens offered by Project QUEST can be applied to the youth groups we are analyzing in this study. In particular, it may be useful to look at the case of Project Quest to prevent conflicts between organizing and service efforts. Warren observes that Project QUEST was structured in a unique way after its launching, which helped to circumvent some of these problems. Most community organizations follow one of two directions, Warren says: 1) they withdraw from the process and allow another agency to run the program for which they won funding, or 2) they administer it themselves. The

¹⁰ Warren, citing Vidal, A.C. *Rebuilding Communities: A National Study of Urban Community Development Corporations*. New York: Community Development Research Center, Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, New School for Social Research, 1992.

¹¹ Warren, citing Stoecker, R. “The CDC Model of Urban Redevelopment: A critique and an alternative,” *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 19 (1), pp. 1-22.

IAF combined these approaches, in a sense, by creating an independent agency to run QUEST, but maintaining a strong role throughout the project implementation process.

For example, the IAF ensured that one third of the seats on the QUEST board of directors were reserved for IAF leaders. This was agreeable because IAF offered the political clout understood to be necessary for continued funding for the program. This measure was put to the test and proved to be highly valuable when QUEST staff members suggested taking commitments for jobs that paid below the \$7.50 minimum pay. In this instance, IAF board members were well positioned to force a retraction, and keep the original principles of seeking high-paying jobs for QUEST trainees.¹²

The IAF also sought to ensure that the program operated along the original intentions and that benefits accrued to its community bases by retaining COPS-Metro Alliance in control of the recruitment process for trainees. This decision required a major community mobilization effort on the part of COPS-Metro Alliance, with 140 volunteers conducting interviews at IAF member churches to recruit candidates. COPS-Metro Alliance members volunteered nearly 15,000 hours each year to run the

program on an ongoing basis.¹³ Structuring the recruitment process and administering the program in these ways strengthened the links between political action and community building within the project at each stage. COPS-Metro Alliance members maintained significant control of the project's direction and operation, and ensured that its members continued to benefit from the services they fought so hard to secure.

Project QUEST continues to offer its participants tuition, books, child care, transportation, supplies and uniforms, stipends and crisis funds to help with emergency rent, utilities and minor medical expenses. The staff also provides referrals for students to seek other sources of assistance, including scholarships, grants, subsidized housing, food stamps and Medicaid. Finally, QUEST participants are required to meet regularly with staff counselors and attend weekly "motivational meetings." Many participants point to the counseling as a critical piece in sustaining their participation in the program. For example, Carol Ann Romero, a 52-year-old woman studying to become an accountant, said, "They help with money, but they go all the way, helping us emotionally too. They keep close track of us. They are always, always, always there."¹⁴ Others, like Cynthia Scott, a single mother of three who entered the program after

¹² Warren, citing personal communication with QUEST Board Chairman Charles E. Cheever, Jr., July 21, 1993.

¹³ Jay Walljasper, "A quest for jobs in San Antonio," *The Nation*, July 21, 1997, 265 (3), p. 30.

¹⁴ Walljasper, J.

receiving welfare for years, emphasize how important the encouragement of other Metro Alliance members in her church and neighborhood has been to her finishing the program. Scott was the first graduate of the program in 1993, became a licensed vocational nurse in an oncology ward and went on with her studies to become a registered nurse.¹⁵

What makes Project QUEST unique in comparison to some other community development efforts is that it has sustained itself for more than ten years since the initial organizing for the program, and kept closely in alignment with its original goals. Other efforts have not seen similar fates, and certain common conflicts have emerged in some youth groups we have looked at in this study. For example, in the case of YMAC, years of work by YMAC organizers made the creation of wellness centers on high school campuses possible. Yet later efforts by YMAC to partner with these centers, the very fruits of their labor, have been limited by the overwhelming needs of students visiting the center as well as a fundamental conflict in orientations. YMAC members do not see their group as a traditional youth development organization and, moreover, some

members distrust the traditional social service orientation that they feel contributes to the institutionalization of youth. This concern was certainly reinforced by the wellness centers tolerating and working with police officers on campus while YMAC was organizing for the removal of police presence on campus.

Perhaps if YMAC had the capacity to retain a strong role in administering the wellness centers and a say in the decision-making process as the centers evolved, these conflicts might have been avoided or been resolved more favorably and in line with YMAC's vision for the centers. Without idealizing Project Quest or attempting to apply its model universally across the board, we can glean important lessons from the successes of the project. Moreover, we can gain viable models for overcoming some of the pitfalls that tend to emerge from community organizing and community development collaborations. These lessons will be vital in building stronger, sustained partnerships between community organizing and development in many social justice realms and in many diverse communities.

¹⁵ Ibid.

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ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

The Movement Strategy Center (MSC) is a movement building intermediary that engages youth and adults across issues and regions, through a collective visioning and mapping process. This process encourages collaboration and joint strategizing in order to develop stronger, more effective movements for democracy, equity and social change. We support the civic participation of youth and young adults and link them to other community change efforts. Specifically, we provide organizational capacity building, mapping and research services, alliance building and network support to youth organizing efforts and youth organizers.

Young Wisdom is a capacity building project of The Movement Strategy Center that strengthens young people's leadership in, and governance of, social justice organizations. We believe that young people, as constituents, are a critical part of movements for social change, and that youth and young adults are instrumental in developing and running innovative projects to strengthen their communities. With the right support, community organizations can be set up to engage and develop young people as leaders at all levels of decision-making.

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BRINGING IT TOGETHER:

YOUTH ORGANIZING, DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

A research report generously funded by The Ford Foundation

The field of youth organizing has grown exponentially in the last decade. But the young people involved in these efforts to change their world have so often had their personal lives negatively impacted by the systems that neglect or deny many of their fundamental needs. When difficult life issues continue unaddressed, the abuses and traumas young people experience can have a detrimental effect on organizing efforts.

This report reveals how youth organizing groups across the country are incorporating innovative approaches to support the holistic – emotional, physical, spiritual and political – development of their members. Strategies depend on history and local context and include support such as traditional healing circles, academic tutoring, access to health care, reconnecting family and generational ties, and emotional support. Organizations are also forging partnerships with service providers and public agencies, creating new models for integration of services and community organizing.

Ultimately, this approach is leading to a more sustainable movement for social justice, one that builds on assets and resources across traditional divides, and encourages the creation of healthy lives in tandem with community change. For all these groups, this is not viewed as a new idea, but as a return to a basic understanding of life, harmony and balance – a nod to past wisdom that allows a community to thrive.



The **MOVEMENT STRATEGY CENTER** is a movement-building intermediary that engages youth and adults across issues and regions. We facilitate collaboration and joint strategizing in order to develop stronger, more effective movements for democracy, equity and social change. We support the civic participation of youth and young adults and link them to other community change efforts. Specifically, we provide organizational capacity building, mapping and research services, alliance building and network support to youth organizing efforts and youth organizers.



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