

shades

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of

POWER

For three years, the Institute for MultiRacial Justice has worked to help build alliances between peoples of color who share common experiences of oppression and exploitation. Now still more grounds for alliance-building have surfaced with the bloodless coup d'état called Election 2000.

In Florida, thousands of African American votes against Bush were never cast or counted as the result of discriminatory requirements, intimidation at the polls, and downright rejection of legitimate voters. Guess what? The same thing has been happening to Latino voters, not only in Florida but the Southwest.

José Garza of Texas Rural Legal Aid, who has handled 100 cases concerning denial of Latino voting rights, knows the discrimination. At Texas polls, Latinos have been asked to

THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

ally or die

show not only their voter registration cards but also I.D. to prove they are the people with the cards. "This happens all the time, all over the state," he said. Polls located in majority Mexican areas run out of ballots. Men wearing green—the color of the Border Patrol—have been seen near polls in Bexar and Hidalgo counties, just as police hung around Florida polls where Blacks went. Sheriffs and other law enforcement officials are sent to visit people, mostly older Mexicans, who request absentee ballots. "It's to weed out fraud," they say—but imagine the effect.

Also, no one can legally help another person fill out an absentee ballot more than once. One of José Garza's clients helped two people fill out an application and was prosecuted for doing so. "Did you ever hear of this happening to a white person," I asked him. "No.," he said.

continued on
back page

CHINESE & LATINO YOUTH LEARN ORGANIZING TOGETHER



Common Roots 2000 participants. Photo by CPA

BY JULIA LAU

"It's time that an investment is made in young immigrants so we can learn how to change this country and fight to build power in our communities!" says Raymond Fong, a Thurgood Marshall High School junior and recent immigrant.

Last summer, several Chinese youth joined a Mission rally and chanted "Stop Displacement Now" to the city's Planning Commission. Several Latino youth walked through the streets of Chinatown on a community tour to learn about the living and working conditions of residents so as to pressure the city's Department of Building Inspection for improved housing.

Chinese and Latino youth are coming together in San Francisco to share their cultures, issues and struggles, and to organize for social justice in their neighborhoods. This was

see how the opposition was trying to drive wedges between our communities and pit us against each other on issues that we both were being hurt by. That's when Common Roots started," explained PODER Project Director Antonio Díaz. "We wanted to create a vehicle to bring our communities together in a systematic way, so that we could build our power and fight together."

Former CPA Executive Director Gordon Mar, one of the initiators of the program, couldn't agree more. "We always respected each other's work and shared a vision for expanding beyond the local work in each of our communities. We wanted to really build and strengthen our alliance in a concrete way."

Learning the Skills to Fight for Justice

Each summer, six youth organizers and a broader base of about 30 youth volunteers are recruited from the Mission and Chinatown communities to participate in this intensive 10-week program. It starts with a weekend-long training in which the youth develop their skills in community organizing, including how to organize a meeting and do community outreach. They go on to learn about community issues in weekly workshops on topics such as immigrant rights, workers rights, and environmental justice. Many of these workshops include political education tours of other low-income communities of color in the Bay Area.

They also develop their critical thinking skills about the root causes of inequality and injustice through readings and discussions that delve into sexism, racism, homophobia and the histories and struggles of people of color communities. As two of the key political constituencies in one of the nation's most culturally diverse cities, Asian and

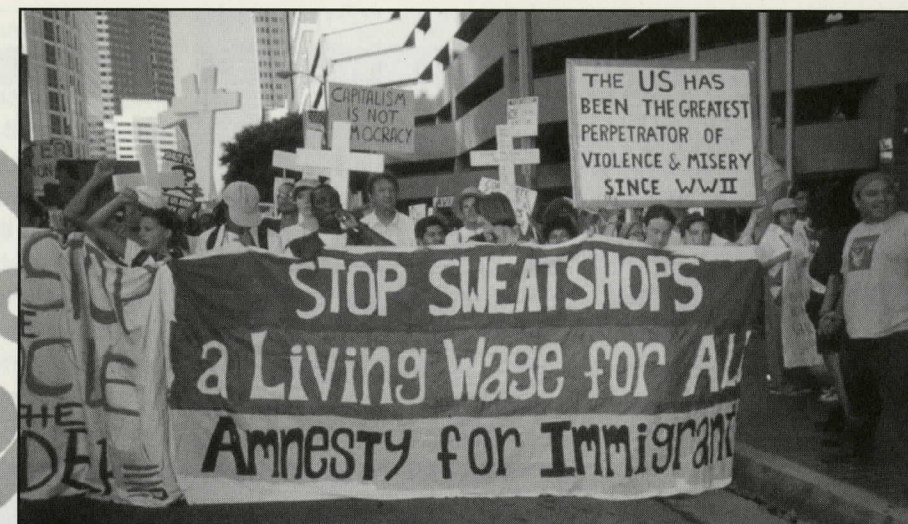
Asian & Latino Garment Workers Unite in Los Angeles

BY THE GARMENT WORKERS
CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

The movement against corporate globalization has put sweatshops in the public spotlight. Images of children sewing soccer balls in Pakistan or young Indonesian women slaving away to make expensive Nike shoes remind us of the people who sew our clothes, too often in sub-standard working conditions. Consumer campaigns aim to clean up factories overseas. Students demand codes of conduct to ensure their university clothing items are produced under humane conditions. Shareholder activists introduce resolutions to get corporations to pay their workers a living wage.

But what do we know about garment sweatshops in our own neighborhoods? What about the workers who are leading the fight against sweatshops themselves every day? And what can we learn from the inspiring way those workers have united across racial and ethnic lines to fight together and win—like the Latino, Thai and Chinese workers in Los Angeles right now?

The garment industry employs 696,000 workers in the U.S., primarily Latino and Asian immigrant women in California and New York, as well as Asian guest workers in the U.S. territories of Saipan and Samoa. They labor 10-12



Workers and supporters march from L.A. garment district to the Democratic National Convention in August 2000, calling for an end to sweatshops. Photo by Joan A. Flores

testified before labor officials; filed lawsuits to hold retailers and manufacturers accountable for those conditions; and campaigned to hold companies like Jessica McClintock, Levi's and DKNY responsible. In Saipan and Samoa, young Asian immigrant guest workers are bravely stepping forward to speak out against slave-like conditions. These organizing efforts are built from the bottom-up, empowering workers directly affected by sweatshops and corporatization to lead the struggle for economic justice themselves.

New Garment Workers Center Opens

Over the last five years, garment workers in Los Angeles have planted the seeds of inter-ethnic outreach and organizing. On Jan. 20 of this year Latino, Thai and Chinese workers opened the doors of the new Garment Workers Center in the heart of Los Angeles' garment district. Most are monolingual in their own languages, they come from very different cultures, but they share the same terrible working conditions and understand the need for unity.

The story of the new Center goes back to the infamous 1995 case of the El Monte sweatshop whose owners held 80

LATINOS & ASIANS STAND TOGETHER

once a dream for two grassroots organizations, but now it's on their list of accomplishments. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER) and the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) are making it happen with their Common Roots Summer Youth Organizer Program, now three years old. The program aims to develop youth leadership skills including how to organize.

Common Roots was developed out of a real critical need. "In 1998, the intense anti-immigrant sentiment was increasing and we lost our fight against Proposition 187. We continued to

Latino communities share the experience of immigration but this is not the only tie. CPA and PODER see that their struggles are linked to those of other communities of color.

The program has often been an eye-opening experience for the Common Roots participants. "Interacting with CPA youth was a different experience for many of us. I had no idea before of the issues they have, and in knowing more now I have a completely different point of view about

continued on pg.5

hours a day, 6-7 days a week, in unhealthy and unsafe conditions, without even earning the minimum wage or overtime. Los Angeles is the capital of the nation's garment industry, employing upwards of 140,000 women, men and children in 5,000 sewing shops. Almost 70% of these shops violate minimum wage and overtime laws, and nearly all violate health and safety standards.

But the workers have been standing up for their rights and taken important strides in coming together to fight sweatshop conditions. Workers in California, New York and Texas have

Thai immigrant garment workers behind barbed wire, under armed guard, and employed 22 Latino workers in a front shop. The Thai and Latino workers joined as plaintiffs in a lawsuit that resulted in over \$4 million in settlements to the workers. Their participation in the litigation was in many ways an outreach and organizing effort, involving Thai and Latino worker interaction. "The stories of how the workers struggled together, challenged each other, fought and laughed, shared

continued on pg.4

their dreams and refused to quit are an integral part of the story of their victory," said Julie A. Su, attorney at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) in Los Angeles, who represented the workers.

During recent years Thai, Latino and Chinese workers have worked together in advocacy efforts, such as testifying at public hearings before state and federal labor law enforcement agencies and before the state legislature, about their working conditions and the need for legal and other reforms. Workers who often labor side by side are now marching,

protesting, going to court and standing up for their rights side by side. Workers have also come together to educate each other about their workplace rights. With guidance from a former Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) attorney, Julia Figueira-McDonough, Latino workers wrote and performed a theater piece for Chinese workers with help from Cantonese and Mandarin translators.

Building on these efforts, workers came together to create the Garment Workers Center as a center for independent organizing. They did this with the support of Sweatshop Watch, APALC, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) and the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates. Their work in establishing the new center shows they know the importance of building alliances across race and gender lines to create a strong movement for workers' rights and economic justice. "Unity shifts the balance of power from corporations to workers," as Julie A. Su said.

Because garment workers frequently receive subminimum wages, their first action is often a lawsuit against the contractor, manufacturer and retailer whose clothes they sewed.

Participating in litigation, as well as press conferences and related activities, has encouraged many garment workers to continue advocating for their rights and to begin organizing among their fellow workers. In November 1999, federal lawsuits were filed on behalf of four Los Angeles garment workers, alleging violations of state and federal labor laws.

The plaintiffs are Chinese and Mexican immigrants who sewed for upscale manufacturer BCBG Max Azria in two different sweatshops. They also produced brand-name clothing for Francine Browner, City Girl and Hobby Horse. The workers suffered miserable conditions at both factories: 6-7-day workweeks, sub-minimum wages, no overtime pay, extremely

unsanitary working conditions, and threats and intimidation to keep them from speaking out.

The workers are represented by APALC and LAFLA. "Like most garment manufacturers and retailers, BCBG Max Azria reaps enormous profits from the labor of the workers who sew its clothes, but denies any responsibility for the conditions under which they toil," said Julia Figueira-McDonough. These larger companies contract with smaller sewing shops that hire garment workers to produce their clothing, often setting the contract price so low that minimum wages are not paid. When manufacturers visit the contractor factories, they turn a blind eye to the visible squalor.

Samuel Guerra, one of the plaintiffs in the federal suits,

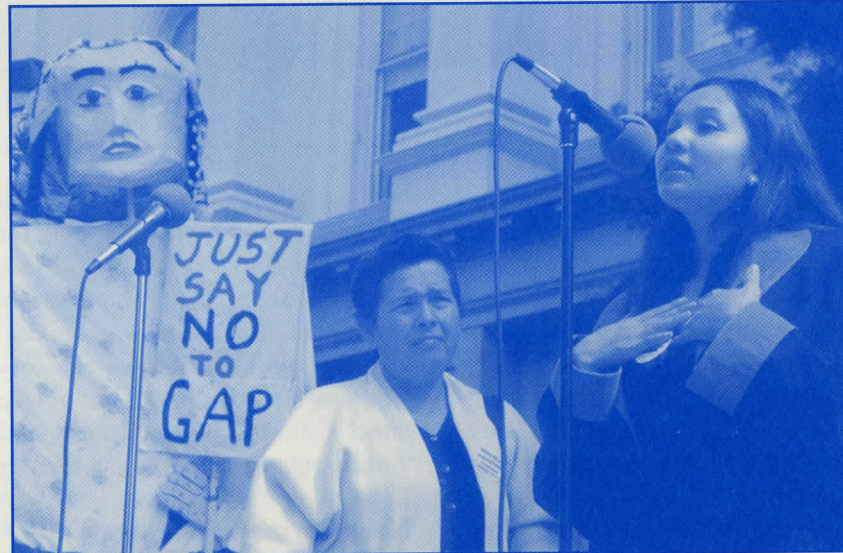
asserts that manufacturers do know what's going on inside the contractor factories but choose to ignore the facts. "They come in to the factories and won't even make eye contact with or greet the workers. But we're right there, and there's no way they can walk by us and not see the conditions we work in. They're choosing not to see." (Today, when contractor sewing shops fail to pay workers their wages, Assembly Bill 633—which went into effect last year—will hold

garment manufacturers and retailers legally responsible for ensuring that workers are paid minimum wage and overtime.

Plaintiff Hsiu-Chu Chen is 60 years old and has worked in the garment industry for 16 years. She sewed for brand name labels at a Los Angeles sweatshop. "There were endless amounts of work to be done and it was always 'rush, rush, rush,'" she says. "We were treated like animals." Mrs. Chen often worked six days a week, sometimes seven, earning little more than \$3.00 per hour with no overtime pay. Hsiu-Chu and her co-workers were required to punch a time card designed to reflect fewer hours than they actually worked. She now suffers from regular headaches, sleeplessness and high blood pressure induced by stress.

The Ceja-Guerra family, also plaintiffs, worked long hours at a medium-size sewing shop for approximately two years, never earning the minimum wage, sharing one bathroom with 70 other workers, and laboring amidst cloth debris, rats and cockroaches. When a private monitor hired by one of the brand-name manufacturers came to their factory in the fall of 1998, Graciela, Samuel and their daughter Lorena defied the factory owner's orders and answered the inspector's questions truthfully. Although the inspector promised

continued on pg.5



Garment workers Rojanna Chuenchujit (right) and Graciela Ceja speak about conditions they face at a 1999 rally at the Sacramento capitol. Photo by David Bacon

Chinatown," said Common Roots graduate Lily Gonzalez.

The bulk of the participants' time and energy is focused on direct organizing in CPA and PODER campaigns. Whether it's working with CPA to push the city to do better housing code enforcement in Chinatown or working with PODER to pass legislation that would protect the community from gentrification and displacement, Common Roots youth organizers take on important responsibilities, including door-knocking, organizing actions, and public speaking.

The youth also develop their fundraising and membership recruitment skills. Over the past three years, Common Roots youth have raised several hundred dollars through an annual Hike-A-Thon. In the last weeks of the program, they work to recruit youth to join one of the two organizations as members. The program culminates in a Graduation Celebration that the youth assist in planning. "It was a learning experience just planning it out," commented Common Roots youth participant Raymond Fong. "But at the end, we even wound up singing karaoke and dancing salsa!"

Expanding the Involvement

Over the past three years, Common Roots has graduated 18 youth organizers and recruited an additional 100 volunteers and youth members into both organizations. With the success of the program, CPA and PODER decided to make it year-round, starting in the summer of 2001.

"A 3-month summer program doesn't do our youth justice," said PODER Community Organizer Oscar Grande. "By the time they get the basics, the program is over. The youth are all fired up and ready to organize. So a year-long program is the only way for our organizations to go."

In a city that often rests on its laurels as a beacon of cultural diversity and progressive politics, CPA and PODER's



From Common Roots workshop analyzing power relations. Photo by CPA

Common Roots program stands out for its aggressive approach to building power through youth leadership in district-specific campaigns. It demands that powerful City agencies and industries not neglect low-income immigrant youth and communities of the city.

"This program is exciting because it really shows the potential of a strong alliance. CPA and PODER are strong organizations on their own but when we work together and bring our power together, we expand that by so much. Building our relationship as well as relationships with our other allies through this program is what's going to contribute the most to the broader movement for social justice," commented PODER Community Organizer Geri Almanza. "And we're also helping to develop the next generation of kick-ass organizers!"

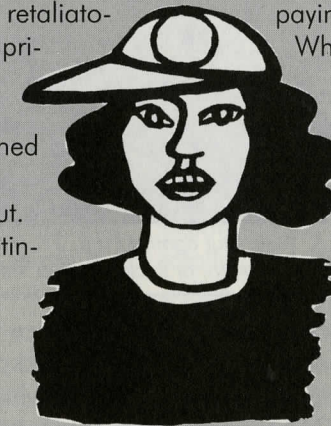
To find out more about Common Roots, and to get involved, call/email 415-391-6986 /cpa@mail.ewind.com (CPA) or 415-431-4210 /poder@igc.org (PODER!).

Julia Lau is Lead Organizer for the Chinese Progressive Association in San Francisco's Chinatown.

anonymity, they were promptly fired for their honesty.

The family won an administrative claim for retaliatory firing, the first victory of its kind involving a private monitor, but the factory owners simply changed their business name and ignored the judgment. This made the family more determined than ever to hold them responsible. Lorena explains, "Most workers are afraid to speak out. They shouldn't be, because their boss will continue to humiliate them as long as they let him. I'm a little afraid, but I'm fighting anyway to show others that it can be done."

Hsiu-Chu adds, "I have a family to support. I have been through a great deal and I am getting old. Still, if I do not fight, things will never change. If I do not stand with other workers, we will always be exploited because we have let ourselves become



Rini Templeton

divided. I hope more workers stand up so we can show our joint strength. Latino workers suffer just like Asian workers, and our employers benefit by taking all the money and paying us nothing, while keeping the workers apart. When we don't speak the same language, we have to find other ways to communicate so all of us can be respected."

"Employers try to use race as bait by giving different workers different pay, so that we fight each other rather than against our employer," echoes Graciela. But, Samuel adds, "If you see an injustice happening to your brother or sister, whatever their race, you have an obligation to do something, to fight with them."

For more information, contact the Garment Worker Center at (213) 748-5866 or visit www.sweatshopwatch.org.

.....YOUTH DEMAND. Education as a Human Right

BY KIRBY JONES

Kirby Jones is the pen-name of a Latino community and youth organizer in Los Angeles



As 150 youth, parents, and community people filled the Gilroy Unified School Board meeting-room, board members looked on in disbelief. The garlic capital of the world—Gilroy, California—was being faced with its own race and class realities. The majority Chicano/Mexicano farmworking community had come to demand better education for their children and that the charges be dropped against Rebecca Armendariz, an 18-year old youth. She had signed for the bus that took Gilroy High students who had walked out from school to San Jose for an educational rally.

When the school board refused to let them speak and put them at the very end of the agenda, the farmworking community members, who had for years been told what to do and when to talk, finally said "ya basta" (enough is enough). They took over the mike and ran down a list of the ways the school board had systemically miseducated Latino youth in Gilroy. By the next day the charges were dropped against Rebecca and the school board began to take the Latino parents and youth seriously.

That incident occurred in November 1993 and marked a beginning of a movement that today has

People of Color Call for



[top] Young Chicana leads a rally, Los Angeles. [left] East L.A. Walk Out against Prop. 21. [middle] Oakland youth show their solidarity at a YOC action against Pete Wilson. [right] YOC, OLIN, & Third Eye Movement at Ruckus Action Training Camp, July 2000. All photos by SchoolsNotJails.com

spread throughout California from as far north as Eureka to Chula Vista near the Mexican border with the demand of "Schools Not Jails" and "Education as a Human Right." For the year 2001, Youth Organizing Communities (YOC) based in southern California is drawing up a Youth Platform of winnable demands founded on a transformative vision of education. It aims to force over-funded prisons and over-

armed police forces to return public resources to meet educational and other social needs. It includes working to repeal Prop. 21, which intensified the criminalization of youth. But it aims to accomplish more than reversing the recent trends.

An alternative vision of schools is needed, the campaign

continued on pg.8

FIGHT THE POLICE STATE

BY CARL PINKSTON

The Black Radical Congress (BRC) is launching a national campaign to mobilize youth, social justice activists, the faith community, women's organizations and all civil rights groups. Its goal: Education Not Incarceration. The campaign, to run from June 25, 2000 through June 2004, is based on the BRC's view of the deadly connection between the decline in education for African Americans and the prison industrial complex.

There is something wrong in this country when you have over 800,000 Black males in the county, state, and federal criminal injustice system (at a cost of \$6 billion). Something is very wrong when only 13 % of the U.S. population is Black but 30% of the people arrested, 41% of the people in jail and 49% of those in prison are Black. Something is extremely wrong when, as *Human Rights Watch* reported in May 2000, African Americans are incarcerated for drug offenses at 8.2 times the white rate.

And something is intolerable when one out of every 20 Black men over the age of 18 is in state or federal prison, compared to one out of every 180 white men. Not to mention the fact that 9,000 Black women were in federal prison in 1984 but ten years later the number had leaped to over 30,000. Once caught up in the criminal injustice system, both men and women are barred from employment, housing, welfare and other services if they are charged with a felony.



October 2000, demonstrators hold a rally against police brutality at the St. Louis Municipal Court building. Black Radical Congress activists were part of the coalition backing the rally. Photo by Jennifer Hamer

conomic development. On the other hand, fewer Blacks are making it out of high school to college. It is no secret that the educational system plays an important role in determining who will be successful in this society. At the same time we have seen new heights of police brutality (Abner Louima) and murder (Amadou Diallo) together with increased execution of the innocent.

Education Not Incarceration

The development and expansion of the criminal injustice system in recent years has been enormous. Back in the 1960s, entire Black communities in Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc. were destroyed by the relocation of industries outside the U.S., automation, and suburbanization. Those developments created a massive, expendable labor force that has included many African Americans. The criminal injustice system replaced viable socio-economic opportunities.

At the same time, racial profiling tagged African Americans (and Latinos) as criminals. The routine became: arrest by police based on the profile, conviction in court based on the arrest, and imprisonment based on the court's sentence.

The massive growth of the prison industrial complex and the decline of inner-city education have been twin developments for the last 30 years. On one hand, the complex has become a \$35 billion a year industry that includes private prison construction, a huge pool of cheap labor, and small communities dependent on it for eco-

Making the connections at its National Organizing Conference in Detroit last June 23, the BRC adopted a campaign of "Education Not Incarceration: Fight the Police State." Anchored by the National Campaign Committee and chaired by Amadee Braxton, "this will be a different campaign, the objective is to create zones of power," as she said at the conference.

The BRC campaign will focus on two demands. One, we want the government to stop criminalizing and filling the prisons with mostly young Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and Asians. The government should shift the funds it now spends on prison expansion (as well as weapons programs) to reconstructing and totally upgrading the public schools. Two, we want an end to police violence, brutality and murder in our communities. We demand the abolition of the death penalty, civilian oversight/review boards and the prosecution of police officers who commit acts of brutality and murder.

It will be a four-part campaign. The first campaign calls for legislation making brutality and murder by law enforcement offi-

continued on pg.12

will affirm. Get ROTC out of schools and give youth a chance at college. Revolutionize the curriculum. Education for everyone—that is the goal. The specifics of the Youth Platform and the new campaign are being developed now.

Many Groups Built the Movement

Looking back at how the movement developed is an education in itself. First, it took years to develop. Some Black, Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander youth in San Francisco had been energized and politicized during the 1991 Gulf War.

In 1993 primarily Raza youth were training and demonstrating all over northern California against racist policies and programs in schools, demanding La Raza Studies at the high school level, and other educational rights. The organization once known as StEP (Student Empowerment Program), and currently OLIN (the name means Movement in Nahuatl, an indigenous language of central Mexico) organized massive school walkouts involving 20,000 people over time in 1993-94.

Major forces in developing the movement were the campaigns against a series of right-wing initiatives, including Propositions 184 (Three Strikes and You're Out), 187 (No Health and Education Rights for the Undocumented), 209 (No Affirmative Action), and 227 (No Bilingual Education). Californians for Justice in the Bay Area trained hundreds of young people in electoral work. Some youth fought to block a new curfew in San Francisco. Many have worked in the campaign to free Mumia Abu Jamal and still more were energized by the Critical Resistance conference at U.C. Berkeley exposing the prison industrial complex.

High School Students Run the Show

By 1997, the high school students were running things like meetings on their own. The biggest effort drew more than 4,000 youth to the new police station in Concord for a dramatic protest in 1998 demanding schools not jails. Groups with several years of activist experience like Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM) attracted youth of color with their radical politics and street style, and set up study programs that included revolutionary theory. In Los Angeles and San Diego, Youth Organizing Communities (YOC) began giving workshops and training youth about the prison-industrial complex and the state of the educational system.

All this work and more laid a foundation of sophisticated and experienced young people ("veterans" of 1990's activism, now in their mid-to-late 20s) ready to help a new

generation develop. They included many dynamic young women, whose leadership was not to be squelched by sexism. This paid off during the later campaigns, when young women aged 15-17 (for example, from Third Eye Movement in San Francisco) were handling the media and other major responsibilities at events.

Weeks of Rage: Schools Not Jails!

When Prop. 21 appeared, then, youth were ready. Prop. 21 included 43 pages of provisions that criminalize youth, increase penalties for minor crimes, lower the age to be tried as an adult, build more jails and take away money from schools and youth-positive programs. On Feb. 21, 2000, youth and community organizers launched the "Weeks of Rage" campaign that ran up to the election. A series of back-to-back non-violent protest actions were organized to highlight the destructive effects of Prop. 21 and the prison-industrial complex.

In Oakland, a hip-hop event stirred hundreds of youth who then marched over and blocked the street at the city jail, demanding that the 42 adults arrested there for protesting Prop. 21 be released. They created such a ruckus that police soon freed three, hoping to defuse the crowd. The next day, in San Diego, 700 students organized by YOC core groups in 15 schools walked out and marched down the city's major artery. Students in six cities in the Los Angeles area participated in coordinated strikes while 300 marched six miles through downtown Whittier (Nixon's hometown) and rallied at the Hilton hotel. As a funder of Prop. 21 the Hilton Corp. was a frequent target.

Youth actions organized by the New Raza Left, Getting' Down, Asian Pacific Islander youth and a host of other groups exploded up and down the state, and even in normally quiet Stockton, Actions included candlelight vigils at city halls in over 12 cities, to remember imprisoned youth and for those who might be imprisoned under Prop. 21. In the last big pre-election action in northern California, youth and supporters transformed a dilapidated building in San Francisco's Mission District, where youth were often transferred from juvenile detention, into a colorful "Liberation School" with buildings named for historical revolutionaries.

On Election Day, 1500 students from East Los Angeles schools marched to the Sheriff's Station, shutting down the city's major arteries. Police harassment of students at high schools increased. Youth continued to win respect from parents and sometimes even from the media. In San Francisco, the day after Prop. 21 passed, people occupied the Hilton Hotel lobby; 175 were arrested.

continued on pg.15



BY ANTONIO DIAZ

COMMUNITY, Not cubicles!

THE FIGHT AGAINST DISLOCATION GROWS

With a 9-piece band on a flatbed truck exhorting people to "Get up, stand up, stand up for your rights," the enthusiastic crowd walked through the Mission District. People had gathered not only to hear various speakers describe the negative impact of the dot-colonization sweeping through San Francisco, but also to celebrate the perseverance of a community that continues to survive and flourish.

Their signs read "People over Profits," "La Misión es Nuestra Comunidad" and "Community not Cubicles." That day over 1,000 Mission residents and their supporters from across the Bay Area sent a clear message to city government and developers: we're organizing to fight back! We won't be displaced!

MAC Organizes a Big "Long Walk"

This caminata (Long Walk) on August 12 was among the most successful actions organized by the Mission Anti-displacement Coalition (MAC), a leader in the movement against displacement in San Francisco. The movement has grown in power and influence over the past several months. Land-use issues and city policies that affect development have become prime subjects of debate in neighborhood meetings and at City Hall. Television, radio, the two major dailies and especially the community press have covered the struggle extensively. The organizing in response to the gentrifying pressures put on working-class and predominantly people-of-color neighborhoods has garnered national attention, with major articles appearing in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and *Newsweek*.

The MAC has helped develop a flourishing movement that brings together neighborhood



The Mexican Bus escorts elders during the Caminata, Aug. 2000. Photo by Pancho Alatorre

residents, non-profit organizations, artists, and small business owners. It has used a multi-faceted approach and tactics that include direct action, participatory research and analysis, art and culture, and electoral politics.

First came MAC's actions to call attention to the negative impact of San Francisco's Planning Department and Planning Commission policies on neighborhoods such as the Mission District. Rallies have been held at their hearings at City Hall. The response? This past fall a MAC representative was wrestled to the ground by a sheriff's deputy, by order of the Chair of the Planning Commission, after he went over by a few seconds his allotted three minutes to speak. On October 19, the Commission took the unprecedented step of cancelling the public comment period at the inception of each meeting and moved it to the very end. Even the *San Francisco Examiner's* lead editorial called for the resignation of the commissioners (all but one) who voted to silence the public's participation.

Housing for People, Not for Dot.coms

Increasingly, MAC organizers targetted the companies themselves that are invading the neighborhood and the moneyed interests encouraging it. On September 21, MAC peacefully occupied the offices of Bigstep.com, the dot-com company that moved into the Bayview building on Mission Street thereby displacing over 20 non-profit organizations and businesses serving the community. A dozen people were arrested by San Francisco

continued on pg.10

police. According to city zoning codes, businesses are limited to using 6,000 square feet for their offices on Mission Street. At the time of the Sept. 21 action, Bigstep was illegally occupying over 90,000 square feet. The Planning Department has yet to enforce the city's regulations.

Similarly, on December 7, over a dozen MAC members camped out at the entrances of the building where Zing.com is located, at 1800 Bryant Street. The building was initially approved for high cost live/work loft spaces but it has been illegally converted into dot-com offices. As a result, the city lost fees charged on office construction, which would have provided \$463,890 to the city's affordable housing fund and \$65,800 to child care services.

With the theme "Housing for People, Not for Computers!" MAC members brought in sofas, coffee tables and other household items and barricaded the doors to the building. After two hours, the CEO of Zing.com, David Ezquelle, went with several police officers to all of the entrances and signed a citizen's arrest for each of the protesters blocking the building. Shouts of "Arrest him!" and "Shame! Shame" followed from the dozens of supporters.

Yes on L, Don't Buy the Developer's Lies

MAC is an informal association of organizations such as PODER, Mission Agenda, and St. Peter's Housing Committee, and individuals. The core organizations have worked to inform their constituencies about developments affecting their neighborhood and activated them to respond. With educational sessions for SRO tenants, Day Laborers and youth, the goal is to ensure that all affected Mission residents are part of the growing movement. This outreach is intended to go beyond the 40-to-50 individuals who consistently attend weekly MAC meetings and reach the most marginalized, most vulnerable sectors: immigrant workers, working class Latino/a families, elders and youth.

The Foro Comunitario held on October 25 at Cesar Chavez Elementary School was an example of this broader community educational effort. Conducted bilingually with a crowd of mostly Latino/a neighborhood residents, the foro covered the upcoming November election and three initiatives on the November 2000 ballot that had direct impact on the sustainability of San Francisco's neighborhoods: propositions L, H, and N. These initiatives would have strengthened tenant protections against evictions and restricted over-development in at-risk neighborhoods. MAC and its members worked in solidarity with groups from other areas to push for their passage.

Proposition L, in particular, provided protection for neigh-

borhoods like the Mission, South of Market, Potrero Hill and Bayview/Hunter's Point from the live/work loft and dot-com office development that's causing land values to soar and pricing out low-income renters, small businesses, non-profits and artists. Prop. L would also have closed the loopholes used to over-develop in some of the city's industrial areas. It would have clarified that dot-com offices are offices and live/work units are housing, so that developers would have to pay the city fees charged on offices—such as for affordable housing and transit development.

At the urging of Mayor Brown, developers, lobbyists, and other pro-development interests raised a significant amount of money to confuse voters and defeat these measures, including over \$2 million to stop Prop. L. Yet even with the

money spent against it, Prop. L lost by only a few hundred votes and passed overwhelmingly in the Mission.

The fight for Prop. L set the stage for the next electoral battle, district elections, which were being re-introduced in San Francisco. A progressive slate of seven candidates for the Board of Supervisors challenged Mayor Willie Brown's pro-development agenda. All seven were in the run-off election and 6 of them won seats.

Research in Community Hands

A key component of the work conducted by MAC has been developing proactive strategies and policies to stem displacement. This includes constant monitoring of projects that are pending at the Planning Department or coming to the

Planning Commission; analyzing the impact of City policies on the Mission; and pushing for key demands that protect the neighborhood.

An example of this is the MAC report, "The Hidden Costs of the New Economy: A Study of the Northeast Mission Industrial Zone (NEMIZ) due to the development of lofts and dot-com offices in the area. According to MAC's analysis, in the NEMIZ alone, over 1,200,000 square feet of office and 600,000 square feet of live/work lofts have displaced more than 60 businesses and art spaces over the past several years. These enterprises had provided blue-collar jobs to Mission residents and other workers in San Francisco. Furthermore, over \$22 million has been lost in affordable housing, childcare and transit fees in the Northeast Mission alone. The citywide losses are estimated at \$100 million.

MAC is proposing interim controls to protect the NEMIZ and the Mission's commercial corridors from the type of development that's causing displacement. Proposals were to be presented to the new Board of Supervisors when they convene at their first meeting on January 16, 2001.

El Arte en la Calle

Another significant contribution to the anti-displacement movement has come from cultural workers. The SF Print Collective in the Mission, an eclectic group of graphic artists, has created posters that have been wheat-pasted throughout the city conveying the community's demands and announcing upcoming actions and events. Whether they portray neighborhood residents being evicted or warn of the 'dot-com plague,' the posters are a constant reminder of the importance of using cultura to convey messages and extend critiques.

Throughout San Francisco, visual artists, dancers, musicians, videographers, photographers and writers have organized mobilizations to draw attention to the plight of the arts community. Cultural workers are also documenting the transformation of San Francisco and the many efforts to reclaim the city. The organizing taking place is aimed at protecting the rich social, cultural and economic diversity of the city and safeguarding what makes the neighborhoods unique.

Moving Forward

The year 2000 saw an unprecedented amount of organizing around one of the most pressing issues affecting working-class people and people of color throughout the Bay Area and the country as a whole: the forcible dislocation of human beings from their communities and social space.



The Caminata at 24th Ave & Bryant, San Francisco, August 2000. Photo by Pancho Alatorre



MAC protestors block conversion of 1800 Bryant to dot.com offices with household items. Photo by Pancho Alatorre

continued from pg.11
Community, Not Cubicles!

Besides the pressures from globalized capital, neighborhoods in the urban core are being further eviscerated by short-sighted planning policies and a lack of economic development that meets the needs of a diverse population as a result of the cities' attempts to take advantage of "the new economy." So the current organizing is not only to safeguard neighborhoods as they exist but also to exert control over how communities develop. With leadership from MAC's organizations and volunteers, the Mission will seek to define a vision for the neighborhood. Measures will be put in place to ensure that people who live, work and play there have a say in the future of their community.

Implementing controls and putting into effect a new plan for the neighborhood are more possible now, thanks to the changes at City Hall. With a new Board of Supervisors, such measures can be strengthened and improved. As always, however, on-the-ground organizing will be needed to hold these officials accountable and ensure that the community's vision is put into effect.

Antonio Díaz is Project Director of PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights) in San Francisco. ✊

continued from pg.7

Fight the Police State

cers a federal crime. The BRC doesn't expect the federal government to be our savior; nevertheless we are making this demand.

The second campaign is to demand that the state cease its use of police terror and force to quash the struggle of the South Carolina dockworkers. Local 1422 of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) a largely Black local, mounted a peaceful protest this year against Nordana, an employer that planned to bring in non-union workers to break the back of the dockworkers' organizing. In

response workers were beaten, clubbed and later charged with inciting to riot. Defense committees for them are being formed nationwide. The BRC will hold a forum co-sponsored with the ILWU on Thursday, Feb. 22 entitled "Black Labor Confronts the Police State: The Case of the South Carolina Dockworkers" at La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck, Berkeley.

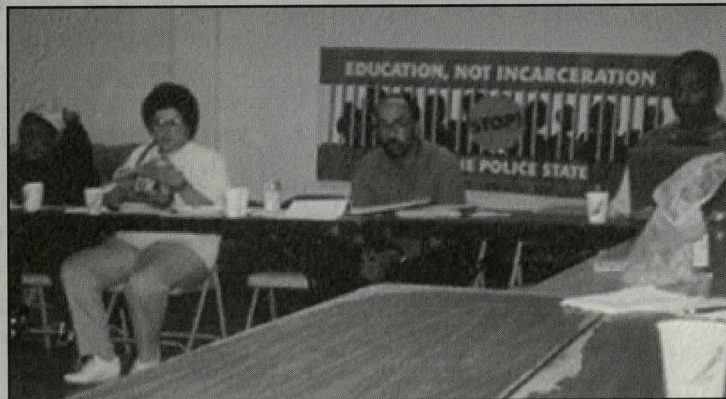
The third campaign is to resist the push to privatize public education through vouchers and other forms of corporate control over education. While we recognize that public

education has failed far too many of our children, we also know that vouchers are a case of the cure being worse than the disease. They may help a few families but stripping our tax dollars from the public schools budget and putting them in the hands of private entities will not solve the crisis in education.

The fourth campaign is the boycott of Marriott hotels and food services. Sodexo Marriott, a national provider of food services to public schools, universities, hospitals and prisons, is linked to the Corrections Corporation of America, the largest owner and operator of private prisons. Again, we demand that funds be reallocated to education.

To learn more about the Black Radical Congress and its new campaign, contact the national office at: Black Radical Congress, Columbia University Station, P.O.Box 250791, New York, NY 10025. (212)969-0348. Blackradicalcongress@email.com.

Carl Pinkston is a longtime activist and founder of the Black Radical Congress, now its West Coast Regional Representative. ✊



Members of the BRC National Council chart the BRC's future course. Photo by Ula Taylor

Building Unity Between AFRICAN AMERICANS & IMMIGRANTS

BY KIKANZA RAMSEY

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

As an African American woman fluent in Spanish, I focus a significant portion of my work on grappling with the tensions that divide Black people and immigrants and trying to build structures that will unite us. In many of the communities where I have organized—Wilmington, Long Beach, South and South Central Los Angeles—racial demographics demand that immigrants' rights, language rights, and civil rights be addressed. In these areas, the ability of Blacks and Latinos to constructively handle their conflicts will largely determine whether they can defeat the neofascist plans that the system has for them.

Therefore, in my organizing I always start with demands and organizational structures that offer liberation for the most oppressed people in a particular situation but that also challenge the oppressed to be more universal, more humane, more truly radical. In my work to unite Blacks and Latinos, I lead with immigrants' rights and language rights. Our political system turns the rage that many Black people feel against that system toward Latino and Asian immigrants. So it is crucial to organize the Black community to defend full immigrants' rights and language rights, including the right to be here in the United States, earn a living wage, have access to full public service and public assistance benefits, and have fully funded bilingual education programs that celebrate their language and teach English.

Our history of oppression as Black people does not make us immune to the U.S. tendency to rally around a "patriotic" nationalism that privileges the native-born. In fact, because the U.S. government owes us so much, we are ripe to be convinced that immigrants are our unworthy competition.

For many years I organized in Wilmington, the harbor community of L.A. that is approximately 60% Latino, 20% white, 10% Black, and 10% Asian. This is where the Labor/Community Strategy Center focused its WATCHDOG project on Texaco and the petrochemical industry. As hard as I tried, I could never succeed in bringing Black folk into what was perceived to be a Latino organization (because we organized bilingually and demanded Spanish translation from the industries and the Air Quality Management District). And even though the two lead organizers (Chris Mathis and myself) were African American, we could not overcome the silence of most Blacks in Wilmington when environmental racism was being perpetrated on their community. Some even united with white racist homeowners rather than join WATCHDOG.



Kikanza Ramsey working a bus stop in Los Angeles. Photo by Bus Riders Union

On the other hand, I was able to make significant advances in building unity through my work with the Bus Riders Union/Sindicato de Pasajeros. The union was initiated by the Labor/Community Strategy Center after its victorious 1994 lawsuit against the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) of Los Angeles. The suit charged that the civil rights of half a million daily bus riders were violated by MTA raiding public funds from the bus system to build a separate and unequal rail system.

Building Class Unity with the Bus Riders Union

Powerful Black and Latino Democratic Party politicians refused to implement the court-ordered remedies. They exemplify the growing "comprador" or middle-class of color that defends and participates in the capitalist system's pillage of poor communities of color because it owns, shares in and benefits from the spoils. I have been heartened, however, by the fact that the low-income Black and Latino working class people, including Bus Rider Union (BRU) members, are not fooled by these politicians.

When I first began to organize on buses that don't come on time, break down constantly, and pack us on like sardines, I was not surprised to hear Black folk say that their main gripe is the fact that there are too many of "them,"

continued on pg.14

"who crowd on with their children and can't speak English." It is also not at all uncommon for monolingual Spanish-speaking bus riders to tell me that the worst thing about the bus system "son los choferes morenos quienes nos maltratan como si nuestros tokens no valieran lo mismo y no tuvieramos derecho de usar el servicio del bus" (are the Black drivers who treat us as if our tokens don't count and we don't have the right to use the bus service).

The breakthroughs in the BRU are built upon our ability to recruit African Americans with experience in the Black Liberation movement who have strong pro-immigrant politics, and our commitment to build an organizational structure with language rights and immigrants' rights as the non-negotiable core. A turning point occurred when Pat Elmore, a 65-year old Black radical from Inglewood, proposed writing immigrants' rights into the BRU bylaws and having mandatory translation at the membership meetings.

In a now-famous speech, Pat told the members she was "against 'bilingualism' because in Los Angeles we need to become multilingual." Shortly after Pat's speech we decided to have Spanish translation at all the membership meeting and to circulate occasional leaflets in Korean. We also voted to mobilize our membership aggressively against the anti-immigrant state propositions 187 and 227.

From that time on, the Bus Riders Union has organized regular political education around the correlation between immigrants' rights in Los Angeles and U.S. imperialism in the Third World. African American members now regularly represent the Bus Riders Union at pro-EZLN Zapatista rallies, sporting T-shirts that say, "Soy Zapatista." My experience has taught me that consciousness builds on itself. Black folk, when pushed, will choose the Left side of the struggle.

In this light, I was happy to hear Caribbean, African, and Afro-Latino brothers and sisters raise the struggle for immigrants' rights and against imperialism at the Black Radical Congress in 1998, a reflection of the understanding that Blacks in the United States come here from many different nations. At a time when the Third World immigrant population is growing at top speed all over the U.S., and federal, state, and local governments are aggressively passing anti-immigrant legislation (while IMF and World Bank policies tighten the screws on people in Latin America, Asia, and Africa), we need to extend our thinking beyond this country's

formative black-white axis.

In the last two years, the BRU has won three major victories over the MTA:

1) A precedent-setting \$42 monthly bus pass and \$11 weekly pass. The MTA threatened to raise fares after our lawsuit victory but we made them drop this plan, and are organizing to lower the fare and bus pass charge even more.

2) On May 26, our organizing forced the MTA to purchase 370 clean-fuel (Compressed Natural Gas) instead of diesel buses, which would be a public health disaster.

3) In our work getting the MTA to expand its service, they are now hiring 25 drivers a week; these are union jobs.

The BRU has also created an On-The-Bus Teatro, improvisational theater led by Martín Hernandez, that allows us to bring the latest developments in MTA policy and BRU proposals to thousands of bus riders and drivers. (Bus riders are trained to be producers, writers and actors.) With the teatro, with posters proclaiming slogans like

"No Somos Sardinas" (We are not sardines), the BRU and Strategy Center incorporate cultural work into our organizing.

Riders Support Drivers in Latino/Black Solidarity

Another major accomplishment was the building of black-brown unity at the ground level. A longtime chill had existed between the BRU, whose membership is strongly Latino and immigrant, and the predominantly African American bus drivers' local of the United Transportation Union (UTU). But last September 16, when 4,500 bus operators went out on strike for major wage and benefit concessions, the BRU announced its support the very same day.

Usually at odds on the buses, the two groups joined forces at picket lines and rallies. While a few drivers maintained their animosity, the majority of the rank-and-file overwhelmingly welcomed our members with true gratitude and respect. The longtime chill has thawed considerably; the two are now in negotiations to develop strategies and tactics to further challenge MTA attacks against both groups.

Note: This is part of an article from *Ahora Now*, published by the Labor/Community Strategy Center and updated. A video on the Bus Riders Union is available; contact 213.387.2800 or laborctr@igc.apc.org.

Kikanza Ramsey is an organizer with the Bus Riders Union based in Los Angeles.



On-the-Bus Teatro by the Bus Riders Union. Photo by BRU

MEXICANS, CHICANOS & NATIVE AMERICANS UNITE for Human Rights at the Border

BY JOSE PALAFOX

Last December 8-10, over 600 people came together in Tucson, Arizona in a historic summit meeting, "From Border to Border: Building a Human Rights Movement." Immigrant rights organizers, faith-based activists, indigenous groups, and academics from the U.S. and Mexico discussed ways to create a movement that can challenge today's abuses. Its targets include vigilante attacks on migrant workers, militarization of the border, unfair immigration policy, and the impact of capitalist globalization on human mobility and borders.

The summit endorsed supporting the native Tohono O'Odham Nation of more than 24,000 members, who have lived on both sides of the border in southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico for many years. They have been struggling against immigration/border laws that impede their ability to visit family members and participate in religious events. Organizations that endorsed the summit included the Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras, AFSC, LULAC, Citizens for Border Solutions, the Derechos Humanos Coalition, and others.



Workshop at the Tucson Summit Meeting. Photo by José Palafox

José Palafox is a graduate student in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

continued from pg.8

Youth Demand Education as a Human Right

Even though Prop. 21 passed, the energy and commitment of mobilized, politicized youth kept pumping into even bigger campaigns. YOC trained young people about globalization and its effects on education. It also began to train high school youth in non-violent direct action.

As the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Los Angeles neared, a coalition formed to protest racist and classist inequalities in education. The coalition included YOC, Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), a university coalition that included MEChAs (Chicano students) and BSU's (Black Student Union), and the Bus Rider's Union (BRU). This coalition, "Justice for Youth: End the Racist Setup", called on Governor Gray Davis to adhere to its 10-point plan to change public education.

The coalition march to Davis' office was an overwhelming success as over 1,000 youth, community members, teachers, and supporters forced a meeting with one of his representatives. "I'm sick and tired of having to endure these horrible conditions in our public schools, where our classrooms are too crowded, we don't have any books and our teachers aren't paid enough," said 17-year-old Emilio Guerrero of Whittier. "It was about networking and creating a larger movement that goes way beyond the DNC," said Cecilia Brennan from Central L.A. YOC. "In Los Angeles, the majority of marchers were from the community. When people of color, the working class, immigrants, undocu-

mented, and youth are demonstrating against globalization and corporate capital, politicians, corporate interests, and the police find this really scary."

Where Do We Go From Here?

Since 1993 both OLIN and YOC have focused their energies on pressuring local school boards as well as local and state elected officials around educational demands. Although these actions have energized the youth movement, many of the gains have only been concessions such as Ethnic Studies classes. The educational system remains in a permanent crisis, especially in inner-city schools where most people of color reside. It's time to up the ante and demand educational justice in all classrooms.

Although important, an Ethnic Studies class will only target a few students. Curriculum changes need to be made in all classes, since all curriculum is inherently racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic. Schools need to be places of critical learning and develop thinkers who are socially responsible. For schools to be transformed, we need to hold the decision-makers accountable.

This new campaign will target statewide policy makers while focusing on four of the largest school districts: Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego, and San Francisco Unified. If these four districts are pressured constantly, we can hope the schools will be transformed into places that promote educational justice, critical thinking, inclusion, and racial and economic equity. "This time the youth will definitely be heard," said Lester Garcia from East LA YOC.

Students of Color Fight Racism AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Occupiers and supporters in Student Union building. Photo by SCC

BY FARAH MONGEAU

For 37 days last spring, the Students of Color Coalition (SCC) at the University of Michigan successfully occupied the tower of the Student Union building. They were protesting the presence of Michigamua, a "senior honors society" known for its racist stereotyping and cultural degradation of Native Americans. The name itself is a play on a Native word roughly translated as "big water."

Almost 30 years had passed since the first civil rights complaint about these practices was filed. Michigamua still ignored a formal agreement signed in 1989 to cease the desecration of Native culture and still called its tower office "the wigwam." They kept the authentic and pseudo-Native American artifacts in their possession.

The SCC was formed to challenge the institutionalized racism that characterizes

IN SOLIDARITY WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

UM despite its front as an upstanding liberal institution. For example, well over 25% of the undergraduates are of color yet over the last 5 years the faculty of 1,300 has averaged only 45 Blacks, 13 Latino/as, 71 Asians and one Native. It is not possible to get an M.A. or Ph.D. even in the long-established African and African American Studies Program. Students cannot major in Asian-Pacific American, Latino or Native American Studies (all are housed under the American Culture Program).

Native American Culture Desecrated

These and other issues, including the Michigamua's desecration, were addressed in a 14-point petition presented by the SCC to President Lee Bollinger. New examples of the unequal treatment of students of color emerged during the occupation itself.

One example of inequity occurred when a group of primarily white student activists, Students for Labor and Economic Equality (SOLE) occupied a Dean's office to press anti-sweatshop demands. Bollinger met with them within an hour of their takeover and submitted to their demands within

two days. However, in the case of the SCC occupation, Bollinger's representatives indicated to these students of color that he was unwilling to meet their demands because they used an occupation as a means of achieving them. "This is not Alabama!" he barked at one SCC member.

Another example: Michigamua has a direct liaison with the Administration, Frank Cianciola, who is Associate Dean of Students and also oversees the entire division of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs (MESA), the main support unit of the student-of-color community. That is indicative of the special privileges accorded to Michigamua and also represents a serious conflict of interest.

Cianciola was at the beck-and-call of Michigamua, who once summoned him to the occupation site at 1 a.m. (We had no administrator to call on.) Such privilege comes as no surprise when we remember that Michigamua members have been some of the largest contributors to the University and have campus buildings named after them. Now 98 years old, this society is in effect a network of UM's elite and a pillar of

continued on pg.18

BLOOD LINES

when we escaped the plantations of Florida
and ran among the trees toward swampy ground
to trudge through mud and
memories so fresh of bondage
and of blood

we found your arms swung open wide
as gates to refuge from
a weary fugitives' parade

but there are those
who would have us not remember this
you and we did not only hide
and live in friendship side by side
we both

being people of the drum
did not our hearts thump out a battle song
to drive our feet to march against
the pale-faced ones
whose stomachs could not be filled
who had stolen us from our mother land
and too

were stealing yours from you
but there are those
who would have us not remember this
with your Comanche warriors

in Texas we fought them
with our Seminole warriors
in Florida we fought them
with your Tuscaruros warriors
in South Carolina we fought them
scant are the places where we did not
together fight them

but there are those
who would have us not remember this
who would stuff our recollections full
with the nightmarish deeds of those of ours
who betrayed our common cause
the Creek slave-holders
and mercenaries among the Choctaws
Buffalo soldiers
who valued our blood less
than the pale-faces' money and their laws
and others who could not tell
their enemies from their friends

there are those who would have
us remember these as heroes
but the vistas of yesterday are wide
and we do not stand awake
with one eye closed.

— Mondo



John Taylor and a Ute friend. Photo from Black Indians:
A Hidden Heritage by William Loren Katz.

MONDO is Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Lange (formerly David Rice), who was a member of the Black Panther Party of Omaha, Nebraska. He has been imprisoned for 30 years for the bombing murder of a policeman, supposedly committed with another Panther, Ed Poindexter, also imprisoned 30 years.

Federal courts have found Mondo was convicted on evidence illegally obtained (apparently a coerced witness) and ordered a new state court trial. For the last five years, the Nebraska Parole Board has recommended that Mondo's life sentence be commuted. Records from 1970 indicate that Mondo and Ed Poindexter were targets of the infamous COINTELPRO program to "neutralize" activists. The two had formed an organizing arm of the Panthers to respond to police brutality; their activism intensified after a white officer shot a 14-year old girl in the back of her head, who had committed no crime but ran away at the sound of police sirens.

As Minister of Education in the Panthers, Mondo ran a "liberation school" where black youth learned facts about their history and culture not taught in school. He has continued educational work in prison, where he founded the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization and

continued on pg.19

the "old boys" club" that dominates the campus.

Also during the occupation, the SCC was watched around the clock by the campus police, who also restricted access by supporters. This is the same campus police charged with rampant, racial profiling.

The SCC Refuses to Fold

The occupation, which had been expected to last a few days, maybe a week, went on. From day one, the University administration was attempting to wait out the protest until spring break, when it was convinced we would be gone as other students left campus. Meanwhile, the SCC with active support from the Native American community refused to fold.

When the occupation began, the SCC was made up of politically and organizationally active members of the minority community on campus. Initially, it included Native Americans, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, all quite involved. Most had known each other in one way or another prior to the occupation. The group ultimately evolved into a predominantly black and brown mixture with two Native members.

It became increasingly difficult for the SCC members to maintain the occupation including press releases, negotiations and tours of the tower (some 3,000 people came). SCC's decision to move forward with the occupation without first educating the various groups and organizations of color about the issue proved to be somewhat problematic. Out of 35,000 students, only a handful knew of Michigamua. Keeping a critical mass motivated and interested, outside of the Native American community, was a challenge. The occupiers had to make it clear that Michigamua was a people-of-color issue, not only a Native American issue.

The occupation had a profound impact on all of the SCC participants as well as their supporters. Many members

missed classes, lost jobs or otherwise couldn't work, got little sleep, and were locked into the degrading, spiritually draining environment of the "wigwam." It was 10 days before President Bollinger would sit down at the table to begin addressing points outlined by the SCC.

Victory After 37 Days

We declared victory after 37 days even though we know that we had not forced the severing of the relationship between Michigamua and the University. As a result of the occupation, however, Michigamua had been exposed and it was not permitted to continue occupying the tower. Later Bollinger permanently revoked its lease on the grounds that no student group should have exclusive use of public space indefinitely. Furthermore, everything found in the "wigwam" had been catalogued during the occupation; authentic artifacts were returned to the Native community and the placement of other offensive items is still under negotiation.

The occupation exposed UM's hypocrisy: while willing to uphold affirmative action in admissions recently, institutionalized racism continues there. In addition to problems already mentioned, the few support services and programs that exist to promote multicultural perspectives in education are severely underfunded and neglected.

Since returning last fall, SCC members have continued to address these issues. They are committed to uncovering UM's flawed "commitment to diversity." Mobilization for non-violent direct action is critical to the struggle for the kind of changes that progressives seek. We cannot let liberals like Bollinger claim that the need for such changes has passed.

Farah Mongeau is a 2nd Year Law Student who participated in the occupation and remains a member of the Students of Color Coalition. She currently serves as Political Action Chair of the Black Law Students Alliance and is the Law School representative to the University of Michigan Student Assembly.



Kitty Cloud (Ute), wife of John Taylor, her sister, and their children. Photo from Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage by William Loren Katz.

edited its newsletter, the *Harambee Flame*, for 20 years. (Harambee is a Swahili word meaning "to come together".) His case and many other struggles for justice are covered in *Buffalo Chip*, associated with Nebraskans for Justice.

In addition to his journalism, Mondo is also the editor of three books, performer of plays at schools and community centers, and artist. In February, 2000, 40 of his paintings, drawings and sculpture were on exhibit in Omaha.

The campaign to free both men continues to gain national and international support, including a visit to the State Capitol last September by Angela Davis. *Shades of Power* will carry more of his poetry in future issues. Meanwhile, give your support by writing Nebraskans for Justice at 1314 South Ninth St., Omaha NE 68108 or: W.M.E. we Langa, #27-768, P.O. Box 2500, Lincoln, NE 68542-2500.

CORRECTION: In our Summer 2000 issue, there was an error on p. 8 concerning California's prison population. It should have said that Latinos constitute the largest ethnic group in adult prisons (34.2%) and in youth prisons (aged 16-21) the breakdown is 45% Latino.

-Ed.

Letter to the Editor

I am writing as a member of the New York City Coalition Against Police Brutality (CAPB) about the article in your Summer 2000 issue, "New York Colors Unite to Combat Police Violence."

Although we at CAPB have jokingly referred to ourselves as the "Down Low" coalition (in large part because mainstream media have such a difficult time identifying us as leadership) your article suggests that perhaps we are a little too down low and anonymous. So I wanted to provide a fuller and more accurate picture of the People's Justice 2000 organizing process.

People's Justice 2000 emerged as such in late 1999 under the guidance of the CAPB, a grassroots coalition of people of color organizations including the Audre Lorde Project, the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAV), the Justice Committee National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, the Malcolm X Grassroots Organization and Youth Force. (Some of these organizations were not listed in your article.) The specific goal was to provide a coordinated response to the Diallo and Louima cases, both of which were set to go to trial.

People's Justice 2000 is committed to building a multiracial movement led by people of color to fight against police brutality in New York City. It brought together a broad range of progressive organizations. We worked closely with the Capital Region Justice for Diallo Coalition in keeping a vocal community presence throughout the trial in Albany and struggled to keep public attention on the issue of police violence and brutality.

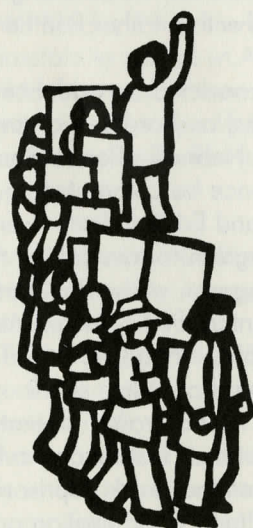
Months of concentrated organizing paid off most visibly on Feb. 26, the day after the words "not guilty" were read aloud 24 times by the Diallo trial jurors, in a mass demonstration that drew over 4,000 multi-racial people from all walks of life, as noted in your article. There was gender and age diversity also, in the crowd and in the leadership. That demonstration represented an important moment in the anti-police brutality movement in NYC; it could not be ignored.

The campaign of "41 Days of Action: No More Business as Usual" followed, with three major goals: keep pressure on the city; broaden the range of protest; and support local communities in developing their own modes of protest. During the 41 days, two more young black men (Patrick Dorismond and Malcolm Ferguson) were killed by NYC police. On April 5 there was a mass rally and march to City Hall, organized by CAPB, the Student Liberation Action Movement (SLAM) and other People's Justice 2000 groups. It included the civil disobedience action by youth described in your article.

Although the momentum lessened over the summer, the struggle continued. People's Justice 2000 continued to push for demands.

To contact People's Justice 2000: pjustice@yahoo.com, or check out our website at www.pj2000.org.

Dayo Folayan Gore
CAPB and People's Justice 2000



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Another attorney, Joaquín Avila in California, mentioned inadequate bilingual service in terms of ballots and poll-watchers. Denial or subversion of Latino voting rights takes many other less flagrant but widespread forms, like at-large elections, gerrymandering, failure to redistrict when called for, redistricting to give Latinos less districts (called "packing") and sprinkling Latino and Black voters over several districts (called "cracking").

Richard Fajardo of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, also a Latino attorney in Los Angeles, recalls another type of electoral racism. "Up to the 1990's, we found that if a Latino was running against a white person, the white would include a picture of his or her opponent in campaign literature. Candidates never do this except when they want the public to know you, a white, are running against a person of color. This happened to numerous Latino candidates, and their opponents always used the darkest, ugliest portrait."

Today, the future faced by most

Blacks, Latinos, others of color and Native Americans under an illegitimate president is more racist, more unjust than ever. Look at Bush's Cabinet nominations. John Ashcroft for Attorney General? His record includes opposing all forms of affirmative action and the appointment of qualified people of color to federal positions. He worked hard to defeat the nomination of a respected Black Missouri justice, Ronnie White, claiming White was "pro-criminal" and he voted to deny public assistance to immigrants, even naturalized citizens. Also he opposes any form of abortion rights, even in the case of rape or incest.

Gail Norton for Secretary of the Interior? In Colorado, she argued hard against minority scholarship; as Attorney General she refused to defend the state's efforts to diversify its contracting. She regretted the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War and equated slavery with "bad facts." Her record says she won't support efforts to end environmental racism.

With other nominations Bush has been dishing out an opportunist, rightwing version of "diversity."

Condoleezza Rice as National Security Advisor is only one of several backward African American appointments. As one pundit says, "all the Blacks who voted for Bush got into his cabinet."

Latinos should never forget that having a name like Chavez doesn't relate you to the labor leader named Cesar. Bush's first nominee for labor secretary, Linda Chavez,

opposed raising the minimum wage, affirmative action, and facilities for the disabled; supported Social Security cuts; served as chair of U.S. English for years; and said women who file complaints of sexual harassment are "crybabies." *Chale!*

Chavez is gone but her successor, Elaine Chao, also exemplifies Bush's attempt to fool people of color and women. A Chinese American, her rightwing positions (for example, on affirmative action) and corporate ties are being hidden by her charity work and politicking. Neither nomination makes Bush non-racist, non-sexist.

It is a time of greatly increased danger but also great lessons and great opportunity. We all should do so much more to join forces at every possible step to advance economic, political and social justice. Why didn't the Congressional Hispanic Caucus support the Black caucus when they walked out in protest against the North Carolina electoral vote count? Why don't African Americans, with Latinos, find some way to make the galloping Latino population an asset—a source of increased strength against racism—instead of a divisive numbers game? What more can progressive Asian Americans do?

Our alliances must not only be race-conscious but also class-conscious. To those who say, "No, I must think of my community first, not others," there is an answer: alliances can build a unity whose strength is the only long-range hope for each and every community of color in this land.

-Ed.

shades of power

Shades of Power is published by the Institute for Multi-Racial Justice. Founded in 1997 in the Bay Area, the Institute aims to strengthen the struggle against white supremacy by serving as a resource center to help build alliances among peoples of color and combat divisions.

Shades of Power brings you news of Institute activities, reports on current efforts to resolve conflicts and build alliances between communities of color as well as analysis of the issues at stake and historical examples of linkage between different communities of color.

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