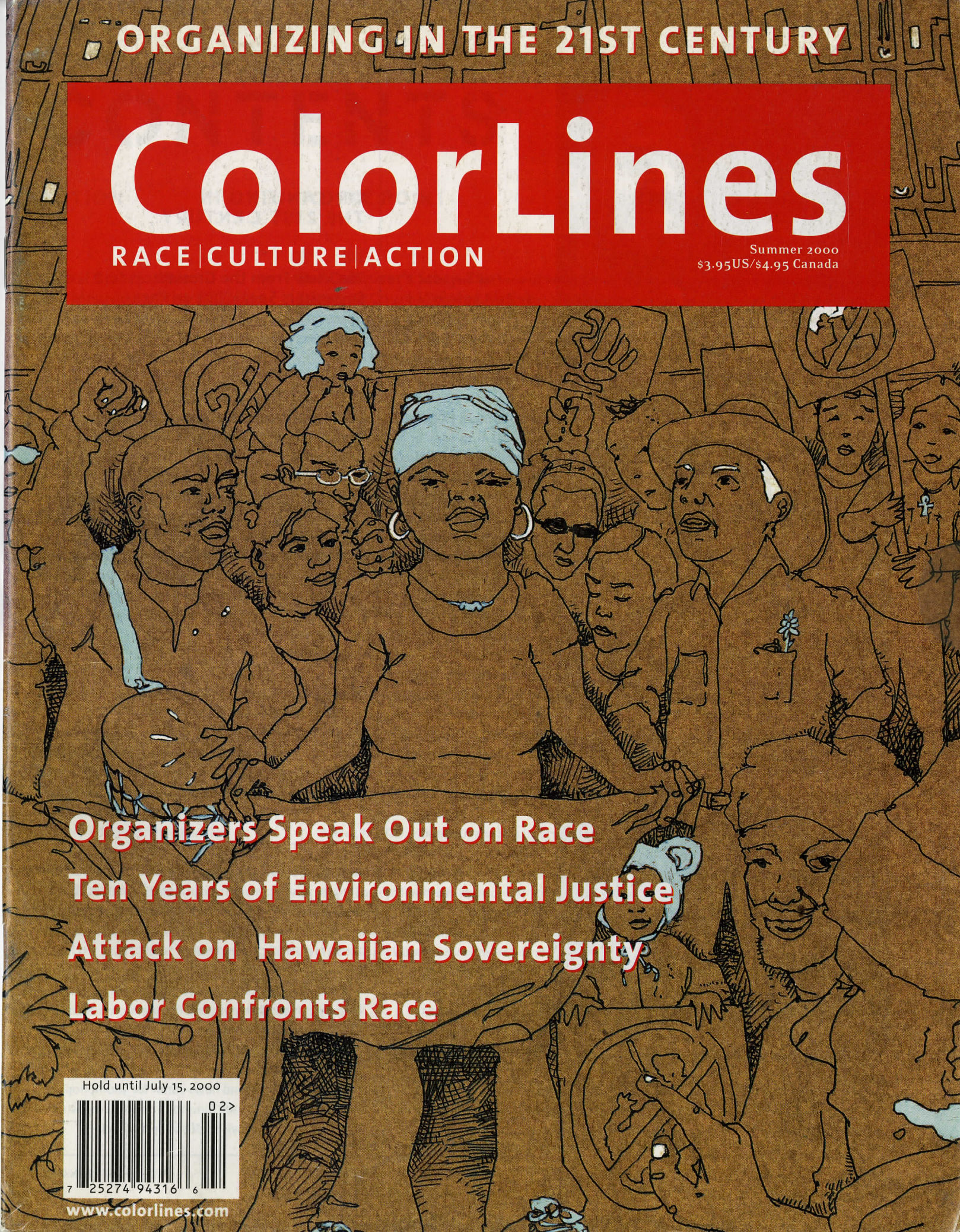


ORGANIZING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

ColorLines

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Organizers Speak Out on Race
Ten Years of Environmental Justice
Attack on Hawaiian Sovereignty
Labor Confronts Race

Hold until July 15, 2000



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GUEST EDITOR'S NOTES

by Mark Toney

What's community organizing all about? Is it a fight to control material resources flowing in and out of our communities, or is it a struggle to control the ideas that frame the way we understand both power relations and our ability to make change? Is racism most effectively addressed by emphasizing economic improvement for low-income communities—since people of color are overwhelmingly poor? Or should racial justice be an explicit focus and driving force of social justice movement work?

The special section of this issue of *ColorLines* on Organizing in the 21st Century features people and organizations who are at the leading edge of an influential and growing trend among community organizations to adopt racial justice as a central framework for social critique, policy initiatives, and vision-building.

In "The View from the Ground," Francis Calpotura and Bob Wing incite seven leading organizers to share their most provocative thoughts on race and organizing. Jeanne Gauna articulates the difference between "environmental equity" and "environmental justice." Jerome Scott argues that "white supremacy" communicates the structural nature of racial domination far better than "racism." Maria Jiménez draws a sharp distinction between bringing together diverse cultures and the political education and strategies necessary to overcome racist immigration policies.

Steve Williams emphasizes the inseparability of the fight for racial justice with the struggle for gender and economic justice. Janet Robideau observes that organizing Indian people is considerably different from working in other communities of color. Anthony Thigpenn argues that multiracial organizing must move beyond focusing on the immediate win to engage people on broader social issues. And Jane Bai advocates the need to link police violence against Asian immigrants, INS detention of Latinos, and mass incarceration of blacks.

The other articles in the special section profile organizations and campaigns that are breaking new ground in the fight for racial justice. In "Labor Confronts Race in Stamford," Dan HoSang profiles an innovative multi-union organizing effort sponsored by the AFL-CIO to connect economic issues with racial justice and link labor organizing with community organizing. In "It's a Survival Issue," Jeff Chang and Lucia Hwang trace the convergence of struggles against racism and campaigns for healthy environments in communities of color that resulted in the environmental justice movement, perhaps the most dynamic grassroots anti-racist work of the last decade. In "Storming Denver," Patrisia Macías Rojas illustrates how a group of Latino parents developed an effective organizing model to advance racial justice in the public schools.

Mark Toney is the executive director of the Center for Third World Organizing and a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Berkeley.

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In Denver, a fiery group of Spanish-speaking moms have school administrators quaking in fear. Patrisia Macías Rojas talks to the women of Padres Unidos.

About the Cover: Christine Wong is a 22-year-old Chinese American artist, educator, and activist based in Oakland, CA. She works with Taller Sin Fronteras, East Bay Institute for Urban Arts, Critical Resistance Youth Force, and Pacific News Service.

ColorLines is sad to report that managing editor Jeff Chang has left the magazine. Jeff's vision, energy, and intelligence were crucial to the launching and development of *ColorLines*, and he will be sorely missed. Jeff is now senior political and news editor for 360hiphop.com, hip-hop producer Russell Simmon's new Internet startup in New York City. We wish Jeff the best of luck.

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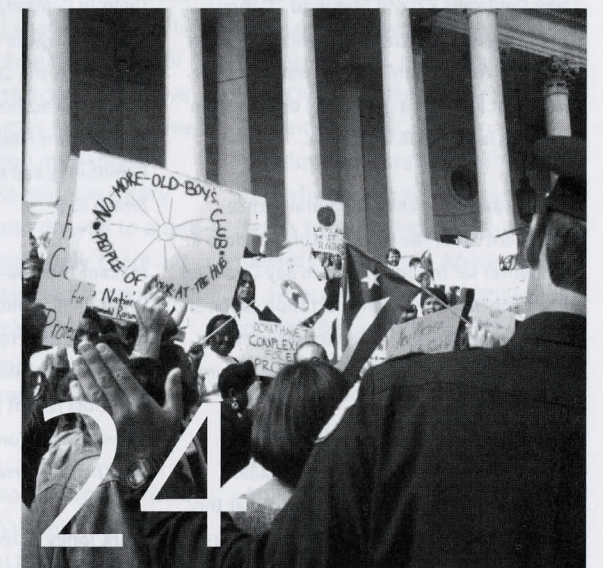
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Makani Themba-Nixon, "Changing The Rules: What Public Policy Means For Organizing." Makani is director of the Applied Research Center's Grass Roots Innovative Policy Program. Her most recent book is *Making Policy Making Change: How Communities are Taking Law into Their Own Hands*.

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LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Seattle was an amazing place during the WTO Ministerial. However, we must be careful to not wallow so much in euphoric afterglow that we neglect to mount a serious critical self-analysis. Elizabeth Martinez's excellent article in *ColorLines* (Spring 2000) on race in Seattle offers an important contribution to this necessary intellectual struggle.

The issue of race has been raised frequently at the Seattle Direct Action Network meetings I have attended since November. And in all fairness, when DAN folks look around their meeting room, my impression is that they feel honest embarrassment that the faces they see are so overwhelmingly white. However, they treat this as essentially a cosmetic problem. Earnestly performing the whole range of liberal-multi-cultural gestures, they do their best to sprinkle a dash of color into each steering committee, they use only the most inclusive collective nouns, and they listen with eerily intent silence when

black comrades speak out.

And therein lies the difficulty. Because Seattle DAN conceives of racism as an error to be corrected, they honestly try to correct it. Because they don't see antiracism as an intrinsic component of their movement, they don't emphasize it. Instead, they seek to build a demographically diverse coalition around a peculiar philosophy of internal purity and self-denial that appeals mostly to young white people.

Seattle DAN folks romanticize the wholesale abandonment of mainstream culture. They boast of dumpster-diving and television-smashing, dream of self sufficiency and deep ecology. But of course, dropping out of society has a different appeal for those who have always-already been invited to participate fully than it does for those whose invitation is eternally lost in the mail. It's also an extraordinarily naive model of social change. No matter how lightly I may tread on the backs of the poor, no matter how many unfair advantages I righteously refuse, I will never become innocent. Complicity is a given; we must wrestle with it, not deny it.

By necessity, radicals of color live the dialectic between internal and external struggles. Desires to tear down the system conflict productively with efforts to get a fair share in the system; the inequities between Seattle's Northern neighborhoods and Southern ones quite clearly resonate with the inequities between the global North and global South. My white cellmates, on the other hand, overwhelmingly agreed that race was a distraction from the struggle, while McDonald's was central to it. Race did, however, remain a useful reservoir of ironic pleasure, as with the observation by a militant straightedge on Day 3 of our incarceration that "it's

funny how most of the guards are black, and we're all white, but we're like fighting for them."

We won a momentous victory in Seattle, and DAN played a crucial role. Its collective approach was fabulously inspiring, its trainings wonderfully empowering, and its displays of solidarity deeply moving. I'm afraid, however, that we on the Left are lurching from our old tradition of insipid self-flagellation for battles lost to an equally mindless self-congratulation for a single victory won.

Martinez's article serves as an antidote to the latter tendency, and also as a challenge. Spurred on by her intervention, we must insist always that antiracism is not a distraction from the real issue. Quite the contrary: as we set our priorities for what comes next, balancing immediate demands and more visionary ones, we would do well to appreciate that most likely, there are radicals of color out there who will have already led the way.

SAGE WILSON
Seattle, WA

Dear Editor,

Alondra Nelson ("AfroFuturism: Past-Future Visions," *ColorLines*, Spring 2000) has uncovered cultural inventions that took me decades to discover in the field. I am a pragmatic futurist, so I look for features in a culture where evidences of excellence abound.

In Africa, this appeared in women's work, such as small-scale multi-crop farming, in NGO organizations, and in the use of color in fabrics. In Central America, I found young Mayan

women in traditional village garb at a "conexion" learning how to use computers to send e-mail to refugee relatives in the United States, and taking time to surf the Internet and practice how to become a modern secretary.

I foresee that soon such women will play computer games to optimize growing corn and beans by outwitting the weeds and the hordes of predators who want to eat the crop before the humans. I see others micro-entrepreneuring a franchise for telecommunication with low-flying satellites for cell phones in villages, TV from the Internet, and streaming music, and that they will soon add word processing to replace scribes, photocopying, and DVDs for distance learning. Presently the NGOs yearn to develop radio stations, which are recently accessible without batteries by using new wind-up devices from South Africa.

How can we create high levels of well-being and happiness with minimal resource use and capital in those societies? I believe that present technologies enable us to do it with 10 percent of what Americans now consume. Moreover, it seems feasible to achieve it in one to two generations.

That takes planning, but not the kind presently taught. It can be invented when building upon tools, techniques, and relationships like those described by Alondra. A few starts have been made.

RICHARD L. MEIER
Professor of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley

Submission Guidelines:

We welcome letters to the editor. Letters must include the writer's name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit letters that we publish.

ColorLines

Letters to the Editor
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By
Melia Franklin,
ColorLines staff

RACE FILE

Recent developments across the nation paint a disturbing picture of an unaccountable police and criminal justice system permeated by institutional racism—but also of mounting resistance, even by some mainstream forces.

Who's Policing the Police?

LOS ANGELES, CA (February): An investigation of anti-gang officers in the LAPD's Ramparts Division has unmasked an outlaw force that routinely deported, harassed, battered—and even killed—suspects without cause, then fabricated stories and planted evidence to justify their actions. Officers adorned with skull-and-crossbones insignias and tattoos held quasi-official "shooting parties," and awarded plaques to members for wounding or killing suspected gang members. So far 29 officers have been relieved of duty, more than 70 others are under investigation, and dozens of criminal convictions have been overturned.

LOUISVILLE, KY (March): Louisville's police force rose up in an all-out

mutiny against Mayor David L. Armstrong after he fired Police Chief Eugene Sherrard for awarding medals of valor to two white officers who were involved in a racially charged fatal shooting of an unarmed black man last May. After the dismissal, scores of officers left their posts and marched on City Hall, blocking traffic with their cruisers, flashing their sirens, and noisily called for the mayor's removal.

CLAREMONT, CA (February): Community and student protests forced officials to rescind a job offer to former LAPD lieutenant Thomas Scheidecker to become Claremont's new police chief. Activists and the media uncovered that, in the 1980s, Scheidecker allegedly collected information on campus and community activists and leaked them to Western Goals, a rightist group with ties to the John Birch Society. Claremont's police force has been the target of weekly protests since two officers shot and killed 18-year-old black motorist Irvin Landrum, Jr. in a traffic stop more than a year ago—and then received "employee of the year" awards.

No Justice, No Peace

NEW YORK, NY (March): On March 16, unarmed Patrick Dorismond was killed by undercover police who were trying to entrap the African American man in a random drug sting. A week earlier plainclothes police killed Malcolm Ferguson, another unarmed black man, in the same Bronx neighborhood where Amadou Diallo was killed last year. The killing came less than a week after protesters thronged the streets of New York decrying the not-guilty verdict for four white cops charged with Diallo's murder.

PROVIDENCE, RI (January): Black off-duty police officer Cornel

Young Jr. was killed by fellow officers as he attempted to assist them. Several witnesses said they heard him identify himself as a police officer, but white officers mistook Young for a perpetrator and shot him dead. "Had he been a white officer he would not have been killed," said City Councilperson Balbina Young. Direct Action for Rights and Equality called the murder "part of a pattern of vicious, racist abuse by the Providence police."

NEW LONDON, CT (March): A 10-month state investigation cleared a white police officer in the fatal shooting of Aquan Salmon, an unarmed black teen. The state concluded that shooting the 14-year-old in the back while he chased another boy who had a toy pistol in his hand was justified.

VACAVILLE, CA (March): After spending two years in jail, Latino youths David Moreno and Justin Pacheco were acquitted by a Solano County jury of murdering a friend who a white teen long ago confessed he had killed. Chad O'Connell admitted that he stabbed Jerry English, but the DA's office decided that he acted with justifiable force. The prosecutors charged Moreno and Pacheco with murder under California's "provocative act" rule, arguing that their participation in the fight led to O'Connell's death. We Interrupt This Message, a progressive media group, played a key role in publicizing the case and exonerating the defendants.

Death Penalty under Fire

CHICAGO, IL (February): Republican Governor George Ryan imposed a moratorium on executions in the state of Illinois pending an exhaustive review of the process. Since the state reinstituted the death penalty in 1977, 13 con-

demned men have been proven innocent. The following week legislators in Maryland and Oklahoma introduced moratoriums on the death penalty. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington are also considering legislation to halt executions. Oregon's governor has announced his support for a ballot initiative that would abolish the state's death penalty.

Racial Profiling

SOUTH DAKOTA (March): Announcing the start of "Indian Hunting Season," an ad in a South Dakota newspaper declared "open season on the Sioux Reservations," set a limit of ten kills per day, and specified in extremely offensive terms the manner in which Indians can and cannot be killed. Designed to look like a real hunting season announcement, the message apparently also circulated as a flier printed on State of South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Department letterhead.

DENVER, CO (February): In a study of the city's use of "no-knock" warrants, the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* found that people of color were targeted in 82 percent of the 178 such warrants issued last year. No-knock warrants allow police to raid a suspect's home without warning, a practice that led to the unjustified police killing of Ismael Mena, a Mexican national, late last year.

CALIFORNIA (March): California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 21, the "Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act" which promises to fill the adult jails with youth of color in years to come. The Act makes it easier for DAs to try minors as adults and imposes harsh penalties for "gang-related activities" such as painting graffiti. ☹

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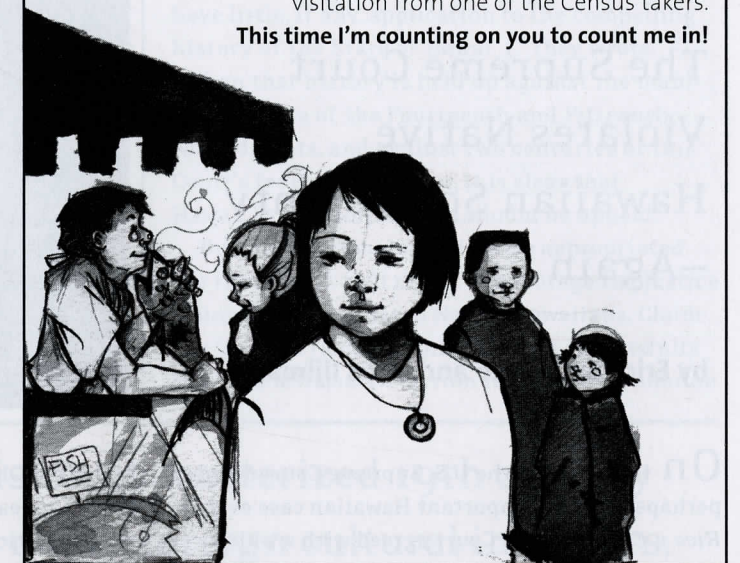
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The Colonizer's Story

The Supreme Court Violates Native Hawaiian Sovereignty—Again

by Eric Yamamoto and Chris Iijima



Photo by Rod Thompson

Big Island rancher Harold "Freddy" Rice (far left) at a cafe in Waimea.

On February 23, the U.S. Supreme Court decided perhaps the most important Hawaiian case ever. In *Rice v. Cayetano*, the Court agreed with a white American rancher's claim that a Native Hawaiians-only voting limitation for trustees to the state's Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) constituted unlawful racial discrimination.

In 1996, plaintiff Harold "Freddy" Rice, a Caucasian rancher who traces his family's roots in Hawai'i back to the mid-1800s, sued Hawai'i's governor, Ben Cayetano, to invalidate OHA's Native Hawaiians-only voting limitation. But underlying *Rice v. Cayetano* is a centuries-old battle over land, race, and rights.

OHA was created in 1978 by a state constitutional amendment adopted by an overwhelming vote of Hawai'i's multiracial populace. As Justice Stevens wrote in his dissent to *Rice*, Hawai'i's voters recognized that Native Hawaiians (*Kanaka Maoli*) "share with Native Americans" a "history of subjugation at the hands of colonial forces" and that *Kanaka Maoli* deserved a measure of self-governance. *Rice* now jeopardizes not only OHA; it also threatens all federal and state programs designed to repair continuing harm to the Native Hawaiian people resulting from the illegal U.S. overthrow of reigning Queen Lili'uokalani and the sovereign nation of Hawai'i in 1893.

Rice's attorney, Theodore Olson, has announced his intent to file new suits to dismantle all federal and state-supported Native Hawaiian programs,

including OHA. While Native Hawaiian leaders called for protests, Rice's political supporters (including the Campaign for a Color-Blind America, the right-wing legal foundation that financed the suit) praised the Court's stand against "racial discrimination"—against whites.

Meanwhile, Native American leaders worried that the decision would encourage conservatives to attack Congress' authority to deal with Native Americans not formally recognized as tribal members. Latinas/os—who are linking contemporary legal strategies on immigration, language, citizenship, and political participation with rights to self-determination and land stemming from the treaty that ended the U.S.-Mexico War of 1847—could also find their rights at risk. *Rice* signifies that the conservative retreat from justice continues for people of color, women, gays and lesbians, and the disabled.

A Battle Over Land

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs is a Native Hawaiian-controlled entity that, among other things, administers the so-called "ceded lands." These

lands were Native Hawaiian government and royal lands seized by the U.S. upon its annexation of Hawai'i. They comprise almost two million acres—about one-third of the entire lands of Hawai'i. When Hawai'i became a state in 1959, the U.S. turned over most of the ceded lands to the state to be held in trust partially for the benefit of Native Hawaiians.

For years, the state failed to uphold this trust responsibility. Indeed, Hawai'i's voters' approval of the 1978 constitutional amendment to create OHA and its Native Hawaiians-only voting structure came partly as a response to the state's mismanagement of the trust. Today OHA controls more than half a billion dollars in assets from the ceded lands, oversees the state's use of ceded lands, and spends millions annually on programs addressing the social, economic, and cultural needs of *Kanaka Maoli*.

As the constitutionally designated "receptacle" for government reparations payments, OHA is seen by some *Kanaka Maoli* as a transitional entity toward sovereignty. Currently, the

state is negotiating with OHA to transfer actual title to some land and to pay it over \$300 million as reparations and legal settlement for the state's past malfeasance.

Civil Rights Short-Circuit Sovereignty

Freddy Rice claimed that OHA's Native Hawaiians-only voting limitation constituted illegal racial discrimination against non-Natives and violated the 14th (equal protection) and 15th (voting) Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

The State of Hawai'i, OHA, virtually every major Native Hawaiian organization, and the U.S. government countered that the voting limitation was not a racial restriction in the traditional sense. Rather, they argued, it was an allowable limitation resulting from the U.S.'s recognition of its political relationship with its indigenous peoples, and the federal and state governments' history of affording them special protections.

Eric Yamamoto and Chris Iijima teach at the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa.

The lower federal courts flatly rejected Rice's arguments and upheld OHA's voting limitation. They found, in effect, that Native Hawaiians, like Native Americans, should be allowed to hold elections restricted to Native Hawaiians as a form of limited self-governance. But the U.S. Supreme Court reversed course. A majority of seven justices held that the "race neutrality command of the Fifteenth Amendment" prevents a state from abridging "the right to vote on account of race, and [the OHA voting restriction] does so."

The *Rice* decision is perhaps the first time that the 15th Amendment has ever been invoked to protect the rights of a white male. Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for the majority, pronounced that the voting

for indigenous peoples, and numerous federal statutes which specifically describe Native Hawaiians as an indigenous people, concluding that OHA was not a "quasi-sovereign" entity and therefore not entitled to restricted voting.

In their dissent, Justices Stevens and Ginsburg excoriated the majority for its historically blind decision. "The Court's holding today rests largely on the repetition of glittering generalities that have little, if any, application to the compelling history of the State of Hawai'i," they wrote. "When that history is held up against the manifest purpose of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and against two centuries of this Court's federal Indian law, it is clear that Hawai'i's election scheme should be upheld."

But the Court majority in *Rice* appropriated the rhetoric of civil rights to sabotage the justice claims of subordinated Native Hawaiians. Claiming "reverse racism," conservatives successfully attacked affirmative action for people of color on

The decision characterized 19th century missionaries not as foreign cultural intruders, but as civilizers who "sought to teach Hawaiians to abandon religious beliefs and customs that were contrary to Christian teaching."

limitation "demeans a person's dignity and worth [because it] judged by ancestry instead of by his or her own merit and essential qualities."

Native, but not Sovereign

The Kennedy majority turned a blind eye to history. Ignoring OHA's reparatory purpose and ongoing federal efforts to rectify the illegal overthrow of the Native Hawaiian government, the opinion treated OHA's voting limitation as racial discrimination against non-Native Hawaiians. It ignored legal precedent allowing voting limitations

the continental U.S., and now with the *Rice* decision, they have succeeded in attacking a Native people's movement toward political sovereignty.

At Stake: Collective Memory

What lay at the core of the Court's decision was a battle of conflicting histories. Indeed, justice struggles through claims of right are, first and foremost, struggles over collective memory. How a community frames past events and connects them to current conditions often determines the power of justice claims—or opposition to them. Is OHA simply about conferring racial privileges, tilting an otherwise level U.S. playing field in favor of Native Hawaiians? Or is OHA part of concerted, long-term state and federal efforts to rectify the ravages of U.S. colonialism in which race, economics, and politics played major roles?

The Court's decision grossly distorted the history of Hawai'i. Nowhere did it mention U.S.

colonialism in 1898, in Hawai'i or in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Nor did the Court acknowledge the destruction of Native Hawaiian culture through the banning of Hawaiian language, or the current effects of Native Hawaiian homelands dispossession: high rates of poverty, homelessness, and incarceration; and poor health and education indicators for *Kanaka Maoli*. The Court never specifically referred to whites, even though Rice's claim was implicitly one of "reverse discrimination" against whites. And nowhere did the Court discuss the vibrant Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement that gave birth to OHA.

Perhaps most astonishing was the Court's dismissive treatment of two hugely significant facts. First, there was little mention of the extraordinary U.S. Congressional Apology Resolution of 1993, in which the U.S. government acknowledged its complicity in the illegal overthrow of the Native Hawaiian government in 1893 and committed the U.S. to future acts of reconciliation. Second, the decision failed to mention that OHA and its voting limitation were created by an overwhelming vote of Hawai'i's multiracial populace.

As Justices Stevens and Ginsburg observed in dissent, "It is a painful irony indeed to conclude that Native Hawaiian people are not entitled to special benefits designed to restore a measure of native self-governance because they currently lack any vestigial native government—a possibility of which history and the actions of this Nation have deprived them."

Same Old Colonizer's Story

So what collective story did the majority tell in their decision? Relying selectively on decades-old historical works written by non-Native Hawaiians long before the contemporary Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement, the Court invoked the familiar tale of how the white man "civilized" the Native savage.

The Court described, in patronizing and stereotypic language, how the Native Hawaiian people found "beauty and pleasure in their island existence." But life was not "idyllic"; Hawai'i was rife with internecine warfare and its kings "could order the death or sacrifice of any subject." Moreover, Hawaiians were "polytheistic."

The decision characterized 19th century missionaries not as foreign cultural intruders, but as civilizers who "sought to teach Hawaiians to abandon religious beliefs and customs that were contrary to Christian teaching." The Court described the often hostile and greedy Western encroachment as a benign "story of increasing involvement of westerners in the political and economic affairs of the Kingdom."

The Court referred to "tensions" between an "anti-Western, pro-Native bloc" and "Western business interests and property owners." Then, turning historical events upside-down, the majority intimated that the overthrow was justified by Queen Lili'uokalani's undemocratic actions. Her attempt to restore "monarchical control and [limit] the franchise to Hawaiian subjects" compelled "pro-democracy Americans" to seize control. In fact, Lili'uokalani was reacting to the white American businessmen's imposition of a "bayonet constitution" in 1887, in which Native voters were largely disenfranchised by property voting requirements, while white voters and foreigners achieved grossly disproportionate political power.

Eliminating Race to Claim Reverse Racism

The Court alluded to the "Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino" migrations to Hawai'i, and how these immigrants faced, and overcame, discrimination. The implicit message is clear: These immigrants picked themselves up by their bootstraps, why haven't the Native Hawaiians?

This argument ignores the crucial differences between people made American involuntarily through colonization and those who chose U.S. citizenship via immigration. But there is also a latent, perhaps more troubling, message that emerges from this discussion: Why, when naming Hawai'i's "immigrants," did the Court cite communities of color but omit white Americans? Is it because the Court did not see white missionaries and businessmen as foreign settlers but rather as the natural heirs of Hawai'i? In fact, the Court made no mention of the long history of white racism in Hawai'i.

What emerges from the Court's historical account is a simple story of "reverse racial discrimination" against Freddy Rice. In this view, Hawaiians had a rough go of it, as did immigrant groups, but the playing field now is pretty much leveled. U.S. colonization supposedly left no scars; therefore "privileges" for Native Hawaiians are not only undemocratic, they are illegal.

This, of course, is not the story Native Hawaiians tell. As they tell it, Native Hawaiians, through entities like OHA, are not seeking privileges or handouts. Nor are they seeking racial preferences. Rather they are asserting international human rights: not simply the right to equality, but the right to self-determination; not a right to monetary entitlements, but to reparations; not a right to "special treatment," but to reconnect spiritually with their land and culture; not a right to participate in the U.S. polity, but a right to some form of governmental sovereignty.

If Rice and his national political supporters succeed in legally dismantling Native programs, all of us will suffer huge practical and psychic costs. The U.S. professes fealty to both domestic civil rights and international human rights. It expresses a commitment to justice and, where injustice occurs, reparation.

But the *Rice* decision distorts civil rights, twisting a history of white racial colonization and privilege into present-day "equality" for Freddy Rice. It subverts the international human rights principles of self-determination and cultural development by invalidating democratically adopted multiracial commitments to Native Hawaiian self-governance. Most important, by selectively misreading history to frame its decision, the Supreme Court undermines the principle of justice through reparation and perpetuates the American racial myth that all is well as long as those in power say so. ©

The Soul of Soulless Conditions

Dalits in Contemporary India

by Vijay Prashad

On a warm summer day, Ram Pyari sat with me on a grassy patch outside Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. A sanitation worker in the airport, she spoke to me of her predicament in tones familiar to working-class people the world over. "Without poor people, how would rich people become rich? Poor people make them rich, and as they get rich and powerful, they suck our blood." Those who sat with us murmured their assent, and one spoke of how their supervisor was building a new house with money earned from bossing the workers around.

But Ram Pyari is not just any worker. She is a *Dalit*, a member of a community oppressed by those who claim to be of higher castes. One-sixth of India's population are *Dalits*. These 160 million people are divided into numerous communities with distinct cultures and histories, but they are bound together by a common history of oppression—and a common present of struggle.

Dalit literally translates to "broken people," where "broken" means oppressed. Since the 1970s, radical *Dalits* have claimed the word for their communities and their liberation struggle. Dominant castes used to call them "Untouchables" (*achhut*), Gandhian liberals call them "children

of god" (*Harijans*), and the Indian Republic calls them "Scheduled Castes" (because they are on a government schedule that entitles them to certain protections and affirmative actions).

Most *Dalits* are like Ram Pyari: poor folk who work in the fields, factories, streets, shops, and public buildings—wherever labor is in demand.

Unlike people of color in the U.S. or blacks in South Africa, *Dalits* are not physically distinguishable from other Indians. In some regions, they can sometimes be identified by occupation, surname, or dress, but *Dalits* are usually hard to pick out. The experience of *Dalits* shows that apartheid-like conditions can be imposed upon people who are marked by history, not appearance.

India's powerful independence movement (1885-1947) produced perhaps the world's most extensive system of affirmative action for oppressed peoples like the *Dalits*. And, since the 1970s, *Dalits* like Ram Pyari have organized to use these assets to overturn the caste system, organize for power, and fight for their rights.

Yet *Dalits* still face an uphill struggle against starkly unequal conditions. The election slogan of the Bahujan Samaj Party (a *Dalit*-dominated political group) in 1994 is still apt: "Vote hamara, raj tumhara. Nahin chalega, nahin chalega." ("We vote, you govern. This won't go on, this won't go on.")

Apartheid by Any Name

The Portuguese first coined the term "caste" to describe the complex social organization they found when they first landed on India's southwestern coast in 1498. But there was never just one simple caste hierarchy in India. Even today there are some 4,635 ethnic communities, many with distinct land bases and systems of hierarchy. Hindi is the national language and English is the official language, but over 1,000 languages and dialects are spoken in India.

What the Portuguese called caste was probably a social form called *jati* (community). The Europeans saw *jati* as rigid and oppressive, perhaps forgetting their own rigid feudal social order. *Jati* hierarchies emerged from the ancient world in various forms:

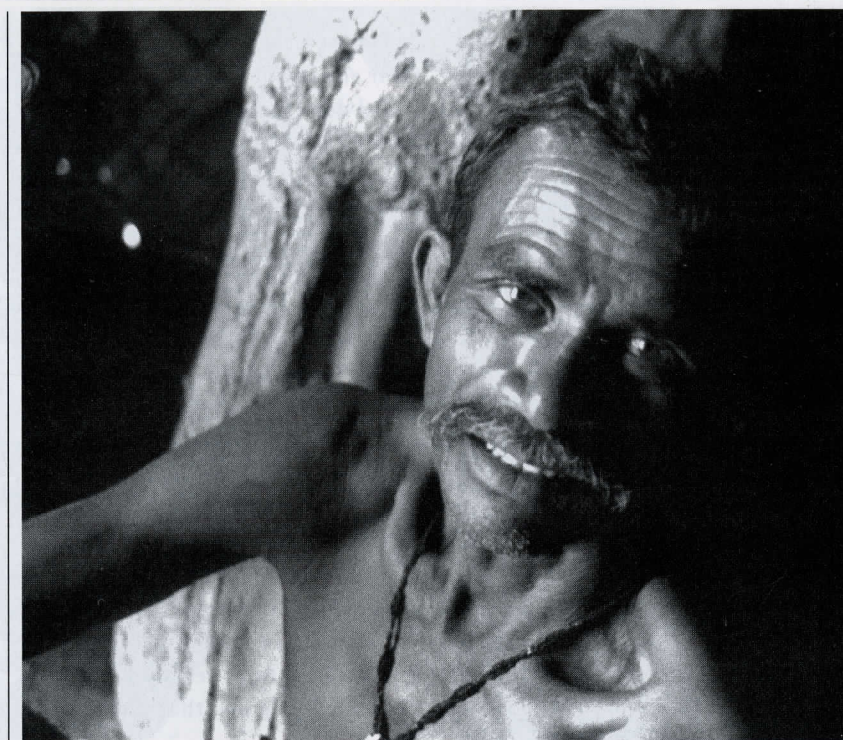


Photo by Amitava Kumar

Previous

A Dalit peasant in Bihar, India

Right

A Dalit funeral meeting in Bihar

and expropriating many *Dalits* from their already meager landholdings.

The dominant *jati* took brutal advantage of British policy. Untouchability was only the most famous of the outlandish customs of their rule. The *Dalits* could touch all manner of dominant *jati* things, as part of providing labor. Otherwise, these *jati* regarded their touch as a form of social pollution. Similarly, elite men commonly forced sex upon *Dalit* women, but otherwise disdained contact with them.

A History of Resistance

Just as Frederick Douglass reminded the world that "power concedes nothing without a demand," Jyotibai Phule (1826-1890) declared that "we know perfectly well that the Brahmin

With the ejection of the British in 1947, the Indian Republic forged an extraordinary Constitution (1950) which immediately made many anti-*Dalit* prohibitions illegal. These were heady days, as anticolonial movements from Indonesia to Ghana took state power and sought to make freedom something tangible to the masses.

The first Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, recruited Ambedkar to become the country's law minister. The new Constitution abolished untouchability, promoted the educational and economic interests of the *Dalits*, opened all public spaces to *Dalits*, and created institutions to monitor their welfare.

To atone for past oppression, the government also accepted the right of *Dalits* to "compensatory discrimination" and reserved state jobs and educational admissions for *Dalits*. Today, over one-seventh of all government jobs are reserved for *Dalits*. When Martin Luther King, Jr. traveled to India in 1959, he was stunned by the state's mone-

"We know perfectly well that the Brahmin will not descend from his self-raised pedestal and meet his low-caste brethren on an equal footing without a struggle."

will not descend from his self-raised pedestal and meet his low-caste brethren on an equal footing without a struggle." In the 1800s, Phule helped to inspire hundreds of *Dalit* peasant revolts against the yoke of British colonialism, local landlords, and moneylenders.

But, divided by language, custom, and faith traditions, it was not until the 1930s, when M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948) brought the struggles of *Dalits* to the center of the Indian independence movement, that *Dalit* leaders emerged to turn their common oppression into a political alliance. One of the most prominent *Dalit* leaders was B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), who argued that: "The problem of the Untouchables is fundamentally a political problem [of minority versus majority groups]" founded on control over land and capital.

tary and legal commitment to *Dalit* emancipation. Asked if affirmative action for *Dalits* discriminated against other *jati*, Nehru replied, "Well it may be, but this is our way of atoning for the centuries of injustices we have inflicted upon these people."

This affirmative action has not gone unchallenged. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the rightwing and dominant *jati* violently turned on the *Dalits* in a series of riots. They promoted myths of the "Harijan elite" and of the "poor Brahman boy," just as stories of "reverse discrimination" by blacks against whites were popularized in the late 1970s by the anti-affirmative action *Bakke* case at the University of California, Davis. However, unlike supporters of affirmative action in the U.S., the *Dalits* and their allies have successfully repelled these attacks.

Far from Free

Anti-discrimination laws, marginal land reform, and affirmative action have produced a small elite amongst the *Dalits*, but the great majority still face wretched conditions. Barely 22 percent are



Photo by Amitava Kumar

literate. Fifty percent live in poverty, compared with 30 percent for the population as a whole.

The oppression of the *Dalits* continues because the dominant *jati* still control most of India's land, capital, and political power. Most of the affirmative action jobs reserved for *Dalits* are low-skilled, low-paying jobs that do nothing to move *Dalits* up the economic ladder. Moreover, affirmative action is restricted to government jobs, so the much larger private sector remains free to discriminate against *Dalits*. In fact, dominant *jati* have stiffened their defense of privilege in response to these programs, which they see as unfair and undeserved.

A crucial factor in the continuing oppression faced by *Dalits* is that only 16 percent live in cities. Most of those who work in the countryside are marginal farmers or sharecroppers whose exploitation by dominant *jati* landlords is reminiscent of the history of black sharecroppers in the U.S. Upon winning independence in 1947, the Indian government promised to redistribute the vast landholdings of the upper castes, but most political parties have been unwilling to confront the immense power of the landlords.

Nevertheless, over the past two decades, radical *Dalits*, backed by agrarian unions, the Left, and rural liberals, have won some concessions. In West Bengal, where the Communist Party (Marxist) has led the government since 1977, "Operation Barga" has legally recorded the tenancy of over a million

sharecroppers (*bargadars*), ensured that they are paid the equivalent of three-quarters of their crop by the landlords, and distributed some land to the *Dalits*. Elsewhere, *Dalits* find tenant rights hard to come by and land ownership is rare.

More than a President

The current president of India, K. R. Narayan, hails from a *Dalit* family. Although the presidency is a largely ceremonial post, its occupation by a *Dalit* bears immense symbolic value. But it does little to change the oppressive social structure. The fight for social change is ongoing by militant *Dalit* groups, Communists, liberal organizations, and the resistance of unorganized *Dalits*.

Many *Dalit* organizations have emerged since the 1970s, including the *Dalit* Panthers (inspired by the Black Panther Party in the U.S.), the Republican Party of India, and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). But many have foundered on the rocks of opportunism or extreme nationalism. For example, the BSP made an alliance with the anti-*Dalit* dominant caste Bharatiya Janata Party in 1997,

and the Panthers now resort to violence against other left groups.

Divisions of class and regional culture make it difficult for *Dalits* to come together. In the province of Orissa alone there are 91 *Dalit* communities, and in Karnataka there are 100. Many villages have multiple *Dalit* communities, who may see commonality amongst each other, but also may experience mutual antipathy.

By all accounts, the struggles of the *Dalits* have increased anti-*Dalit* violence. In 1996, the *Dalits* of Melavalavu won control of the local governmental body. Local goons killed six of the leaders as they tried to take office. The *Dalit* elected to lead the local government was beheaded.

Still, voting patterns in the 1990s indicate that *Dalits* have started to more enthusiastically exercise their franchise. By contrast, the voting percentages in middle-class and elite regions are down, perhaps because they are so confident that the government will always act in their interests. A *Dalit* and broader working-class upsurge may yet change this smug sense of entitlement. ©

Changing the Rules

What Public Policy Means for Organizing

by Makani Themba-Nixon



“This is all about policy,” a woman complained to me in a recent conversation. “I’m an organizer.”

The flourish and passion with which she made the distinction said everything. Policy is for wonks, sell-out politicians, and ivory-tower eggheads. Organizing is what real, grassroots people do. Common as it may be, this distinction doesn’t bear out in the real world.

Policy is more than law. It is any written agreement (formal or informal) that specifies how an institution, governing body, or community will address shared problems or attain shared goals. It spells out the terms and the consequences of these agreements and is the codification of the body’s values—as represented by those present in the policymaking process. Given who’s usually present, most policies reflect the political agenda of powerful elites. Yet, policy can be a force for change—especially when we bring our base and community organizing into the process.

In essence, policies are the codification of power relationships and resource allocation. Policies are the rules of the world we live in. Changing the world means changing the rules. So, if organizing is about changing the rules and building power, how can organizing be separated from policies? Can we really speak truth to power, fight the right, stop corporate abuses, or win racial justice without contesting the rules and the rulers, the policies and the policymakers?

The answer is no—and double no for people of color. Today, racism subtly dominates nearly every aspect of policymaking. From ballot propositions to city funding priorities, policy is increasingly about the control, de-funding, and disfranchisement of communities of color.

What Do We Stand For?

Take the public conversation about welfare reform, for example. Most of us know it isn’t really about putting people to work. The right’s message was framed around racial stereotypes of lazy, cheating “welfare queens” whose poverty was “cultural.” But the new welfare policy was about moving billions of dollars in individual cash payments and direct services from welfare recipients to other, more powerful, social actors.

Many of us were too busy to tune into the welfare policy drama in Washington, only to find it washed up right on our doorsteps. Our members are suffering from workfare policies, new regulations, and cutoffs. Families who were barely getting by under the old rules are being pushed over the edge by the

new policies. Policy doesn’t get more relevant than this. And so we got involved in policy—as defense.

Yet we have to do more than block their punches. We have to start the fight with initiatives of our own. Those who do are finding offense a bit more fun than defense alone. Living wage ordinances, youth development initiatives, even gun control and alcohol and tobacco policies are finding their way onto the public agenda, thanks to focused community organizing that leverages power for community-driven initiatives.

* Over 600 local policies have been passed to regulate the tobacco industry. Local coalitions have taken the lead by writing ordinances that address local problems and organizing broad support for them.

* Nearly 100 gun control and violence prevention policies have been enacted since 1991.

* Milwaukee, Boston, and Oakland are among the cities that have passed living wage ordinances: local laws that guarantee higher than minimum wages for workers, usually set as the minimum needed to keep a family of four above poverty.

Photo by Jerome Friar, Impact Visuals ©1995

These are just a few of the examples that demonstrate how organizing for local policy advocacy has made inroads in areas where positive national policy had been stalled by conservatives. Increasingly, the local policy arena is where the action is and where activists are finding success. Of course, corporate interests—which are usually the target of these policies—are gearing up in defense. Tactics include front groups, economic pressure, and the tried and true: cold, hard cash.

Despite these barriers, grassroots organizing can be very effective at the smaller scale of local politics. At the local level, we have greater access to elected officials and officials have a greater reliance on their constituents for reelection. For example, getting 400 people to show up at city hall in just about any city in the U.S. is quite impressive. On the other hand, 400 people at the state house or the Congress would have a less

significant impact. Add to that the fact that all 400 people at city hall are usually constituents, and the impact is even greater.

Recent trends in government underscore the importance of local policy. Congress has enacted a series of measures devolving significant power to state and local government. Welfare, health care, and the regulation of food and drinking water safety are among the areas where states and localities now have greater rule.

Devolution has some negative consequences to be sure. History has taught us that, for social services and civil rights in particular, the lack of clear federal standards and mechanisms for accountability lead to uneven enforcement and even discriminatory implementation of policies. Still, there are real opportunities for advancing progressive initiatives in this more localized environment. Greater local control

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can mean greater community power to shape and implement important social policies that were heretofore out of reach. To do so will require careful attention to the mechanics of local policymaking and a clear blueprint of what we stand for.

Getting It in Writing

Much of the work of framing what we stand for takes place in the shaping of demands. By getting into the policy arena in a proactive manner, we can take our demands to the next level. Our demands can become law, with real consequences if the agreement is broken. After all the organizing, press work, and effort, a group should leave a decisionmaker with more than a handshake and his or her word. Of course, this work requires a certain amount of interaction with “the suits,” as well as struggles with the bureaucracy, the technical language, and the all-too-common resistance by decisionmakers. Still, if it’s worth demanding, it’s worth having in writing—whether as law,

If it’s worth demanding, it’s worth having in writing—whether as law, regulation, or internal policy

regulation, or internal policy.

From ballot initiatives on rent control to laws requiring worker protections, organizers are leveraging their power into written policies that are making a real difference in their communities. Of course, policy work is just one tool in our organizing arsenal, but it is a tool we simply can’t afford to ignore.

Making policy work an integral part of organizing will require a certain amount of retrofitting. We will need to develop the capacity to translate our information, data, and experience into stories that are designed to affect the public conversation. Perhaps most important, we will need to move beyond fighting problems and on to framing solutions that bring us closer to our vision of how things should be. And then we must be committed to making it so. ☺

Steve Williams is the executive director of People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER) in San Francisco. POWER is a membership organization led by low- and no-wage workers that fights for full employment and living wages.

Jerome Scott was a founding member of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers in Detroit in the late 1960s. He has been an organizer in the South for the last 20 years. He is the director of Atlanta's Project South, a leadership development, popular education, and research organization that partners with groups throughout the South.

Jane Sung-ee Bai is executive director of CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, also known as the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, which organizes with low income Asian immigrant communities in New York City. Jane is also a leader in People's Justice 2000, a multiracial, group that is at the forefront of the fight against police brutality in New York.

*Francis Calpotura and Bob Wing
incite a set of **kick-ass**
organizers to speak their minds
on race and organizing.*

THE VIEW FROM THE GROUND ORGANIZERS SPEAK OUT ON RACE

At ground zero of today's racial and class conflicts stands a staunch and determined band of racial justice organizers who are organizing with low-income communities of color. Because they deal daily with the people who bear the brunt of racism, they are in a unique position to understand its workings and impacts. Their experiences tell the tale of how race not only matters, but matters centrally in shaping people's lives.

Racial justice organizers spend their lives trying to figure out how to work with their constituents and allies to attack racism most effectively. Their confrontation with racism, and the struggle against it, is absolutely practical. For them, theory is truly a guide to action rooted in concrete experience, and action constantly calls for deepening theory.

This is why we've asked a panel of kick-ass, cutting-edge, anti-racist organizers to reflect on the lessons they have learned at the intersection of race and organizing in our time. We've asked them how they navigate these dangerous political waters and assertively develop strategies to advance racial justice. In response, they address some of the most provocative issues facing organizers today: the impact of globalization,

the limits of multiculturalism, how differences between various racial and ethnic groups shape organizing in different communities and building unity, the difference between "equity" and "justice," the limitations of focusing on immediate victories, the importance of political education, and many others.

The participants are: Jane Bai out of New York City's Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence—Organizing Asian Communities (CAAACV); Jeanne Gauna of the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP) in Albuquerque; Maria Jiménez of the American Friends Service Committee's Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project (ILEMP) in Houston; Janet Robideau of Indian People's Action (IPA) in Missoula, Montana; Anthony Thigpenn of Los Angeles' Environment and Economic Justice Project and AGENDA; Jerome Scott of Project South in Atlanta; and Steve Williams of San Francisco's People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER).

These organizers are diverse in personal profile, organizing style, constituencies, and geographical location. But all are at the epicenter of racial justice activities that not only bring their communities together but also articulate, for people within their organizations and for those outside, an understanding of what's going on in a racialized social and economic order and what needs to be done to turn it around.

Francis Calpotura was co-director of the Center for Third World Organizing for the past ten years. Bob Wing is editor of *ColorLines*.

How does your organizing work deal with race and racism?

Janet: The work of Indian People's Action (IPA) focuses on institutional racism in education, employment, and law enforcement, and how these systems affect the lives of urban Indians in Montana. For example, we're fighting with the school district to address the high suspension and drop-out rates for Indian students. We're demanding that they address why, out of 750 certified teachers in the Missoula school district, there are only three Native American teachers and seven teachers of color, total. Race plays a big part in how our kids get treated, what they're taught, and who gets to teach them.

Jane: The work of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence centers around race and how it plays out in Asian and Pacific Islander communities in New York City. Specifically, we deal with how state violence issues like police brutality and Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) enforcement are connected to the prison industrial complex and how they affect Asian communities and other communities of color.

Anthony: AGENDA is trying to do a couple of things in our organizing work in communities of color in the

Metropolitan Los Angeles area. One is to work on a large enough scale so that we have the power to really make a difference on issues facing our communities. The other is to develop models for advancing political consciousness that move people beyond their immediate community self-interest to becoming social change activists pushing for a different vision of society.

Jeanne: The environmental justice (EJ) movement is a direct response to the fact that people of color are being routinely poisoned, and that we are not being protected by the agencies that are supposed to protect us: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), local governments, the health department, you name it. SWOP coined the term "environmental racism" to spotlight this reality because no one, including the mainstream environmental organizations, was doing anything about it. In fact, sometimes these organizations were contributing to environmental racism. So the EJ movement put everyone on notice that this couldn't go on. Early on, we decided that the movement would be defined by the people most affected by these policies, and that people would speak for themselves. These became the central principles of the EJ movement.

Steve: POWER organizes with low- and no-wage workers who

Jeanne Gauna is co-director of the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP), a statewide, multi-issue, membership organization based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. SWOP was a founding member of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ).



have a non-traditional relationship to the work force. Our first campaign has been with welfare workers who are forced to do some form of work in exchange for a welfare check. I think our particular contribution to this area of organizing has been to develop real political education among welfare workers so that they understand that this is not just a fight for equal pay for equal work, but that it takes place in the context of international capital, white supremacy, and patriarchy. When you see the attacks on people of color around the globe, it sharpens the focus in understanding what is taking place in communities of color here in the United States—a Third World workforce forced to work in hyper-exploited conditions.

What are some of the key lessons from your organizing work that could help others deal with and understand race?

Jerome: At Project South, we believe that white supremacy is still the leading edge of oppression in this country. We also believe that you can't just concentrate on white supremacy without bringing up issues of class as well. But having said that, when we look at organizing

efforts in the South, there are folks who *just* want to deal with economic issues—increase wages and that sort of stuff. They ignore the racism and white supremacy that is the very foundation of the wage issues. We have to look at issues of class in relationship to white supremacy, or else we're missing the boat.

Maria: Proposition 187 in California, which got replicated around the country, is the most recent watershed event in terms of immigrants and native-born Latinos responding to racism. It wasn't so much the proposition, but what it signified: the institutionalization of racist attitudes against all undocumented immigrants masked as public policy by government entities and politicians. Latinos' resistance to another generation of our people being subjected to these attacks sparked activity and organization in Latino communities across the country: the huge march in Washington, D.C., organizing drywall workers in Los Angeles, the effort of hundreds of thousands of people to become naturalized citizens, and getting out to vote. This has changed the landscape in anti-racist organizing for immigrants.

Anthony: At AGENDA, we think that self-organization of a particular ethnicity or racial community can often

“RIGHT NOW IS THE CALM BEFORE ANOTHER MAJOR STORM.”

be a legitimate form because the cultures and/or conditions of a particular community warrant that. But I think these efforts have to be placed in a broader context. We cannot limit ourselves to organizing just one group of people, because our vision of society

is broader than that. And, if we're trying to organize on a large scale to gain real power, I don't believe there's any one ethnicity that can do it by themselves. Alliances have to be built between different communities and we need to create multicultural organizations and multiracial movements.

Jane: CAAAV understands that different communities are segregated, policed, repressed, and exploited in different ways. For example, when we talk about policing in an Asian immigrant community, we don't just go out there and say, “Hey, it happens to us, too, and here are all the people who have been brutalized by the police in our communities.” Each Asian immigrant community experiences state violence in different ways. Violence against the Cambodian community in the Bronx is different from violence in the largely undocumented Fukienese community that lives in Chinatown. The harassment of Cambodian youth by the New York City Police Department is a different experience than INS raids in Chinatown, even though both are acts of state repression. Therefore, organizing in each community needs to be different.

Janet: IPA uses the school district's own numbers to show how institutional racism works; that it's not the individual prejudice of a teacher, or a principal, even the superintendent. It's the system that produces higher suspension rates for Indian students; it's the district's policies that discriminate against our children and reinforce individual prejudice.

Do you see any negative trends in how organizations deal with issues of race and organizing?

Jeanne: One of the key tensions that has existed in the EJ movement from the start has been between those who were calling for “equity” and those of us who demanded “justice.” Earlier, it was the national white environmental organizations who were pushing for “environmental equity.” Nowadays, mainstream national organizations of color—like the Hispanic Environmental Network, which goes around and gets major corporate sponsors—are using that language. The term “equity” was a government creation pushed onto the EJ movement by the Environmental Protection Agency. SWOP doesn't want “equal opportunity pollution.” We want to reshape the whole table. We want a fundamental reordering of our priorities and commitments, and that starts with corporate and government accountability to the community. We want justice. There are those of

us who use race as a driving force to change society, and there are those in our own communities who use it to drive opportunities for themselves. And then they wonder why they're being shunned by the movement.

Maria: Some people think that bringing multiple cultures together in the name of diversity means that there's anti-racist organizing going on. I think it is important for various cultures to interact and engage in political projects together because these become laboratories for breaking down barriers and finding strategic unity. But I think the more difficult task of “political integration” is to identify what it is about the current historical political moment that creates the need for immigrants from Mexico and Central America to get together with Nigerians and Indians to overcome this country's racist immigration policies. ILEMP believes that the very presence of immigrants is the most concrete manifestation of the global integration of communities, and race plays a huge part in global development. The disparate experiences of immigrant and refugee communities must be integrated to craft a long-term strategy based on this analysis. Just pushing “multiculturalism” without political content is not helpful.

Janet: People want to use pretty words like “diversity” and “multicultural awareness” instead of calling it what it is. At IPA, we know it is institutional racism. It's like we're all in the same room, and there's this huge pink elephant in the middle of the room. That pink elephant is racism. But nobody wants to look at it; people walk around it; they don't want to see it. But we can't begin to move forward until we name it and get other folks to actually see it. Until we can do that, we can't really change anything, we can't get the pink elephant out of the room. People are too busy running around proclaiming, “I am not a racist.” Either they get over their blindness and see the pink elephant, or they'll get run over in a stampede they don't see coming.

Jerome: When people talk about multiculturalism in the South, they are basically talking about black and white: the growing Latino population is left out. Another thing that gets glossed over in our language and practice is the difference between “white supremacy” and “racism.” When people say “racism,” it conjures up people's attitudes, or that white people have a bad attitude about people of color, or that people of color have a bad attitude about white folks, or each other. But the real deal, I think, is “white supremacy,” because it's an institutionalized thing with long historical roots that goes beyond individual bad attitudes and shapes the development of the policies and cultures of institutions. The term “white supremacy” indicates more of a structural phenomenon than “racism.”

Jane: When people are fighting for jobs, they are really talking about jobs for the “enfranchised”—people who

Maria Jiménez is director of the American Friends Service Committee's Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project (ILEMP). Based in Houston, ILEMP coordinates the work of organizations throughout the Southwest that document immigration abuses and help border area residents exercise their rights.



either are citizens or are documented. CAAAV believes that race is centrally embedded in the whole construct of citizenship and all the systems that emanate from it—public services, jobs, opportunities. When we're fighting for jobs or better housing, we want to reframe the issue—whose interests are being served by these demarcations and incredible enforcement structures that delineate citizens from non-citizens?

What are the key challenges and opportunities in advancing racial justice in the coming period?

Maria: I think the basic challenge actually lies within the progressive movement itself. As a longtime organizer, I've observed this perception that immigrants can't form their own organizations, can't lead their organizations, can't speak for themselves, can't build organizations with enough power to make a real difference. An immigrant rights organization like ILEMP will not look and feel like a traditional community organization, and therefore will not act like one. It combines services with national advocacy, and its grassroots organizing practice is influenced by experiences from its members' countries of origin. Most immigrant

rights activities are concentrated in major urban centers and the border region. Immigrant communities blend domestic and homeland issues, and make the experience of globalization painfully real. To meet these challenges, one of the key areas of concentration is developing an infrastructure for a new, emerging leadership in immigrant communities.

Steve: People on welfare are all poor and are overwhelmingly women of color. What has been important for POWER in organizing with them is to pinpoint the intersections of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. The fight is not simply one for racial justice, but also for economic justice and for gender justice. One of the major trends is to try to focus on one particular lens of oppression as opposed to the complexity of the intersections. Some may attempt to deal with racial justice to the exclusion of dealing with the broader system of capitalism, or vice versa. Neither approach advances our work significantly. The other tendency is to focus exclusively on tactical skills development, because doing analysis is just too complicated or even unnecessary. This approach assumes that the system we currently have is an acceptable system, and all we need to do is to tweak or modify it in some way so that welfare workers receive a slightly higher wage. That approach really gets us nowhere.

Jerome: Project South believes that one of the main challenges in the next period is how well we as a movement promote the leadership of low-income people. Central to that leadership development is a systematic education process about how white supremacy functions as the leading oppressive tool in this country. The key is to organize with low-income people, to develop them as leaders in the process, and to develop education around the centrality of white supremacy. If you're fighting for leadership by low-income people in this country, and you're fighting side-by-side with those people, then you are doing some serious anti-racist, anti-white-supremacist work.

Jane: The next challenge CAAAV faces is to link issues of citizenship, immigration, and immigrants of color with the African American community by showing how INS detention and enforcement policies are linked to the prison industrial complex. This project challenges us to deepen our understanding of the way that race operates. Dealing with racism is much more complicated than just saying that the black and Latino communities are disproportionately incarcerated in the prison system, and that immigrants are in the INS detention system. One point of commonality is an economic one, another is the strategies and tactics employed by both types of incarcerated populations. CAAAV is trying to get into that nexus.

Jeanne: We need to develop our own institutions, strengthen

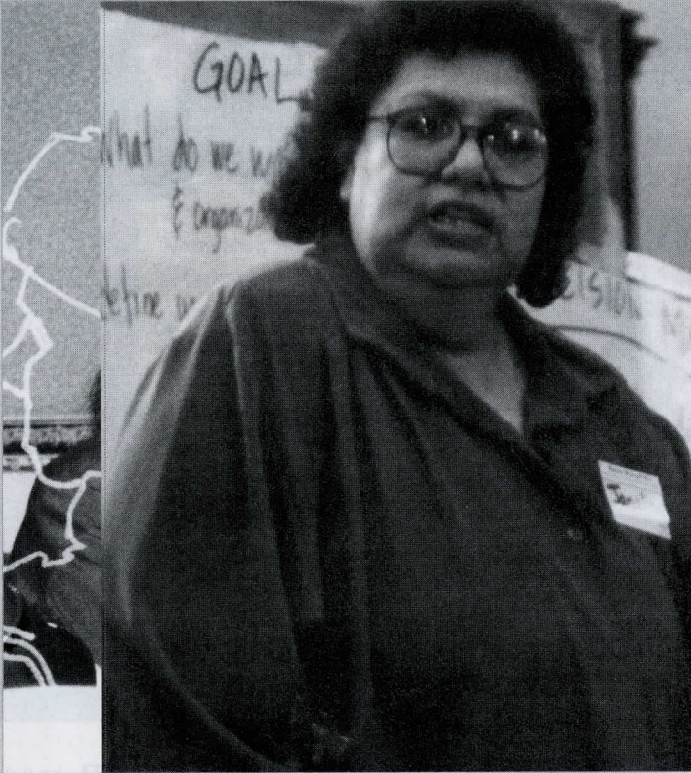
Anthony Thigpen has been active since he joined the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party almost 30 years ago. In 1993, he started AGENDA (Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives), a South Los Angeles community organization. He is executive director of the Environment and Economic Justice Project, a national training program for environmental justice organizers.



our organizations, and build an infrastructure to support them. We have to write down our own history, our own training manuals, our own models of doing this work. The EJ movement has set up many regional and racially specific networks in the past 15 years, and there's much we all can learn from that experience. We're having the second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit next year, ten years after the first one, to see what lessons we've learned, and what challenges lie ahead for the movement. Right now is the calm before another major storm.

Janet: People who have been very successful organizing in other communities of color want to use the same type of strategies and tools and tactics in Indian country, but they don't meet the same success. They don't know our culture, and they expect our people to react to similar agitations, exhibit the same interest level in traditional organizing methods, and engage in similar tactics that they see in other communities of color. We don't respond well to cookie-cutter organizing. We adhere to our own cultures and traditions, and our own rhythm of building towards action. For example, we don't focus on the treatment of ourselves; as Indian people, the number one priority has always

Janet Robideau is the statewide coordinator for Indian People's Action, a chapter of Montana People's Action. Started in 1997, IPA organizes urban Indians to fight institutional racism in education, employment, and law enforcement policies in the state of Montana.



been our children. We're the kind of people that say: "Do whatever you want to me, I'll endure. But mess with my child, then I'll have to kick the shit out of you." Our numbers may be small, but that doesn't mean that we can't be powerful.

Anthony: AGENDA believes that one of the biggest obstacles to advancing the practice of community organizing is the traditional fixation on the campaign and the basic organizing premise that you have to win something concrete to motivate and keep people involved. While there is some truth to that, one of the things we're trying to do is not just talk to people about the immediate campaign, or the immediate impact it will have on their family, but also to engage them on broader social and political issues. What is our vision of society? Of community? Our values? Clearly, the development of a more consistent political education program strengthens that engagement. But how do we combine political education with organizing on a large scale? We've done good work, and built a solid membership structure, but we're still organizing on too small of a scale to challenge the power structures in L.A. What would it take to challenge for power in the whole country? ©



Photo by Jane McAlevey

Can labor organizing be transformed into a movement for economic and racial justice? *Daniel HoSang* checks into a remarkable organizing drive.

In the last 12 months, a remarkable string of organizing victories involving thousands of low-wage workers and their families has taken the corporate hub of Stamford, Connecticut by storm. Haitian taxi drivers have joined Jamaican nursing home workers and South American janitors in public actions to challenge the leadership of this New York City suburb. Hundreds of clergy, public housing tenants, union members, and civil rights activists have besieged the Mayor's office to demand action on a broad range of issues.

The effort is being led by the Stamford Organizing Project, an innovative effort sponsored by the national AFL-CIO and including Region 9A of the United Auto Workers (UAW), Justice for Janitors Local 531 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), District 1199-New England, and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 217. The four locals have agreed to an unprecedented coordination of organizing efforts in the workplace and beyond.

In the process, they are challenging the notion that unions should limit themselves to workplace concerns, breaking new ground on how to connect labor and community issues, exploring the relationship between the fight over economic issues with racial justice, and creating what some think actually has the look, feel, and smell of a social movement.

Just two years ago, Stamford was an unchallenged playground of Fortune 500 companies. District 1199 had 20,000 members and a strong track record of dealing with racial issues, but its base was in the northern part of Connecticut. The scanty labor presence in the south proved to be one of the factors that persuaded the AFL-CIO's Organizing Department to select Stamford as one of four regional pilot projects to support collaborative

All the Issues in Workers Lives

Labor Confronts Race in Stamford

Public Housing residents from Oak Park and the senior citizen complex called Stamford Manor—both threatened with demolition—marching with UAW and 1199 members.

organizing by union locals. With so much room to organize, unions could test new ways of working together without the baggage of prior relationships.

According to former AFL-CIO Organizing Department director Kirk Adams, the region's economic and political geography was another factor in Stamford's selection. "It's a classic tale of two cities," says Adams, referring to the vast economic inequities in a city where the median income is \$93,400 per year and houses sell for an average of \$300,000 each. The elected leadership of the 120,000-person city is almost entirely white and overwhelmingly supportive of a pro-business, pro-growth agenda. People of color comprise 25 percent of the population. Project director Jane McAlevey says that "whether it's the public schools or the neighborhoods, the city is resegregating itself in the nineties." The AFL-CIO leadership correctly predicted that these disparities could catalyze a broad-based labor-community alliance against an entrenched corporate elite.

Following lengthy negotiations among the participants, the project began organizing in earnest in late 1998. Within a few months, McAlevey says, "we began to have these small but palpable moments that felt like we were building a legitimate movement."

Daniel HoSang is the new organizing and training director at the Center for Third World Organizing after having spent six years as the executive director of People United for a Better Oakland.

Jobs in the City

The basis of the project's success in organizing workers, explains project training director Myrna Iton, is a nuanced understanding of the relationships workers have to their jobs, communities, and each other, that unions traditionally overlook. "If you do an analysis of the connections between workers in the area, you see definite patterns," she explains. For example, the workers at the dozens of nursing homes in the county are almost entirely Haitian, Jamaican, and African American women. McAlevey says the organizers refer to the area as having a "servants economy—something a little more intense than a service economy." Because Stamford is so segregated occupationally and residentially, these workers tend to live in the same housing developments, go to the same churches, and often work in the same second and third jobs.

Most labor-community alliances are built on the foundation of alliances between existing labor unions and community organizations. But in Stamford, the core of the strategy is to organize the rank-and-file workers themselves to organize both on the job and in their neighborhoods, churches, ethnic organizations, and precincts.

Iton says this means that unions would be foolish to go it alone. "You have to make joint strategic decisions in conjunction with the unions around you."

Iton is one of five project staff paid directly by the AFL-CIO to facilitate this kind of coordination between the unions. On one day she may accompany organizers from District 1199-New England on house visits to meet with nursing home workers. On the next day project staff may move to help a United Auto Workers organizing campaign targeting two taxi companies that have been paying sub-minimum wages to 100 mostly Haitian male drivers. Later in the week, the focus may be on rallying support for SEIU janitors at nearby Fairfield University.

By coordinating their work strategically, a synergy develops that lifts all the unions' efforts. Staff and leaders from every union regularly participate in all of the project's actions and recruit members for all the unions. McAlevey keeps in constant communication with the leadership of the respective unions, persuading and sometimes cajoling them to train their attention on the larger movement for union power rather than retreating to a more narrow issue focus.

Face-to-Face with Race

While organizing nursing home and the taxi workers was a quick success, netting several strong first contracts, the project soon turned its attention to what McAlevey calls "strategic non-workplace" organizing. McAlevey and the project staff challenged the leadership of the local unions to better understand the totality of the issues faced by their members, both inside and outside the workplace. This strategy has brought the project face-to-face with racism, Stamford-style.

An extensive union survey discovered that many members name housing issues to be more important than increased wages and benefits. Lucrecia Barreda Rueckert, a former rank-and-filer who now works for 1199, says, "If the union wins a five percent raise in the nursing home and the workers' rent is raised six percent, it's a defeat."

But the unions also quickly realized that, in segregated Stamford, housing is fraught with racial conflicts. Viola Clark, a resident of Oak Park, a 168-unit cluster of moderate income housing, says the city targeted her development for privatization because "they want to move the black people out of Stamford and take our land." For Clark and her neighbors, many of whom work in service jobs, the \$44,000 annual income needed to afford the typical two-bedroom rental unit in Stamford was literally out of reach.

Marie Pierre, an 1199 rank-and-file leader, was forced out of a city housing development that was privatized and fears that Stamford's elite "wants to get rid of us. As the corporations came, more and more rich people started coming to town. I think they want to take over Stamford and send us all to Bridgeport," where housing costs are roughly one-half of those in Stamford. One 1199 leader even likened Stamford's housing policies to "nothing less than ethnic cleansing" of the black and brown residents of the city.

Iton points out that in much of Stamford's moderate- and low-income housing, up to 75 percent of the residents work in industries represented by the project's unions. "In Oak Park, you go to one door and it's a nursing home worker, the next a janitor, and so on." Project staff and local organizers began organizing among the tenants to block a proposed sale of the development by the city. Union organizers and members became tenants' rights activists almost overnight, mobilizing members to meetings and stopping the privatization plan dead in its tracks.

Speaking Truth, Gaining Power

The unions' ongoing commitment to issues such as housing has propelled them into community alliances, and enabled them to become players in local politics as well. Project staffers like Angelucci Manigat, a Haitian community organizer, assist workers in building long-term relationships with their own pastors and elected officials, effectively aligning them into a broader, more strategic movement for power.

Manigat says that nearly all the Haitian union members attend the same handful of churches. "The workers come home from working two or three jobs and they are like zombies, they are so tired. These issues should be the churches' issues. We organize the workers to sit down with the pastors and talk about the big picture: jobs, housing, education, and political power for working families."

Reverend Winton Hill of the Stamford Bethel AME Church explains, "people have been saying that housing has been a problem for years. But the unions' involvement made a huge difference." Hill is one of two dozen religious leaders who support the demands of their congregations and the community for better housing and decent wages. Iton says, "nearly every time



Photo by Jane McAlevey

Lilly Reed, a District 1199 leader from the city-owned Smith House nursing home, speaking to the crowd about their first contract fight. Her placard demands more affordable housing.

that union members speak publicly about their issues, the clergy are right there, and the clergy now regularly speak to their congregations on union rights and social justice issues." Hill says the new partnership is based on the fact that "labor has moved from a narrow focus to understanding its collaboration with the community in broader terms."

Kate Andrius, an 1199 organizer for two years, says such relationships transform the unions' reputation and elevate their standing in the community. "It's much more difficult for the boss to paint the union as a narrow interest group when pastors and other community leaders are walking in step with our leaders," she says.

The project's organizing in the workplace and around housing has also led them into politics. Three weeks before the November 1999 election, the unions decided to back Chiquita Stephenson, a 28-year-old working-class African American

parent, in a citywide school board contest that pitted her against two white establishment candidates. Stephenson's unexpected victory, following an intense week of door-to-door work by nearly all the project staff and leaders, confirmed the unions' status as a potent political force in the city.

The project has also developed alliances with the state's Speaker of the House and Senate Majority Leader, who recently appointed Jane McAlevey to a blue ribbon housing commission. Last fall, members and their supporters got a private audience with Vice President Al Gore at the home of a local pastor to discuss their concerns.

"It comes down to what you think the purpose of a union is."

The Future is Now

While the AFL-CIO's Adams concedes that the project mainly represents a tactical initiative to recruit more union members rather than a major economic or racial justice engagement, he says the project does exemplify some new thinking within the AFL-CIO about organizing on scale. "The labor movement understands a little better now that we'll never be strong enough to carry a social agenda by ourselves. No matter what we do, it has to come from a community perspective as well as a labor perspective."

District 1199 Organizing Director Dave Pickus argues, "It comes down to what you think the purpose of a union is. Is it to do the 'best you can' and try to win a two or three percent raise in the next contract, or is it to create a vision of where the members want to be and how the union can make a real difference in their lives?"

The biggest challenges that the project faces may be internal to the labor movement. Funding from the AFL-CIO is only guaranteed through the end of the year, according to Adams, who says that geographic initiatives like the Stamford Project must build their capacity so they can run by themselves.

Finally, more conservative union locals in Fairfield County and across the state have yet to wholeheartedly endorse the project. If the project is to ever reach the scale and impact its leadership envisions, it will likely have to navigate through even more treacherous labor politics.

Is the AFL-CIO Changing Colors?

by Daniel HoSang

Recently, the AFL-CIO has adopted several new, progressive positions on crucial issues of race and racism.

In February, the AFL-CIO's Executive Council passed a resolution calling for amnesty for undocumented immigrants, condemning the current system that requires employers to verify workers' immigration status as a condition of work, and calling for full workplace rights and freedoms for

all workers—immigrant, U.S.-born, documented, or undocumented. This is a dramatic and welcome change from its longstanding anti-immigrant positions.

In March, the Florida AFL-CIO played a major role in staffing and mobilizing more than 15,000 people to a rally in the state capital to denounce a plan by Governor Jeb Bush to eliminate affirmative action in college admissions and state purchasing. The Florida

But these obstacles seem small compared to the project's ongoing activities and aspirations. SEIU Local 531 joined the project last year and plans a massive Justice for Janitors campaign across the city to align the wage and working conditions with those of other cities. District 1199 hopes to add to the 1,000 Stamford-area health care workers it has already organized in the last two years. The UAW, fresh from victories with the taxi drivers and a unit of city employees, has just initiated a campaign among Head Start workers. The project hopes to support this work by expanding its tenant organizing, offering voter registration and citizenship classes to immigrants, and helping to train a cadre of member organizers to recruit new members.

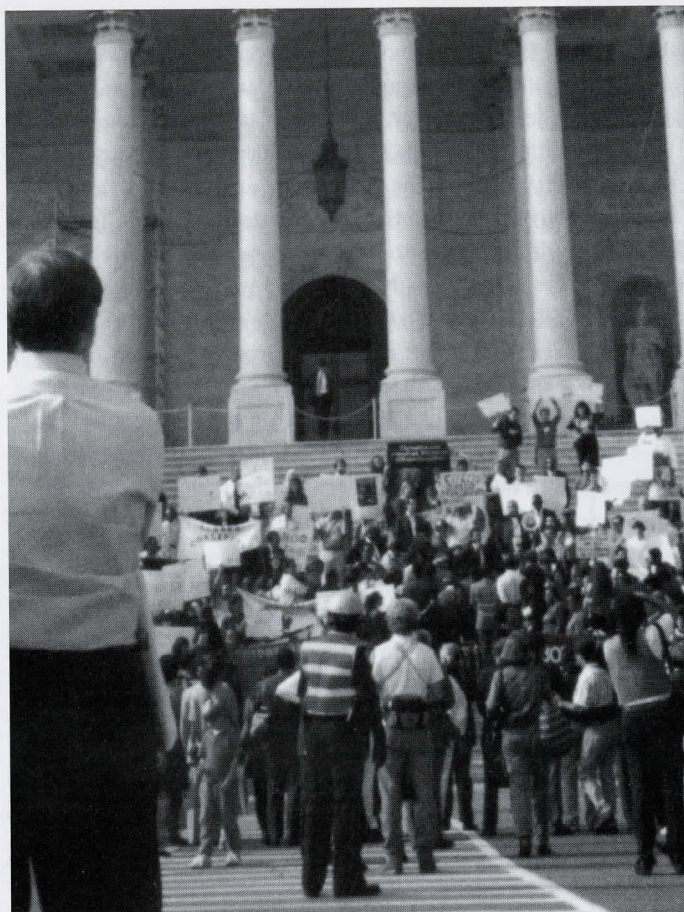
Is the Stamford Project a model for other regions? There are several conditions specific to Stamford that have contributed to its rapid success that may not exist elsewhere: blatant examples of poverty in the midst of plenty, the manageable size of the region and the existing inter-relationships among the workers, the absence of competing organizing agendas, and the strategic savvy of the participating unions.

In addition, the project's staff in general and McAlevey in particular have struck a delicate but effective balance between challenging the unions' leadership to broaden their agenda while understanding their self-interest in building their respective organizations. But the priority of building a strategic alignment for power committed to racial and economic justice must be fortified in Stamford and replicated in many regions if that fight is to gain real momentum.

If successful, the Stamford Organizing Project may become the opening chapter in a new story of building powerful economic and racial justice movements in an age of corporate domination. ☐

AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer, Rep. Tony Hill, even held a sit-in in front of the lieutenant governor's offices to block the governor's attempt to issue the Executive Order banning such programs. This is the first time big labor has truly stood up for affirmative action.

The AFL-CIO also recently adopted a policy calling for the U.S. to cancel the debt of Third World countries. This internationalist position from the labor federation is unprecedented. ☐



It's a Survival Issue

The Environmental Justice Movement Faces The New Century

In 1991, the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit literally changed the face of organizing. Jeff Chang and Lucia Hwang look at its legacy and the prospects for the coming 10th Anniversary Summit.

During the nineties, depending on which side of the debate you were on, the environmental movement either needlessly split in two or finally began dealing with its most pressing human rights issues. The decisive event was the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991.

Activists and organizers of color emerged from that convening under the banner of environmental justice, and the mainstream environmental movement would never be the same. Now, almost 10 years later, environmental justice advocates are assessing the state of their movement, with an eye to the future.

Four Words That Made the Difference

In the mid-eighties, the coining of two simple phrases—environmental racism and environmental justice—changed the way thousands viewed their world and their ability to change it for the better.

While local communities of color had been organizing around issues of toxic waste siting, public health, or land and water rights for years, a 1987 report by the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States," began to popularize the notions of "environmental racism" and "environmental justice." The report found that race, not income, was the single most important factor determining where toxic waste was sited.

Richard Moore had been fighting toxic dumping in his Chicano community for 20 years. "In Albuquerque, we [Latinos] house the only municipal sewage facility in the whole city and county," Moore says. "We're completely surrounded by petrochemical companies. We're housing the largest pig farm in the county. We're housing one of the largest chicken farms. What I'm saying is that we're completely surrounded, in one form or another, in shit, OK?"

"The opposite side of that coin is that we want to be here," he adds. "We're very proud of our community. We've raised our families up here. Some would say, 'Why don't you pack up your stuff and leave?' Well, it's about standing up for justice."

Moore recalls when the authors of "Toxic Wastes," Reverend Ben Chavis and Charles Lee, came to New Mexico to present their findings. "I remember sitting in that church [watching the presentation]," he says. "And there were smiles among those of us involved in grassroots organizing, because we were seeing basically our own community in front of our eyes, but the communities would be in North Carolina or Mississippi or South Carolina or Alabama. And they were using environmental justice language."

Around the same time, Tom Goldtooth was an activist in Minnesota struggling to develop environmental programs for the Ojibway people without assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency. He says he felt the government was not fulfilling its responsibility to protect the country's resources—both physical and human. "That's when I started to look at some of the terminology that was coming out of the environmental justice movement of 'environmental racism' and 'environmental injustice,'" Goldtooth says. "I thought, 'This is what I'm experiencing here with the work I'm doing. Racism rears its ugly head when it comes to protecting Native people.'"

It's About Race, Stupid

The new language made it possible for local grassroots organizers to begin to understand their work differently. Soon regional environmental justice networks began springing up across the country. In the South, African American organizations joined to fight hazardous waste proposals and to clean up communities such as Warren County, North Carolina and Louisiana's Cancer Alley. In the Southwest, Moore and other Chicano, Latino, and indigenous organizers formed the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ), which now has 80 affiliate organizations. Native Americans gathered at Dilkon on the Navajo reservation in the summer of 1990 to discuss toxic and nuclear dumping on Indian lands, sowing the seeds for the creation of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), which Goldtooth now heads.

In October 1991, these regional and ethnic networks helped convene the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Over a thousand organizers and activists from all 50 states as well as Mexico, Canada, Brazil, Nigeria, Chile, and Ghana attended.

At first, Goldtooth was skeptical that a national body could help his work on the reservation. But then, he says, he heard the testimonies of African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and Native peoples. "That just kind of hit me—that it's a life-and-death situation that's going on," he says. "It's not just the communities here in Minnesota, it's not just Native people, but it's all people of color."

The Summit helped organizers understand the breadth of the environmental justice concept, both domestically and internationally. "There was a tendency toward 'Not In My Backyard.' What we said very clearly at the People of Color Summit was 'Not In Anybody's Backyard,'" Moore says.

Indeed, central to the Summit was a critique of the white mainstream environmental movement, which organizers of color found to be racially exclusionary and narrowly focused. The year before, organizers had sent letters to the so-called Group of 10—mainstream environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, and the National Wildlife Confederation—asking them to discuss the exclusion of communities of color from the environmental movement. When the letters failed to spur cooperative action, the organizers called for the Summit.

Moore believes most environmental organizations still have a "closed-box" mentality. "Their opinion is that [a group should] just want to work on pesticides, or air, or land, or water issues, and it's not as simple as that from a people of color perspective," Moore says.

As Goldtooth explains, groups serving people of color must address a whole spectrum of interconnected problems. IEN provides information on just about anything, from protection of sacred sites to intellectual property rights. "I always envied some of the other environmental organizations that can focus just on one issue," says Goldtooth. "We somehow did not have that luxury at IEN because of the vast unmet needs in Indian country. Of course, [mainstream] groups don't understand that."

Pamela Chiang's experience organizing Laotian residents in refinery-dominated Richmond, California, is similar. "Sometimes we get together and our members end up talking about why their children or grandchildren are getting pulled over and harassed [by police]," says Chiang, lead organizer with the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) in the Bay Area. "Folks just don't have a vehicle for talking about stuff."

Race and Class: The EJ Cut

The Summit confirmed that organizers of color had developed a different approach to environmental organizing.

In many cases the traditional approach to cleaning up the environment did not go far enough. "If you look at contaminated seafood, for the mainstream environmental movement, it's about clean water," says Peggy Saika, director of APEN. "But for us, it's

Jeff Chang is managing editor of *ColorLines* and Lucia Hwang is staff writer for the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*.

also about Laotian refugees still fishing to feed their families. Clean water is too narrow. It's a survival issue; that's the EJ cut."

Many environmental justice groups also use the word "economic" in their names, signifying that economic issues cannot be separated from environmental issues. "How can we separate water issues from worker issues?" asks Moore. "Workers are being exposed inside the facility to toxic chemicals, and then the poisoning of the ground water is happening outside the facility."

In 1997 the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) and SNEEJ cemented this recognition of convergent interests through an agreement to work together to help workers transition from jobs at companies or industries that environmentalists want to shut down to alternative employment.

Participants emerged from the Summit with a set of 16 "Principles of Environmental Justice." In addition to environmental goals, the principles demanded "that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all people" and affirmed "the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural, and environmental self-determination of all peoples."

In the next decade the principles would come to serve as a guide for a rapidly developing, decentralized, grassroots movement based on a fundamental commitment to racial justice.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

"The Summit really served as a springboard from which all kinds of environmental justice and economic justice groups could actually be launched," says Bob Bullard, one of the organizers of the Summit and the director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University.

In 1990 Bullard assembled a list of 250 organizations to invite to the Summit. Since that time, he says, the number of organizations working on environmental justice has at least doubled. Winona LaDuke, program director of the Native American-centered Honor The Earth Fund and the author of *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*, counts 200 indigenous environmental groups alone.

In the wake of the Summit, the environmental justice movement seemed to gather steam. Asian and Pacific Islander Summit participants formed APEN in Oakland, California. In December 1993, black church leaders convened another national summit on environmental justice and endorsed an agenda linking economic and environmental justice—an event that drew Vice President Al Gore.

And in February of 1994, finally meeting a recommendation made in the original Commission on Racial Justice Report, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, which mandated each Federal agency to "make achieving environmental justice part of its mission."

By mid-decade, however, the environmental justice movement found itself confronting an indifferent administration and relentless attacks from the right.

Bob Bullard, who helped advise Clinton on environmental justice matters during his first term, is disappointed with the administration's legacy. "It has not gone far enough in imple-

menting and giving teeth to the Executive Order or in trying to initiate legislation," Bullard says. "We lost a golden opportunity when you had a Democratic president and a Democratic majority in the House and the Senate. It was squandered."

Worse, he says, "During the second [Clinton] administration, we were fighting uphill to keep the gains that we had won." Over the past 10 years, business interests have grown more savvy in their attacks on environmental justice. Industries orchestrate the backlash, pooling their attorneys, planners, and economists—even pumping money into universities endeavoring to refute environmental racism, Goldtooth notes. Right-wing politicians have been advocating the removal of the right of EJ activists to sue under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

In New Mexico, a waste company forced out of the Sunland Park community by anti-toxic medical incinerator activists and SNEEJ filed a "SLAPP" suit in December of 1994 against Richard Moore, fellow SNEEJ organizer Louis Head, and the SouthWest Organizing Project—a SNEEJ member. "That incinerator is closed down," Moore says. "They are unhappy. They moved on to sue."

A New Terrain

Throughout the nineties, the mainstream environmental movement mounted a racial backlash. After California's passage of anti-immigrant Proposition 187, environmental justice activists found themselves fighting environmental activists over immigration issues.

In 1998, population control advocates forced a vote among the half-million members of the Sierra Club on whether the Club should support restrictions on immigration. EJ activists termed the nativist push "the Greening of Hate." After heavy EJ organizing, the Club eventually voted down the anti-immigrant referendum, but not before some progressive members of the board and staff resigned in disgust.

During the debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), EJ activists were frozen out of discussions on the effects of free trade on the environment and labor. Moore notes that, in so-called "sidebar agreements," representatives of national environmental and labor organizations forged deals "with no participation from people of color, grassroots people, women, and workers that are the most highly impacted."

At the recent demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization, Moore and Goldtooth's organizations again found themselves on the outside looking in. "We had to really knock on doors and to assert ourselves as people of color to have a face and have a voice in those WTO activities, even with some of our own allies," says Goldtooth.

In fact, the decentralized character of the environmental justice movement may have limited its ability to influence some major decisions. But at the Summit, activists had decided to focus on building a mass movement based on grassroots, bottom-up participation and decision-making instead of bunkering down in Washington, DC.

"[Being decentralized] has its good days and it has its bad days," Moore says. "Mostly I think it's had good days, because

the direction of this movement is basically in the hands of grassroots communities and should continue to be that way. But it's very difficult to build a movement that is decentralized."

Damu Smith, interim coordinator of the National Black Environmental and Economic Justice Coordinating Committee, believes that the time has come to launch a nationally coordinated campaign. Last December over 300 black environmental justice leaders from across the country gathered in New Orleans to network and declare a "state of emergency" on environmental racism and economic injustice in their communities. The group plans to meet again this May 2001 in Detroit.

"We're losing the spin battle, if you will," Smith says. He is particularly disturbed by some prominent black business, community, and government leaders who promote the idea that environmental justice blocks economic development for black communities. "We are really getting kicked as a result of not being organized at the national level."

Building a Strong Backbone

Despite the setbacks, the environmental justice movement has built a sturdy infrastructure of small, stable groups and is constantly exploring ways to expand into new territories.

Six networks, including APEN, SNEEJ, and IEN, recently established an Environmental Justice Fund, which allows employees of participating companies to check off automatic contributions from their paychecks. Saika says that the Fund will help create capacity within EJ networks and fund emerging networks of local organizations.

The EJ Fund is beginning to assess the needs of its networks, and will later undertake a larger assessment of the movement itself. According to organizers, globalization will be at the top of the agenda both in the assessment and in the 10th Anniversary Summit, planned for October 2001.

In New Orleans, Smith's group developed an ambitious, three-year action plan to defend environmental justice tools, such as the Executive Order and Title VI, and to secure new tools. Among them, Smith says, should be a federal policy to help poor residents temporarily relocate away from hazardous areas. "We need an emergency program to get people out of harm's way," Smith says. Another should be a national economic policy supporting clean production and, thereby, sustainable development, he notes. In addition, the movement needs to recruit and train youth leaders. "It's going to take time," Smith says.

Despite the uphill battle, most organizers agree that the environmental justice approach has been fruitful.

"I think there's been more successes in the environmental justice arena than the environmental arena," says Goldtooth. "But then again, the war isn't over. It's international now. With economic globalization and the impact of these trade instruments, we have more challenges in the next couple of decades." ☉

For more information on the environmental justice movement, visit the Environmental Justice Resource Center's website at: <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu>



STORMING DENVER

Padres Unidos Battles for Better Education



Learning the "Padres Approach" at Centro de Unidos.

In Denver, a fiery group of Spanish-speaking moms have school administrators quaking in fear. *Patrisia Macías Rojas* talks to the women of Padres Unidos.

The night of the Columbine massacre, Lupe Lopez, a 37-year-old mother of five, switches on an old color TV to the Spanish news broadcast in the storefront office of Padres Unidos in a barrio in North Denver. Lupe and other Mexican and Chicano parents listen intently as news reporters repeatedly announce that such tragic violence is expected at inner-city public schools like North High—a predominantly Latino high school in North Denver—but not at suburban schools like Columbine.

Claudia Lopez, Lupe's daughter and a student at North High, looks at her mother in dismay. "*Mami, pero por qué andan diciendo eso de la North? Why are they saying that about North High?*"

Her frustration triggers nods, worried sighs, and more commentary from the others. "So, if our kids were shot down at school one day, it would be OK because it's expected of our kids?" says Rosalinda Aguirre, the owner of a neighborhood Mexican restaurant and mother of five.

That night, the parents seem more determined than ever to take on the Denver Public School system. "It's expected that our schools will go from bad to worse, but we won't let it happen," says Lupe. "We'll do what it takes because no one else is going to do it for us."

Organizing the Unorganized

These Chicana and Mexican parents, many of whom immigrated to the U.S. in the mid-1980s, first challenged school officials in 1989 at Valverde Elementary School. Outraged that Spanish-speaking students were being forced to eat their lunch on the cafeteria floor as a form of school discipline, they launched a series of petition drives, pickets, and press conferences that finally forced the principal to resign. It was the first time in Denver history that recently immigrated, low-income, monolingual parents collectively mobilized on behalf of their children.

After the victory at Valverde, the parents agreed to form Padres Unidos (Parents United), a volunteer-based organization to confront racial inequity in the Denver public schools. According to founding member Pam Martinez, "That victory taught us that the schools belong to us; they are part of

our community. Our taxes pay for teachers' and administrators' salaries, buy the books and the supplies, and pay for school buildings. They work for us and should be held accountable to us and our children."

Since its inception, Padres Unidos has challenged Denver Public Schools (DPS) officials over the racial disparities impacting Latino students, who make up over 50 percent of all Denver public school students. The facts, parents say, speak for themselves. Between 1997 and 1998, the Latino drop-out rate was twice that of whites, and the percentage of expelled students who were Latino jumped from 40 percent to 60 percent.

Last year, the *Denver Post* reported that only one student at Lincoln High School, which is 90 percent Latino, took the SAT entrance exam required by most colleges and universities. According to Rosalinda Aguirre, an active member and mother of five, the Denver public schools aren't preparing Chicano/Latino students for the high-level, white-collar, skilled jobs produced by Denver's rapidly growing high-tech industry, but are "training them to be low-wage workers and prisoners."

From Bake Sales to Protests

On some nights, Lupe, Pam, Rosalinda, and dozens of other parent members can be found raising funds with bake sales and raffles. Other nights they're busy answering calls for a bilingual hotline designed to help parents deal with racial incidents, facilitating workshops to inform parents of their rights within schools, or protesting outside the district office.

"Like so many others, I used to feel uncomfortable about standing up to a teacher or principal. I thought they were the educated ones who knew best. Since I got involved with Padres, I realized that I know what's best for my children," recalls Dolores Obregon, a soft-spoken, middle-aged mother of five.

Padres Unidos has emerged as an organization that gives monolingual Spanish-speaking parents tools to speak for themselves and their children. The parents have developed an organizing strategy—the "Padres Approach"—designed to empower other parents. The "Padres Approach" con-

sists of documenting a problem at a given school, doing an analysis of root causes, and determining solutions. According to Pam Martinez, Padres never goes into a school without first going through all three steps and having clear demands.

"We don't humbly ask for fairness," she says. "We demand educational equity and justice for all children and their families." This approach has earned them a 95 percent success rate in achieving demands that range from removing principals to establishing a new dual-language school in a North Denver barrio.

Relentless, Respected

Padres Unidos has become one of the most respected and feared community activist groups in Denver. In 1994, Padres Unidos sued the Denver Public School system over poor bilingual education services. After two years, the courts sided with Padres Unidos and charged the DPS with discrimination based on "national origin" in bilingual education and special education.

Former school superintendent Irv Moskowitz and school board president Rita Montero vehemently rejected the Padres Unidos bilingual plan. They successfully lobbied for an English immersion plan in Denver similar to that of California's Proposition 227, in which monolingual students are taught in "English only" after a limited amount of instruction in their first language. "We took a hit," admits Rosalinda Aguirre. "We proposed a progressive bilingual plan in a time of anti-immigrant hysteria and got 'English Only' instead."

In a more recent victory, Padres organized to establish a new elementary school in Northwest Denver. Fed up with the abysmally low academic performance in their neighborhood schools, parents decided to take matters into their own hands. They organized field trips that enabled over 80 mothers to visit schools such as Escuela Bilingue Washington in Boulder and Dennison Montessori in Denver, where low-income Latino students are excelling academically.

"There are those who would have us believe that our children are inferior and incapable of academic excellence. But we

have seen with our own eyes that there are majority Latino schools out there that have far better success rates than our schools," says Obregon.

Parents relentlessly lobbied until their proposal for the school was approved. Despite opposition from Latina board member Montero, who advocated a traditional "reading, writing, and arithmetic" model for the new school, the New Dual Language/Montessori School is scheduled to open in 2001.

Former superintendent Moskowitz calls Padres a group of rowdy parents who do nothing but "scream, yell, and protest." In 1998, Moskowitz sent letters to some of Padres Unidos' funders, urging them to cut financial assistance to the organization because of "its disruptive behavior and unwillingness to sit at the table."

But for the parents of children attending Denver public schools, Padres is an organization that gives Latina immigrants and Chicanas power over their children's education. The organization has developed strong leadership among monolingual Spanish-speaking Mexican women: women make up 90 percent of its leadership; and 70 percent are Mexican. Says Obregon, "Since I got involved, I realize that we have a right to demand a quality education for our children."

According to Pam Martinez, the conditions that Chicano and Mexican students confront on a daily basis in the Denver public schools border on violence. "When the system denies students a quality education for no apparent reason other than that they are working class and Mexican, when the system punishes them unjustly or simply expects the worst of them—that is racial inequity that can be classified as none other than violent because it denies students basic social, economic, and political rights." The violence at Columbine High School in Littleton ended tragically. But in Denver, Padres Unidos is working hard to transform daily violence into new possibilities and visions of a brighter future for their children. ©

Patrisia Macías Rojas is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of the *ColorLines* editorial staff.

GLOBAL BRAHMANISM

THE MEANING OF THE WTO PROTESTS

Dr. Vandana Shiva believes globalization and free trade are new forms of colonialism. She talks to Rebecca Gordon and Bob Wing on the anti-WTO protests and the future of globalization.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. VANDANA SHIVA



Indian Farmers winnowing wheat on a still day, but using a propeller for wind in Madhya Pradesh, India.

Vandana Shiva is a physicist, ecofeminist, writer, and leader in the international movements against corporate globalization and to preserve and extend indigenous agricultural and environmental knowledge. As a scholar, Dr. Shiva has published hundreds of articles and books on these issues, most recently *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*. As an organizer, she has founded and worked with many groups. In 1991, for example, she founded Navdanya, a farmers organization that safeguards native Indian seeds.

As a follow-up to our coverage of the protests at the November 1999 meeting of the World Trade Organization and as a contribution to expected actions at the meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington D.C. in April 2000, *ColorLines* sought out Dr. Shiva to hear her views on how the globalized economy affects people of color around the world.

You began your academic career in the very theoretical science of small particle physics and then switched to the kind of science that affects people's lives on a daily basis. Was it a gradual process or a quantum leap?

It was many quantum leaps. One big shift for me was getting involved in the grassroots ecological movement in my region, which was a movement to defend the Himalayan forest called "Chipkhu." This was a movement of women coming out in the thousands to stop logging way back in the early 1970s,

before saving trees became popular. It was a spontaneous uprising, shaped by women, led by women.

As you probably know, the mainstream press in the U.S. treats globalization as the golden door to a future of prosperity for everyone. How do you see it?

There's enough of a physicist in me to see future systems evolving out of what we experience in the present. But the present of globalization is to disenfranchise the large majority of people, to rob them of their democratic rights to decision-making, by replacing even what little "fig leaf democracy" we have with corporate totalitarianism.

Do you mean, for example, that the WTO makes it impossible for countries to erect tariff barriers to prevent imports from threatening local industries?

The very language "create tariff barriers" sounds as if something nasty were being done. The entire language of free trade has been shaped by changing the meaning of basic concepts that are understandable by ordinary people, couching them in a new language that makes some things that are good from the perspective of people look like nasty things. They are only nasty from the perspective of the market.

Take "protection." Protecting your community, making sure that your children have enough food; ensuring that your small farmers are not robbed of their livelihood; ensuring that your old growth forests are protected, your rivers are protected,

your soils are protected, your biodiversity is protected. That is not just legitimate protection; it is obligation. It is absolutely essential that we protect our families, our communities, our environment, our livelihoods.

But that "protection"—which comes from a political and social imperative and I would even go so far as to say moral imperative—has been redefined by the corporate culture as an economic category called "protectionism," which is to be opposed and dismantled. Protection is not protectionism, because protection cannot be reduced to a phenomenon of the market place.

The giant agricultural multinationals have taken a lot of heat for creating genetically modified "food." One example is "Roundup-Ready" soy, which can withstand massive doses of pesticides. Now they're talking about introducing "golden rice," which they claim will add vitamin A to people's diets. What's wrong with this new kind of rice?

I've had too much experience with the "miracles" that come out of the Rockefeller Foundation. Let me give you just a few reasons why the golden rice will not be a miracle but a disaster.

The Rockefeller Foundation financed the "Green Revolution" in the 1960s, which shifted agriculture worldwide from sustainable, organic bases to totally non-sustainable chemical farming. It did not produce more food; it displaced more peasants. It bonded Third World countries into permanent debt. India had a three-fold leap in bor-

rowing from the World Bank, just for loans related to chemical agriculture in the 1960s. The later cycles of debt and structural adjustment are all hooked to that recipe of addiction to agri-chemicals through World Bank and Rockefeller financing.

Each year of the Green Revolution, they would introduce one rice variety that would last for one or two years, until it collapsed because of a disease outbreak. And then they would introduce a new monoculture. Collapsing monocultures are not diversity! But they are a wonderful treadmill that the big corporations would like us to get on. First they sold us chemicals. Then they wanted to sell us seeds that would require the chemicals. That is why they introduced genetic engineering. And that is why they created herbicide-resistant varieties like "Roundup-Ready" soy.

The golden rice is part of that same package. My response to the Rockefeller Foundation is: "Why don't you talk about the organic sources of vitamin A that are in the hands of women in the Third World—the 200 varieties of greens that we grow in our fields, the hundreds of wild herbs we collect for vitamin A sources? Just go to the African bush; just because they don't have vitamin A tablets doesn't mean they don't have vitamin A. Just look at nature's biodiversity and count the sources of vitamin A. And if you can't do it, we'll hold grassroots peasant women's literacy classes for you!"

If they push the golden rice the way they pushed the Green Revolution where I live,

"The present of globalization is to disenfranchise the large majority of people, to rob them of their democratic rights by replacing the 'fig leaf of democracy' we have with corporate totalitarianism."

then every field in the world will be full of golden rice! And all the subsidies from the Rockefeller Foundation, and US AID, and the World Bank will wipe out our millet, will wipe out our greens, and destroy vitamin A sources while pretending to create them.

Can you talk a little bit about how globalization effects people of color and people in the Third World?

Consider how, through patenting, indigenous knowledge is being pirated in the name of protecting knowledge and preventing piracy. The knowledge of our ancestors, of our peasants about seeds is being claimed as an invention of U.S. corporations and U.S. scientists and patented by them. The only reason something like that can work is because underly-

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Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke

ing it all is a racist framework that says the knowledge of the Third World and the knowledge of people of color is not knowledge. When that knowledge is taken by white men who have capital, suddenly creativity begins. Seeds such as the Basmati seed, the aromatic rice from India, which we have grown for centuries right in my valley, are being claimed as a novel invention by RiceTec. The corporations are stealing the last resources of the poor, their very seeds.

Biopiracy functions under a racist assumption—exactly as when Europeans colonized the rest of the world 500 years ago. They could actually define all land that didn't contain white Europeans as "empty land." What is happening repeatedly is that, just as in the earlier period of colonization, people's knowledge creation and their wealth creation is being negated, even while their knowledge and their wealth is taken over.

Now, who creates wealth? In my view, it's the workers who create wealth. It's women working away in the factories in the U.S. who create wealth; women peasants in India create wealth. But who is creating wealth in the racist worldview? The corporations who steal from us and those young white fellows on Wall Street who speculate on currencies.

Patents are a replay of colonialism, which is now called globalization and free trade. The intellectual property rights laws of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) set the stage for foreign corporations to gain

a total monopoly control of our food production by displacing traditional seed varieties with patented hybrids.

Here in the United States, progressives were deeply encouraged to see the outpouring of well-organized and creative opposition to the World Trade Organization's meeting in Seattle. What do you think was accomplished there?

I think two things were accomplished there. The most important thing was that even while the big corporations and the powerful institutions engineer globalization, they keep talking about it as a natural phenomenon. They even say as much—as the sun rises in the morning, globalization is bound to happen. It's an inevitable, natural phenomenon. The exercise of power by ordinary citizens in Seattle to block that round of talks informed the whole world that there's nothing inevitable or natural about it. The WTO is a political project where powerful people get together. If people get together, if we organize enough, we can stall that project.

The second thing that was achieved in Seattle was really cross-issue, cross-sector organizing, and organizing across borders. The early part of this past century was the age of revolutions. We had grand revolutions. All those revolutions have in a way faded out, and everything they built is now already in ruins. But the last 50 years of citizen activism was really issue-based activism. Women worked on women's issues,

environmentalists worked on environmental issues, workers worked on workers' rights. You had a total division. There was no synergy building up, even though everyone was acting. It wasn't adding up to a political challenge.

Each separate issue-based movement was having to negotiate separately, from its narrow ground, with highly coordinated and powerful institutions on the other side, which were coordinating how they handled labor, how they handled the environment, how they handled the South, the poor, and the women. They had a very well worked-out scheme, and we were all fragmented.

In Seattle we got together. And even if there were only a handful of Third World peasants, and even if Third World women were only there in small numbers, the issues were shaped by them.

"The corporations are stealing the last resources of the poor, their very rice seeds."

How did that coalescence come about?

Because of at least a decade of work before. There was a lot of groundwork, fed by three major movements: First, the movement of the Third World against structural adjustment, the World Bank, and IMF. The second group is the movements confronting free trade, GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), and the WTO. The third is issue-based movements that had already started to build alliances to deal with structural adjustment and free trade.

In Seattle, the puzzle all started to come together. We actually saw the emergence of a citizen-based alternative paradigm of how we need to organize the economy, how we need to govern markets, what should be the powers of citizens, what should be the powers of governments, and what limits should be placed on corporate greed.

And a sense of how that coalescence could be transformed into enforceable policies?

Absolutely. And that is precisely what the follow-up work after Seattle has become. For example, in India we are working to put together a solidarity convention, bringing together every movement in this country—every trade union in this country, every farmers group, the women's groups, the environmental groups, the groups that work with children, the groups that work on peace. That has partly been possible because of Seattle, because people are able to refer back to a watershed and say, "Oh, yes, it's doable." ☺

FLIPPING THE IVORY TOWER

Once vilified for her progressive views on race and voting rights, Lani Guinier has survived and thrived. Now Jungwon Kim visits Lani at Harvard Law School, the site of her new battles.

LANI GUINIER TAKES ON ACADEMIA



A thinker as complex as Lani Guinier was destined to be misunderstood in the public sphere. In the furor over her 1993 nomination for Assistant U.S. Attorney General for Civil Rights, her ideas were plucked from the context of her academic writings and distorted beyond recognition by conservatives and journalists who never studied her work. Before any substantive public discussion of her politics could take place, President Clinton panicked and unceremoniously withdrew the nomination of his Yale Law School classmate.

After the din subsided, Guinier returned to academic life. She remained at the University of Pennsylvania Law School until 1998, when she left to become a professor at Harvard Law School. She has neither toned down nor dumbed down her critique of the democratic process in the United States. Instead, she has drawn upon her experience in academia to delineate astute parallels between the shortcomings of our political culture and the problem of educational access.

Jungwon Kim is editor of the culture channel at *IndiePlanet.com*.

“We tend to defer too much to the insiders to provide leadership when in fact they are being socialized by their new institutional arrangement to function in traditional ways, not transformative ways.”

Depth Over Flash

Yet while Guinier criticizes institutions of higher education for adhering to skewed notions of meritocracy, the academy is nonetheless her arena—a place for her to put into practice her political beliefs, educational philosophy, and genuine personal warmth. Perched on a rocking chair in her office at Harvard, surrounded by law tomes, countless award plaques, and a collection of artful family photographs, Guinier seems comfortably insulated as she reflects upon the hostile glare of the political spotlight.

“Our culture has made it virtually impossible for anyone with a public platform to have a vision because our culture is so present-tense oriented,” she says. “There’s no forum for having a public discourse that is substantive. We have an adversarial and entertainment oriented media. You’re either engaged in a fight, a game, or some sort of performance. You can’t have a conversation in that context.”

Outside the din of Beltway politics and media clashes, Guinier has flourished. She has written four books in five years (her latest, *The Miner’s Canary: Enlisting Race to Resist Power and Transform Democracy*, coauthored with Gerald Torres, will be published by Harvard University), stayed active on the lecture circuit, and guided many of her students through innovative research projects.

Aside from providing fertile ground for Guinier’s intellectual vigor, Harvard represents a return of sorts. Her father, Ewart Guinier, who passed away in 1990, served as the chair of Afro-American Studies at Harvard. She remembers frequent, wide-ranging discussions with him and credits the breadth of his knowledge as the wellspring of her intellectual life. In the family tradition, she values depth over flash, nuance over obvious dazzle.

Individualism’s Discontents

In fact, it is difficult to place Guinier’s ideas in the context of ordinary political quarrels such as the shrill volley over affirmative action because her acuity always leads her to question the very terms of the debate. Even as stagnant rhetoric has largely reduced the affirmative action issue to a question of rights—those of under-represented ethnic minorities versus those of whites—Guinier has persisted in tying the issues to big picture questions.

She challenges us, for example, to think critically about the mission and the culture of both democratic and educational institutions. “Their shared commitment to liberalism has evolved into a commitment to radical individualism, and so they tend to neglect the role of the individual in connection with groups. In fact, in terms of the present Supreme Court, the majority seems to believe that groups are dangerous, that thinking about people in the aggregate is a threat to democracy when indeed the fundamental premise of democracy is collective action,” says Guinier.

“I’d say the same problem animates many academic institutions. They’re trying to train self-sufficient individuals who may be very weak in providing leadership for other people or being able to work with other people.”

One of Guinier’s main concerns is the “majority tyranny” that occurs when a self-interested, entrenched voting majority totally disregards minority interests.

Guinier argues that this is a

crucial problem in the U.S. political system, one that is, in the end, self-defeating because it loses the cooperation of the minority. Guinier has offered some steps to prevent majority tyranny, namely cumulative voting procedures in which voters get the same number of votes as there are options to vote for—a system used in corporations and in several European countries. She has also proposed a “supermajority” requirement that would require more than a bare majority of voters to approve an action. Such remedies, she argues, create communities of common interest across race and gender lines and give minority interests a bigger voice.

How Institutions Crush the Passion for Change

Yet, she argues, access and accountability are inextricably entwined. As a lawyer with the NAACP during the 1980s, she helped push through an amendment to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that lowered the burden of proof in voting discrimination cases from discriminatory intent to discriminatory results. Although the amendment helped to increase the number of elected black political officials, she’s ambivalent about the results. “We’ve taken the first step by giving access to some people who were traditionally under-represented or excluded or marginalized,” she says. “But what we haven’t done is to hold accountable the people who are now inside the institution to this larger democratic dynamic.”

Guinier is critical of the socialization effect of

political and educational institutions: “We tend to defer too much to the insiders to provide leadership when in fact they are being socialized by their new institutional arrangement to function in traditional ways, not transformative ways.”

In 1994, Guinier collaborated with an interdisciplinary group of women scholars to publish a revealing report on the damaging socialization effects of law school on women students. The study found that while a disproportionate number of the women surveyed entered law school with commitments to public interest law, their third-year female counterparts left law school “with corporate ambitions and some indications of mental health distress.” In addition, male students were three times more likely than women to jump to the top 10 percent of their law school class by the end of their first year.

For Guinier, the study is an illustration of how both law schools and the legal profession have abandoned the principle of inclusiveness, and

while minorities in general are affected negatively, she believes women of color are hit the hardest. Some attribute the difficulties of women and people of color in law school to their lack of preparation, chalking up another point against affirmative action. Guinier takes a completely different view.

“What women or people of color were doing was providing a very important lens to a much larger problem. Legal education is out of step with lawyering,” she says. For progressive legal scholars such as Guinier, the “zero-sum” mentality is reflected in the flawed admissions standards of the “testocracy” and in the Socratic method of the law school classroom, in which a law professor grills one student in front of the entire class. It is also a defining characteristic of our democratic institutions.

“The assumption is that if you set two sides against each other, through the contest of two dueling views you will somehow arrive at the truth or some single solution that

represents the best solution,” Guinier says. “That may work for some problems, but it doesn’t represent the only way of resolving all issues. For people who don’t relate to the ‘gladiator model,’ the whole framework becomes very alienating because you don’t have a way in.”

Although Guinier observes that women of color have the most difficulty in law school, she insists that “the significant disconnect is not between the women or people of color and the Socratic method. The significant disconnect is between a single pedagogical approach and what lawyers in fact do in the real world of lawyering—they work as a team, collaborate, and have to engage in multi-faceted problem solving.”

The Practice of Progressive Lawyering

As a Harvard law professor, Guinier experiments freely with progressive pedagogy. She breaks her classes into small discussion groups, works with teams of facilitators to plan lessons, and creates role-playing simulations. She gives group exams, in which teams of three students collaborate on test questions. While many students say they find this practice extremely unusual, Guinier says the response has been overwhelmingly positive. She also requires students to work in public interest or legal service advocacy organizations and integrate that experience with the course readings.

Guinier’s critique of adversarial legal education and her willingness to seek alternatives reflect an underlying philosophy of collaboration and inclusion that has both political and practical applications in her work. She lauds Texas for including community activists and professors in the process of designing a new admissions system that accepts the top 10 percent of every high school graduating class, although she qualifies her praise by maintaining that “the locality needs to experiment in light of its mission and the needs of the people in that community.”

She applies the same progressive ethic to civil rights. “One of the problems of being a litigator is that you’re always looking backward to the precedents courts have established,” she says, when asked about the legacy of her work with the NAACP. But rather than being satisfied with past victories, Guinier is concerned about the current relevance of such civil rights cases in a changing legal and demographic landscape. “It’s as if you’re driving across the United States and you come across the Grand Canyon. It may be a magnificent sight, but you can’t necessarily use it as a landmark unless you know exactly where you’re going.”

Guinier’s perspective is panoramic, one that places the educator’s mission within the larger context of democracy and political participation. “The goal of teaching law is not simply conveying information. It’s exciting students about the process of learning. It’s trying to give people a sense of excitement to redefine problems in ways that make them capable of at least interim solutions and moving toward a larger vision of justice.”

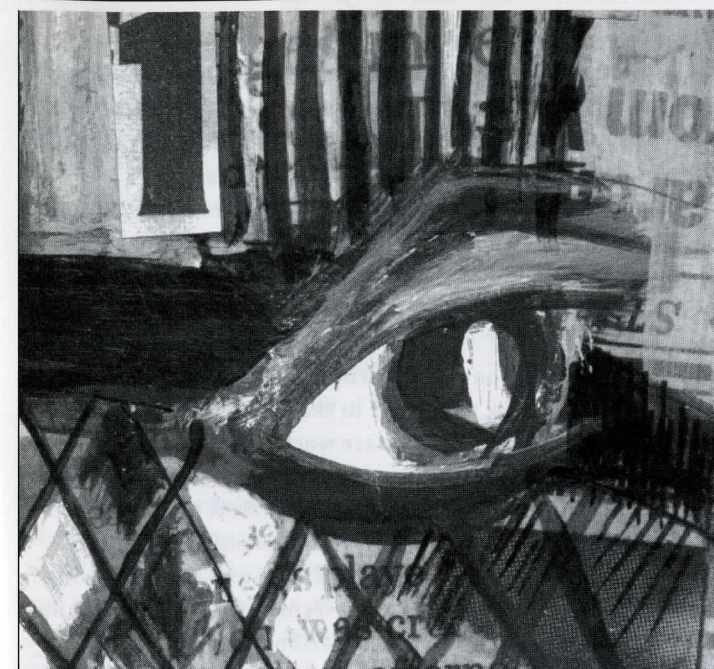
“It’s not just looking in the rearview mirror, it’s measuring progress not by how far we’ve come but where we want to go.”

WORLD GAMES:

THE U.S. TRIES TO
COLONIZE SPORT

HAVING TROUBLE VISUALIZING
GLOBAL CAPITALISM?

MIKE MARQUEE ARGUES
IT'S BEING PLAYED OUT
ON A SPORTING FIELD NEAR YOU.



Art by Justine Formantelli

The discourse of sport has always been prone to planetary-scale hyperbole, and in some respects the ideology of globalization when applied to sports has only taken old habits to new extremes. What is curious and revealing, however, is the way in which global pretensions are so often mingled with U.S. myopia. And nowhere was this contorted posture, so characteristic of our age, better illustrated than in an issue of *Newsweek* published in October 1999.

As part of its breathless celebration of the achievements of the expiring 20th century, the magazine ran a 34-page feature on sporting heroes, entitled "America's Greatest." Here the history of sport in the U.S. was presented as a triumph in which barriers of color and gender prejudice were toppled, along with sporting records, by the efforts of a succession of extraordinary individuals.

Amid the predictable exaggerations and omissions, there was one claim in particular that strayed most egregiously from reality. "Sports may be America's most successful export to the world," the editors wrote. "Whatever the world thinks of us, it loves our games. Major League Baseball is increasingly dominated by Latin players, and there is a growing infusion of talent from Japan and South Korea. Basketball is popular on every continent. And in Europe they now play our football along with their own."

When I shared this last sentence with students in London, they burst out laughing. What is known in the rest of the world as "American football" is a very minor sport in Europe, viewed by many as a testosterone-fuelled freak show.

And while basketball is gaining popularity in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, it everywhere lags well behind more established team sports, just as soccer does in the U.S. In Soweto, you will certainly find far more Manchester United

soccer shirts than Chicago Bulls caps. Michael Jordan's fame outside his native land rests more on his role as a shill for the world's biggest sports shoe company than his achievements on the basketball court.

Whose World Series?

Contrary to the *Newsweek* dictum, sports are actually one of the U.S.'s *least* successful exports. Other products of American popular culture—Hollywood films, TV sitcoms, rock-n-roll, rhythm-n-blues, soul, funk, hip-hop, fashion—have all travelled further and penetrated deeper into foreign cultures than the games of baseball, American football, or even basketball.

Indeed, the salient fact about the U.S. sporting culture is that it is shared with so few others. Overseas, the quaint habit of

denominating the finals of the North American baseball competition as a "World Series" is regarded as an example of typical American arrogance—more amusing than bombing Third World countries, to be sure, but cut from the same cloth.

It is not only in preferring their own, home-made sports to genuinely world games such as soccer, rugby, cricket, or even field hockey that Americans plough a furrow of their own. The ways in which sport is produced and consumed in the U.S. are also distinctive. Despite their preoccupation with the expression of American national identity through sports, the *Newsweek* editors seem largely unaware of those features that actually make the U.S. sporting culture distinctive; indeed, to many foreign observers, downright weird.

Mike Marqusee's most recent book is *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties*.

What is happening in global sport
reflects a broader crisis
in popular culture

Cheerleaders, for example, are a uniquely American phenomenon and attempts to introduce them abroad have enjoyed little success. Crowds at European or Latin American soccer or South Asian or Caribbean cricket matches would all find the notion that their response to events on the field should be mediated by a regiment of scantily-clad females bizarre in the extreme. Here the songs, chants, jokes, and other means of expressing partisanship or commenting on the course of the action emerge from within the crowd itself, often in accordance with long-established (but continually evolving) popular traditions.

The U.S. also enjoys the dubious honor of being the only country to institutionalize the use of higher education as a nursery for professional sport. When it comes to track and field or swimming, sports in which America does compete with the world, this practice has given the U.S. a major advantage, and levelled the playing field with the state-sponsored athletes of the old Soviet bloc. However, *ColorLines* readers will be only too familiar with the corruption and compromise of both educational and sporting values that this long-established American tradition has entailed.

These days athletes from all over the world seek to avail themselves of the facilities of U.S. higher education. For many Third World sportspersons, a stint at an American university is their only hope of translating raw talent into high-level success and financial reward. In this respect, at least some features of the U.S. sporting culture are now spreading across the globe.

While sporting professionalism was a 19th century British innovation, Americans have led the way in the exploitation of sport for commercial purposes. Once upon a time, the idea that a sporting institution like the Brooklyn Dodgers could pull up stakes and move to another locale at the whim of a private owner would have been regarded as an idiosyncratically American phenomenon. Nowadays, the corporate capitalist model pioneered in the U.S. is taking hold nearly everywhere, reshaping ancient sporting traditions and transforming spectator expectations and behavior.

Capital's Battering Ram

Although we do not share a single global sporting culture, we do, increasingly, live under the aegis of a single global sporting industry. This industry is dominated by a corporate elite whose leading members are only too well known to U.S. sports fans.

Take, for example, cricket in South Asia, a sport with a fan base of many hundreds of millions. The right to exploit this huge audience via television has recently been divided up between Rupert Murdoch's Star TV and Disney's ESPN. The principal sponsors of the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams-whose stars are household names across one-fifth of humanity-are Pepsi and Coca Cola.

Murdoch also has major interests-both as broadcaster and franchise owner-in European soccer and Australian and British

rugby. In accordance with his oft-stated belief that sport is a "battering ram" for the penetration of national economies, he has teamed up with both the NBA and Manchester United in long-term projects for the development of basketball and soccer in China, capitalism's favorite emerging market.

His partners in these ventures include not only the Chinese government, but also Mark McCormack's International Management Group (IMG), which has already played a leading role in reshaping professional golf and tennis. IMG is also the promoter-manager of a series of India-Pakistan cricket clashes held annually in Toronto. While the event is not much of a spectator draw in Canada, the rights to the telecasts beamed back to a rapt South Asian audience are worth a fortune.

When the two teams faced each other on neutral ground in Australia earlier this year, Murdoch and ESPN hyped the contest as "Qayamat"-judgment day. With the military dictatorship in Pakistan and the right-wing Hindu government in India exchanging accusations of terrorism and nuclear threats on a daily basis, the cricket confrontation assumed a grotesquely inflated importance, replete with menacing religious and nationalist overtones. That so many

of the big players in the global sporting industry (mainly U.S.-based) now have major vested interests in over-promoting the India-Pakistan cricket rivalry speaks volumes about the distorting and dehumanizing impact of globalization on the culture of sport.

Overseas, the quaint habit of denominating the finals of the North American baseball competition as a "World Series" is regarded as an example of typical American arrogance

We Brand the World

Everywhere, the vast concentration of wealth that this process engenders is transforming long-established competitive patterns and traditional loyalties. Inequalities within and between sports, as well as within and between national sporting cultures, are being exacerbated. In Britain, cricket withers as it finds itself unable to compete with soccer for popular attention; in South Asia, the glamour attached to cricket has marginalized field hockey, once the pride of both India and Pakistan.

The one claim in *Newsweek's* paean to American sport that has a ring of truth is the assertion that the U.S.'s "most visible symbol has, over the 20th century, evolved from the Stars and Stripes to Coke to the Swoosh." Note the complacency with which the editors appear to regard this disturbing evolution. The duty of representing a nation-state and its culture has been passed from a flag to a mass-manufactured consumer product and then to the symbol of a privately-owned corporation.

Last year at a cricket match in Sri Lanka, I witnessed the power of the swoosh. A poverty-stricken young boy was hanging around outside the gate, unable to afford the price of a ticket but hoping for a glimpse of his heroes. He had no shoes, scrawny legs and dirty, ill-fitting shorts. His tattered tee shirt was hand-decorated with the letters "NIKE" and a big, black swoosh drawn painstakingly with a black marker.

I wanted to say to him what I always feel like saying to young people in Britain or the U.S. who decorate themselves with the swoosh and other corporate logos: they pay Michael Jordan, Andre Agassi, and Tiger Woods millions to wear that thing-how much do they pay you? At least the young Sri Lankan hadn't actually paid Nike for the privilege of advertising their product-unlike his contemporaries in the West-but the implication was that he would if he could have afforded to. Since he could not, replicating its corporate symbolism was the next best thing, the nearest he could come to joining the global but exclusive club of the consuming classes.

In adorning himself with the swoosh, this sports enthusiast had become part of a vast web that links sweatshop laborers in South and East Asia, kids in the ghettos of North America, the corporate barons of the clothing and footwear industries, the media moguls and marketing gurus, and not least, sports administrators, sports promoters, and professional sports men and women. He had become part of what might be called the media-corporate-sport nexus-a nexus that now links together a substantial portion of the human race, but does so in a highly unequal and exploitative fashion.

The Increasing (Global) Significance of Sport

One of the defining features of an information-based economy is the ever-increasing value attached to "symbolic goods," that is, images and information. A mere 10 percent of the retail value of a Nike shoe is accounted for by the costs of physical production; design, marketing, and profit account for the remainder.

The company spends more on endorsements from stars than it does on the entire army of low-paid workers who actually make the shoes. Remember it was Air Jordans-a product entirely dependent on its association with a sports hero-that placed Nike in pole position in the huge global sports footwear market, now worth more than \$16 billion annually.

In this type of economy, sport, which is itself a symbolic good as well as a highly effective carrier of symbolic values of all sorts, assumes increasing social significance and economic weight. But this development is not necessarily to the benefit of sport, sports fans, or society as a whole.

In 1998, global expenditure on sport sponsorship exceeded some \$15 billion (a sum that had tripled in a decade and risen by 12 percent in the previous year alone). But the distribution of this enormous investment neatly illustrates the current imbalances in what the apologists of the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization would have us believe is a "global economy." North America accounts for 37.8 percent of the market; Europe 36.4 percent; and Asia 20.8 percent. Africa is left far behind. The recent African soccer championships were followed passionately by a population of nearly one billion,

but since it is a population with a meager disposable income, the competition attracted little sponsorship or media interest. The great African players ply their trade in Europe, just as the top Latin American baseball talent seeks the higher rewards available in the U.S.

Sports sponsorship in Britain now amounts to some \$500 million annually-but two-thirds of that sum is consumed by only two sports, soccer and motor racing. Other sports find themselves increasingly disadvantaged in the furious competition for a slice of the cake, and women's sport is left with only the crumbs. A recent survey revealed that 82 percent of British companies involved in sports sponsorship indicated they had "no interest" in women's sport; however, 57 percent of these said they would have an

interest if women's sport displayed greater "sex appeal." So, far from busting stereotypes and liberating women's long suppressed sporting potential, the modern marketplace seems to be reproducing the old biases.

Along with television rights and sponsorship, the big money in sport derives today from "licensing." For the 1998 soccer World Cup-next to the Olympics, the world's biggest sporting event (in comparison, the Super Bowl is a parochial affair)-FIFA, soccer's governing body, issued 300 licenses to corporations to produce and market more than 400 World Cup-branded products at a total retail value estimated at more than \$1.2 billion. The licensing operation was handled for FIFA by the Swiss-based ISL. A top ISL executive explained the logic: "Today the marks of international sports events have become extremely valuable properties; the visible expressions of the link between supporters and events are an effective way of giving products added value."

Along with die-hard sports fans in many countries, I continue to believe, perhaps naively, that the "link between supporters and events" ought to be of a different nature. We may occupy diverse national and regional sporting cultures, but we have a common interest in resisting the Murdochs, the ESPNs, and the IMGs-and reclaiming our games.

What is happening in global sport reflects a broader crisis in popular culture. Just how popular is it? To what extent are its meanings fashioned among the majority and reflective of their lived experience, and to what extent are they contrived from above and cynically foisted upon a passive public? This crisis isn't something we should regard in a fatalistic manner, bemoaning the loss of a largely mythical sporting innocence from a prone position in front of the boob tube. As events in Seattle reminded us all, the dominant consensus is a fragile one. The colonization of sport, like the corporate appropriation of the Third World gene bank, can be challenged and resisted. But only if sports fans emerge from their nationalist cocoons and begin making links across borders of all kinds. ☉

The principal sponsors of the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams-whose stars are household names across one-fifth of humanity-are Pepsi and Coca Cola

PAST NATIONALISM

KARL EVANZZ ON ELIJAH MUHAMMED, LOUIS FARRAKHAN, AND THE NATION OF ISLAM



Karl Evanzz has spent much of his life studying Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm X, and Louis Farrakhan. Jeff Chang asks the biographer about the past and future of the Nation of Islam's race politics.



Progressives of color have had a love-hate relationship with the Nation of Islam. Yet over the last decade, most have had to concede the Nation's cultural importance. Under Louis Farrakhan, the Nation has helped usher black politics into what Salim Muwakkil calls "a nationalist moment." The signature moments of the hip-hop generation—the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the Million Man and Million Woman and Million Youth Marches, and rap music—clearly bear more of the imprint of Farrakhan's black rage than of Jesse Jackson's multicultural rainbow.

But now Farrakhan has made strong gestures toward changing the Nation's views on race. At Savior's Day celebrations this past February, he invited Warithudeen Muhammed, the son of Elijah Muhammed who split with his father over his opinions on race and orthodox Islam, to share the stage, a symbol of his new embrace of a multiracial faith. Farrakhan also brought forward Hasidic Jewish Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss to address the crowd, another gesture of reconciliation by a man who has been dogged by charges of anti-Semitism. "Has Farrakhan changed?" he asked rhetorically. "Yeah, I have."

Race and Black Muslims are subjects to which Karl Evanzz has devoted much of his life. In *The Judas Factor*, Evanzz unveiled two decades of research into the assassination of Malcolm X. His most recent book, *The Messenger*, is a biography of Malcolm X's mentor, Elijah Muhammed. Mr. Evanzz spoke to *ColorLines* in late January about the influence of Muhammed's Nation of Islam on American culture, and about the future of Farrakhan's race politics.

You came of age during the 1960s—race riots and Black Power. How did that shape your politics and worldview?

It made me more radical and more liberal than I might have been. I grew up in a Catholic family with very conservative views. But after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, it changed my entire perception of America. I was about 15.

You grew up in St. Louis.

Yeah, in the part of the city they call "the ghettos." Once King was killed, everyone started talking about how bad the country was and how it was going to hell. For the first time I began to

see what police brutality was. I started visiting Elijah Muhammed's mosque in St. Louis. I became radicalized very quickly. I got out of the gangs and started the Black Student Union. We came under the influence of the Black Panthers and started a free breakfast program, and we started gathering discarded clothing for poor families. That was the focus of the rest of my high school career.

I had made no preparations about college. With three months to go, my counselors were saying, "Karl, what are you going to do after graduation?" I said, "Be in the revolution, what are you thinking?" I had to scramble to get into college. And that was where I had my first interaction with whites. I went from an all-black high school and visiting a mosque every week where I was taught to hate white people, to being thrown into college and dealing with whites one-to-one for the first time. There were two Native American students and maybe eight or nine blacks out of about 800. So that was my American journey—to get out of this whole thing of having to hate anyone.

You spent almost half your life doing research for *The Judas Factor*, then for *The Messenger*. Your experiences with the Black Muslims seem to have really affected you.

I changed my last name to Evanzz, with two z's on it. And when I first mentioned to my parents about joining the Nation, they said forget about it, those guys kill each other. I couldn't figure out what they were talking about. My mother finally said, "Well, they killed that guy Malcolm."

They had Malcolm X on records at that time, and when I heard him speak, I just thought he was so profound. I started reading him like crazy. I read everything I could, including *From The Dead Level* by Hakim Jamal, and thought that maybe these guys did kill Malcolm. I started gathering pieces of different stories here and there. I started making Freedom of Information Act requests in 1978 for all of the documents on the Nation of Islam, Malcolm, and Elijah. The FBI was dragging its feet, so it took about ten years for me to get all of the documentation.

Jeff Chang is managing editor of *ColorLines*.

What made you want to write the biography of Elijah Muhammed?

I started finding out things about Elijah Muhammed. Like in 1974, Elijah was changing everything he had taught for 40 years, and now he was saying that white people were OK. I just never heard that in the mosque I was attending, and I was shocked. I thought people ought to know that.

Now, here's a man who had experienced the lynchings and everything else. At the end of his life, after his wife dies, he says, "I can't preach this anymore—white people really aren't that bad." He started hiring whites to join his empire and came to the conclusion that white people were not really the devil, but not only that, there were black devils.

I felt that history needed to be told, not only for that reason, but also to counteract what Farrakhan was preaching, well, until last year. Interestingly, since my book came out, the Nation of Islam website is taking away all of the stuff about the white man being devils. They are not saying that Elijah Muhammed is the prophet of God, they are not saying that [Nation founder] W.D. Fard is Allah anymore, they are going straight to Orthodox Islam. In fact, I'm told that the first white person joined Farrakhan's group just last week or so. I'm hoping that Farrakhan does the right thing at this point because he's so influential with a lot of the black kids. I think he could do some good things if he preaches what he knows is true—that there is one mankind and one God.

There are parts of the text where you state clearly how you feel about Farrakhan.

No question about it.

You say, as a practical matter, the Nation of Islam is a mirage. But the Nation of Islam—as well as offshoots like The Five Percenters—has very much influenced the hip-hop generation. What do you think continues to make the Nation so viable amongst young folks?

I think Farrakhan's a voice for the voiceless. In this situation for African American people—the poorest of the poor—he's the only one out there professing to represent them. And if he changes that, he can represent more people—poor whites, poor Asians, poor Latinos—who don't have a voice or national spokesperson. That's why I'm optimistic about Farrakhan. I'm pretty mean on him in the book, but since he made this epiphany statement I've asked the editor to tone down my obvious anger towards him and make some changes. So in the third printing, some of the text is actually going to be changed.

When I first wrote the book, I was obviously pretty angry with him because he said some mean things. In 1993, he said, "What business is it of yours if we dealt with Malcolm like a traitor?" Then he goes on Barbara Walters and says that he had nothing to do with Malcolm's death. So he can't have it both ways. He either had something to do with Malcolm's death, or he didn't. Stop misleading people and playing games, and tell the truth about it. In the book, I wanted people to know that Farrakhan was a despicable character during Malcolm's lifetime. But now I'm trying to tell people that he has sincerely changed.

What is the legacy of Elijah Muhammed on black politics and culture?

His most enduring contribution was actually in religion. He actually brought Islam to this country for the first time. He gave blacks an alternative to Christianity.

He also changed, I think, the collective psyche of black people. Before he came along, black people were proud to be called "colored" or "Negro." He said, "Forget about it. 'Negro' is a fabricated word and blacks should be proud of their blackness." It was a totally new concept. It was something Garvey tried to do, but it didn't work. With Malcolm X's help, Elijah made that work.

He used drastic measures in the sense that he taught black people that they were superior to whites. What happened to me, consequently, is that I went off to this white college thinking that I was superior to these white kids. But after I got to know them and established friendships with them, I realized how stupid that was.

I have a classic example involving a Native American, a guy who lived on a reservation in Oklahoma. We were

all sitting around drinking from the keg one night and the Indian says, "Am I black or am I white?" The white guy says, "You're white." But the three black kids say, "Bull-crap, you're black, brother." And the Indian says, "I'm a red man. Why do I have to be one or the other?" And for the first time, I realized that we were being just as bad as the white kids, trying to impose our own ethnocentrism on him. It got me beyond my superiority complex.

What Elijah Muhammed did was basically reverse psychology. He leveled the playing field, so that black people could be proud of who they were. When someone called you "nappy-hair" you would automatically be ashamed. But when someone called you a Hamite, you didn't have to feel bad about that. So you were basically able to brush off what people were saying to you that was psychologically undermining your sense of self-esteem. To me, that's really his main legacy. ©

I WENT FROM AN ALL-BLACK HIGH SCHOOL AND VISITING A MOSQUE EVERY WEEK WHERE I WAS TAUGHT TO HATE WHITE PEOPLE, TO BEING THROWN INTO COLLEGE AND DEALING WITH WHITES ONE-TO-ONE



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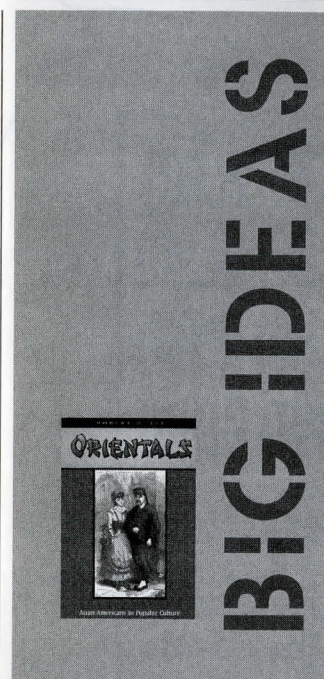
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Compiled by Jeff Chang, Sia Michel, and Oliver Wang



Robert G. Lee

ORIENTALS: Asian Americans in Popular Culture,

Temple University Press, 1999.

Rumor has it that Asian Americans are bit players on the national stage while the real action happens elsewhere. As in Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, Asians merely conjure a mood, a feeling, an atmosphere. They are everywhere, and nowhere. Bob Lee's engaging *Orientals* enjoins a counter-rumor: Asians are central to the constitution of the American identity and social formation.

Representations of the "Oriental," Lee shows, appear at critical junctures in the cycles of American capitalism and in moments of cultural crisis. The Asian as "pollutant" was critical to the creation of California and a fictional white republic; the "coolie" to the construction of the white working class; the "deviant" to the making of modernity and the "new" American man and woman; the "yellow peril" to the mission of imperialism and colonialism; the "model minority" to the Cold War narratives of liberalism; and the "gook" to the exigencies of post-industrial decline and national recuperation.

Lee discusses with great intelligence most of the significant representations of Asians in popular culture, but his review of songs remains the most important and enduring contribution. Who can forget Rodgers and Hammer-stein's reduction of Chinese American identity to the catchy tune and lyrics of "Chop Suey"?

Gary Okihiro is professor of international and public affairs and director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race at Columbia University.

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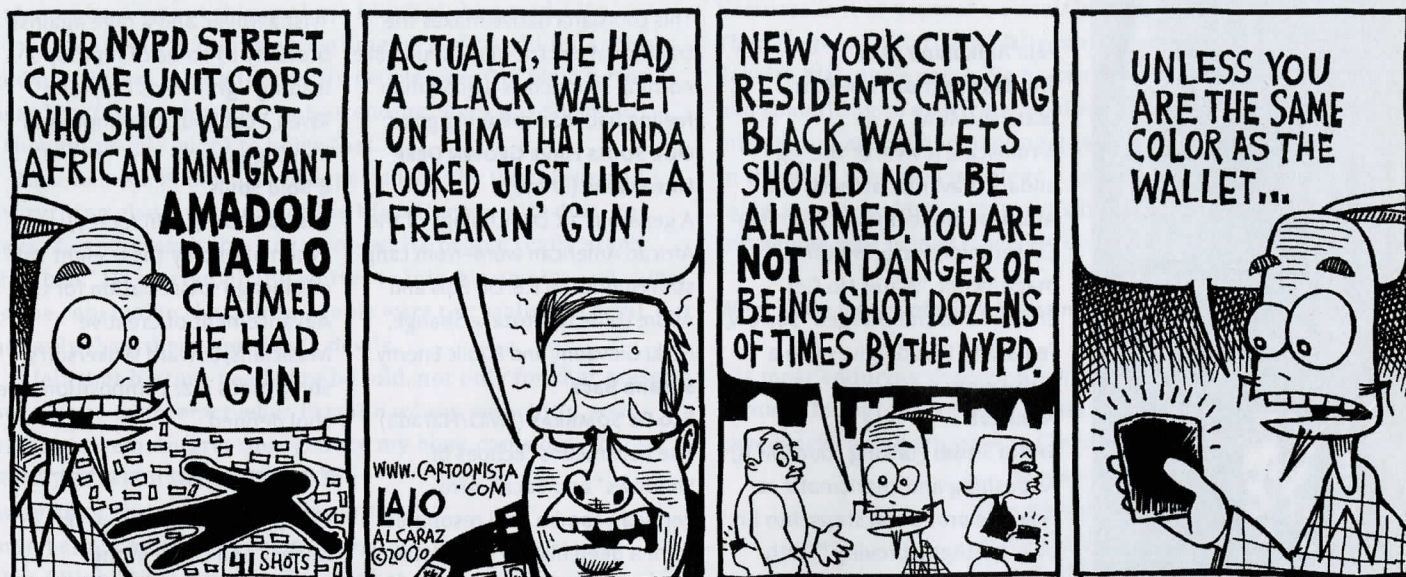
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