Resist Newsletter, Oct. 1988

Resist

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Resisters frequently tell us they'd like to know more about the groups we fund than is revealed in the short grant reports we include in every newsletter. In this issue we answer that request with a "Grassroots Report" about the issues being addressed by one of our grantees, the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives (P.O. Box 1033, 207 Main St., Ahoskie, NC 27910). The accompanying piece, subtitled "A Chicken in Every Pot, Health Hazards in Every Shop," provides a closer look at the experiences of several women poultry workers.

We'd love to hear from readers involved with similar organizing work in other industries and other communities, particularly with low-income and immigrant women workers. A future article we'd like to see would take up the question of current effective organizing strategies in industries that employ new immigrants, refugees, and poor, rural women. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions. Also in this issue you'll find four longer-than-usual grant reports on a range of projects, all of which involved major actions this fall.

Sarah Fields-Davis, Executive Director of the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives.
Photo: Laura Allen
Since 1984, the Center for Women’s Economic Alternatives, (CWEA) has been encouraging low-income women in northeastern North Carolina to organize in their workplaces and assert control over their lives. It’s a region of eighteen poor, rural counties, and nearly half of the population is Black. The economy, based on farming and low-paying industry, provides little economic opportunity to the area’s residents. Over a quarter live below the poverty level, twice that of the rest of the state.

The CWEA grew out of the experiences of two women organizers who hoped to encourage and support low-income women’s efforts to address their basic needs. Beulah Sharpe, a Black woman in her forties, and a native of the region, had a long history of leadership in the workplace. Before helping to create the CWEA she had worked to unionize local plants, develop a worker-owned business, and to organize poor people in a rural electric co-op. Cindy Arnold, a white woman in her twenties, from Pennsylvania, had worked as an organizer on tenants’ rights, community re-development and day care.

In mid-1983, the two joined together to assist ten hosiery mill workers in Halifax County to confront sex discrimination in the mill management’s practices. They realized how alone and isolated these women felt. “There was no retained history, no community of women’s efforts,” recalled Arnold. It was out of this experience that, in March, 1984, the CWEA was born, as a place where women who were being victimized by poverty, discrimination, and harsh working conditions could provide themselves with education, training and support to foster real change.

The CWEA, now staffed by six women, five of whom are Black, has worked to prevent plant closings, has assisted women’s groups to establish their own worker-owned businesses, and has organized women workers to challenge inhumane and dangerous working conditions. The center’s newsletter, Women United, allows women to share their struggles and successes. The Center’s Justice for Women Workers’ Project helps women file law suits, and works to eliminate illegal practices such as “retaliatory firing,” racial and sexual discrimination, and occupational disease and injury due to employer negligence.

RESIST recently gave a grant to the CWEA for organizing and administrative expenses of the Legal Justice Fund. (RESIST does not fund legal fees directly.) We were impressed with the Center’s work, engaged as it is in the difficult task of organizing women in an extremely hostile workplace environment, where poverty forces women to cope first and foremost with day-to-day survival and long-term change seems elusive. We asked the Center to tell us more, and received this article on what’s been happening at the Perdue chicken processing plant (page 3). To place this in the larger context of workplace issues in the region, we include the following background information, also provided to us by the Center.

Workplace Issues in Northeastern North Carolina

The most common victims of the region’s poverty are women, particularly Black women. Families headed by women are more than three times as likely to be poor as families not headed by women. Furthermore, Black women are twice as likely to be unemployed as white women. Yet for either race, the available industrial wage in the region is $3.35 an hour, just twenty cents above minimum wage. Major employers of women include poultry, seafood, and packaged foods processors, cut-and-sew garment plants, hosiery, cotton and other textile mills, furniture makers and other manufacturers of household goods.

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Donate Your Stock To Resist

Last year we encouraged our supporters to donate to Resist their shares of stock in corporations which did business in South Africa, or polluted the environment, or had large military contracts. Many of you responded by turning your shares over to us, and we in turn sold them.

We would like, once again, to encourage you to consider giving Resist stock. Not only is it a good way for you to get rid of stock in corporations whose goals go against your own—it makes financial sense.

If you donate stock to us it is a tax-deductible contribution for you, and you won’t have to pay taxes on the capital gains. And because we are a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, we won’t have to pay taxes either. Everyone wins.

Call us at 617-623-5110 if you need more information.

—Nancy Wechsler
Resist Staff

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Women Workers at Perdue:
A Chicken in Every Pot, Health Hazards in Every Shop

LAURA ALLEN

June Clemons wants to get on with the rest of her life. "My life is not going to revolve around frozen chicken," said this 22 year-old former poultry worker, who lost her job as a cutter and drumstick packer at the Perdue processing plant in Lewiston, North Carolina after suffering a back injury in 1987. Clemons said she was fired because of the injury and has been unable to find steady work since the day in January that she slipped on a piece of chicken fat and fell. (Her tail bone was later removed.) Clemons will also never forget the day she got her termination notice from Perdue. "I started laughing because it was too shocking," she said. "I wake up every day in pain. I go to bed in pain. I feel they had no right to fire me when I'm hurt. I do have enough brains to know what's right and what's wrong."

At night Beth Johnson (a pseudonym) lies with her hands draped over the edge of her bed, hoping the throbbing pain will subside. "I can't even do my girls' hair because of the pain in my hands," she said. Johnson worked at the Lewiston plant as a "draw hand," gutting seventy birds per minute, until last January when she lost her job. Johnson suffers from tenosynovitis, an occupational ailment caused by overuse of hand and arm muscles. She said she was fired because she was sick and could not work. Doctors suggested surgery, but Johnson would not allow them to operate. She said she only discovered that she had been fired when she went to pick up her sick leave pay.

An Epidemic of Retaliatory Firings.
Though their circumstances differ, June Clemons and Beth Johnson share a common history. Both women had endured miserable working conditions at Perdue, had suffered workplace injuries, and eventually lost their jobs.

Apparently these two women are not alone. Several poultry workers at Perdue's Robersonville and Lewiston plants in northeastern North Carolina claim Perdue fired them because they were hurt on the job. Quietly, mostly anonymously, women are coming forward to tell stories of injuries, firings and other violations of workers' rights. Only a few individuals are willing to speak out publically against Perdue, and even fewer are able to take legal action against one of the nation's largest chicken companies.

When I wrote to Perdue requesting a response to the charges from workers I had talked to, I received a formal statement in which the company maintained that all workers are free to speak their minds without risking their jobs: "At Perdue, there are specific time tested procedures in place which allow any of our more than 13,000 workers to express their opinions on either company or personal matters. All suggestions and complaints are handled in a proper and fair manner. Very often, employees who have a complaint also come forward with an innovative solution. This is part of what makes Perdue special and helps us maintain our quality."

Perdue also denied any cases of retaliatory firing: "Perdue does not fire an employee because of an injury suffered on the job. Perdue has never fired an employee because he or she filed for Workers' Compensation. It is not company policy to terminate an employee without warning, except in extreme circumstances where serious violations of company rules are involved, such as fighting in the work place."

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Poultry Workers

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One organization, the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives (CWEA), has decided to take on Perdue. Since 1984, CWEA has been working with doctors, church leaders and lawyers to provide resources for poultry workers. In 1985, CWEA began to work with the women workers themselves. Beginning with the names of a few workers, the Center has since contacted and worked with hundreds of individuals. "Word is spreading around. More and more people are coming in and calling in," said Sarah Fields-Davis, Executive Director of the Center. "We don't know where we're going, but we're going. Changes are painfully slow because the problems the Center is trying to address are ingrained and pervasive."

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Donna Bazemore, a community organizer with the CWEA, once worked at Perdue, cutting bruises off chickens. "I feel what the workers feel. I'm able to work with them better because I've been there," she said. Bazemore has carpal tunnel syndrome, a repetitive motion disorder that causes pain and numbness in the hands. She was forced to quit nursing school because she could no longer take notes or type due to the pain in her hands. She received a total of $1200 in Workers' Compensation because of the disability.

Fields-Davis estimated that 90% of the work force at Perdue suffers from one of the occupational illnesses prevalent among poultry workers—carpal tunnel syndrome, tenosynovitis, arthritis, and white finger (an infection caused by chicken bones piercing the skin). A U.S. Department of Labor report revealed that almost one-fourth of the poultry work force suffers from industrial injuries, and during a three-year period, three out of four workers in a plant are hurt. "Most people at Perdue are scarred for life," said Beth Johnson.

Rita Eason quit her job at Perdue in 1980, after only four months, because her job, lifting heavy boxes, was debilitating. Eight years later she still suffers from arthritis and has been unable to work for extended periods of time. "I can get jobs, I just can't keep them," she said. Eason is so weak she cannot finish two household tasks in one day, like sweeping the floor and doing laundry. Now she regrets that she didn't file for Workers' Compensation when she was injured. "I was so naive then," she said.

In the same formal statement, Perdue said it is concerned about workplace health disorders: "Carpal tunnel syndrome and other repetitive health disorders are not particular to Perdue or the poultry industry. They are common across many industries. Such disorders are of great concern to Perdue, which is why the company is an active participating member of a national task force made up of industry, medical and occupational health and safety experts, sponsored by the National Broiler Council. This task force is searching for viable solutions to help reduce and prevent these types of injuries."

"The company recognizes such injuries do occur. Perdue's policy is iron clad. Anyone who is diagnosed as suffering from such disorders as a result of working at Perdue, is assisted in diagnosis and treatment, and may return to work as soon as their doctor says they are able to do so." According to the CWEA, it is possible to redesign tools and workplace arrangements to reduce the incidence of these disorders, but such efforts have not been made.

Landmark Case

One worker who said she was injured on the job and subsequently fired is taking legal action against Perdue. Linda Buckholts has carpal tunnel syndrome in her right hand, and underwent surgery to correct the disorder. Because she could no longer maintain the production pace, she was fired from the Robersonville processing plant. With the Center's help, Buckholts has filed suit charging retaliatory firing. She is asking for back pay, the difference in salary between her Perdue wages and her current lower paying job, and job reinstatement. The total amounts to $2,000 to $3,000. Perdue would not comment on the case because it is in litigation.

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This case is important to the Center because by filing suit, Buckholts is the first woman to challenge the industry's long-standing practice of getting rid of workers who get sick or injured on the job, particularly those who develop carpal tunnel syndrome, endemic among poultry workers. Whether she wins or loses, Center staff see her case as a landmark step in the struggle for a just workplace in the poultry industry.

Buckholts' lawyer, Steve Edelstein, hopes the case will inspire other workers to take action. "The case lets people know there's something they can do in similar situations," he said. "There's much more that can be done (to prevent workplace injury) by the company, the employees....The legislature can also do things." According to Edelstein, there are no provisions for attorney fees under current North Carolina law, and retaliatory firing cases are difficult to bring to court.

Edelstein also hopes this case will draw attention to the larger issue of how tax and labor laws adversely affect workers. Now, industries can settle in impoverished areas, pay the workers low wages and then relocate if problems occur at the plants. This leaves workers almost powerless to complain. Perdue is one of the largest employers in the region, and the average wage, between five and six dollars an hour, is considered high. Fields-Davis said that many of the poultry workers she has spoken with are afraid Perdue will leave the area if they protest working...

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In the past six months, CWEA has been contacted by women in several of these industries. They have described numerous workplace problems including sexual harassment, occupational diseases, dangerous equipment, racial and sexual discrimination, and wage and hour violations.

In the poultry industry, approximately one thousand women, mostly Black, eviscerate, cut up, clean, debone and pack chickens in two processing plants. They travel five to forty-five miles one way each day to earn an average of $5.00 an hour while they endure occupational diseases, sexual harassment and wage and hour violations. In North Carolina, 11,500 people work for the poultry industry, which generates over $1 billion in revenues annually. The well-respected Occupational Health and Safety Journal, reports that poultry workers experience the highest risk of debilitating skin diseases of any group of American workers, and there is a whole class of muscular and nervous system disorders endemic to the poultry industry, caused by poorly designed tools, the constant rapid, repetitive motion required on the assembly line, and the demanding production pace (90 birds/minute or 380,000/day). (See accompanying article.)

These occupational diseases are exacerbated by the ever-present cold, and loud noise in the plants. Workers wear three or four layers of clothing throughout the year, yet their hands and feet are usually numb by the end of the shift. One woman reported that she often left work with ice crystals in her hair because she worked in a stream of bloody water that fell on her unprotected head.

Respiratory and pulmonary problems have also spurred concern, and several recent studies of air quality in chicken houses have been conducted. Chicken feather dust and ammonia, originating from chicken feces, cause obvious breathing problems, watering eyes and sometimes nausea and vomiting. Along with these hazardous conditions, women poultry workers endure casual firings, sexual harassment, racial and sexual discrimination and other forms of intimidation. Some workers have been asked to trade sexual favors for their right to leave the production line and use the bathroom. Others have urinated on themselves or fainted because their supervisors have refused to let them use the bathroom.

Chicken factory workers have reported these health and labor problems to local Legal Services offices and health care professionals for several years. But unorganized workers have found changing these conditions difficult. Similar conditions at facilities in Virginia and Maryland prompted an unsuccessful national boycott of one large broiler producer in 1980, but this firm, called the "J.P. Stevens of the Poultry Industry," remains entirely unorganized and continues today to grow rapidly and profitably at the expense of the health of rural Black women.

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The Real High Cost of Crabmeat.

In crabmeat processing plants approximately two hundred predominantly Black women crack open crab legs and backs and pick out the meat. Standing at long tables for eight to ten hours a day, the women must pick pounds of crabmeat each day to make minimum wage. They average about $1.25 per pound for meat that sells for $5.50 per pound in local stores. And at the end of each day the women are not paid for the ten to twenty minutes that they are required to spend cleaning their buckets and garbage pails and weighing the crabmeat they’ve packed.

The women have no paid vacation or holidays, no sick leave or maternity leave and no first-aid kits or feminine hygiene dispensers. They have not received a pay raise in the three years that the plants have been operating. Some of these women have approached the company management with their grievances, but they were threatened with being fired. The women are afraid of contacting state or federal agencies for fear of losing their jobs or having the plants close.

Everything You Didn’t Want to Know About that Cuisineart.

In the small appliance manufacturing industry, approximately 400 women build mixers, food processors, crock pots, coffee pots and other household appliances. The women endure headaches, dizziness, nausea and burning eyes from the hazardous chemicals used and noxious gases given off in making plastic casings, baking varnishes on metal components, gluing appliance pieces together, and cleaning machine parts.

The plant has an air conditioning ventilation system, but it is used only when insurance inspectors visit. In the summer temperatures inside the building climb consistently to over 100 degrees. Safety systems are circumvented or don’t exist. Two years ago the workers tried to get union representation, but the presence of sheriff deputies outside their meeting places, and other types of intimidation, successfully halted their efforts. Workers currently are scared to address their many health and safety problems because the plant has had large lay-offs and is rumored to be closing.

The Twenty-One Hour Day.

In a meat-processing plant, about 75 men and women, almost all Black, cook, cut up, trim and package hams and bologna. Starting work at 7 A.M., they do not know when they will go home at night. Usually they work at least 12 hours. Recently five people were fired when they would not stay after working 14 hours (7 A.M. to 9 P.M.). The people who replaced them from other departments worked until 4:30 A.M. (a 21 and a half hour day!). The five had also worked 11 and a half hours the day before and had never previously been required to work longer than 14 hours. These people work with knives and equipment with which they could seriously injure themselves while working such long hours. On the day of the firings, a woman had cut off two of her fingers, having worked several 12-14 hour days in a row. Yet workers do not know about or get Workers’ Compensation.

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**Convenience for the Bosses.**

In convenience stores workers are given frequent, often monthly, lie detector tests when there are shortages in the store's inventory. As a result, firings are frequent even when the tests are inconclusive. In one store an entire shift of five people was fired because the tests did not determine anyone to be guilty. In another store a Black woman was fired because the test's administrator would not give her the test, knowing the woman was pregnant. However, a white pregnant woman was not given the test and was kept on the payroll.

In department stores with retirement plans for long-term employees, older women clerks, both Black and white, are being fired for poor work performances after years of glowing evaluations. Usually the firings happen within two to three years of retirement and occur after management has created a record of poor evaluations and warnings against the women. Clearly it is age discrimination.

**Knowledge, the First Step to Power**

These industries are just examples of the types of workplace injustices women in the region experience. Women workers in many other companies also endure these conditions. To overcome the fear and intimidation created by these injustices, and in order to bring justice to the workplace, women need information about their rights, and the support of other workers and community people. The CWEA fills these needs through its Justice for Women Workers' Project, which works directly with women workers in the factories; the Economic Development component that helps low-income women start cooperative businesses; and the Leadership Development component which assists women in becoming leaders in their own communities, building on skills they already have.

The CWEA believes that women have been systematically left out of the decision making arena. Through education in all areas of women's lives the Center's vision is to create in northeastern North Carolina a community free of racism, sexism, class-based discrimination, and ageism, where women can heal their wounds, fulfill their dreams, and become enablers of others. Executive Director Sarah Fields-Davis said she doesn't want to mislead people. "Organizing in the rural areas is not an easy task. Although the visibility of the Center has grown by leaps and bounds, the fear and intimidation for the women has also grown. They are forced, by circumstances and cultural background, to believe that everything will be all right in the 'Glory Land and Sweet By and By.' There have been planned and fliers put out, and door-to-door contacts made and three people attend." However, Fields-Davis and the rest of the staff believe when women do take control of their lives, the struggle has been well worth the effort.

**Poultry Workers**

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conditions. "This part of the state is so economically destitute that workers can't risk losing their jobs," she said. Now the CWEA is recognizing that many of their goals cannot be reached if organizing is confined to the local community. Poultry workers across the country face similar problems that should be addressed nationally, according to Fields-Davis. The Center has initiated a campaign urging community organizations around the country to join them in fighting on behalf of poultry workers. A possible tactic in the campaign will be a "chicken-out" in which people abstain from eating poultry for a certain period of time.

Workers continue to tell Sarah Fields-Davis, Donna Bazemore and the other women at the CWEA their horror stories. "I just take it one day at a time," said Mona Nichols, a former Perdue worker who was injured on the job. Nichols caught her foot in a conveyor belt, and she said Perdue officials did not give her adequate medical attention or time off. Though she was placed on "light duty," she had to continue working. The foot did not heal properly and she was forced to miss work on sick leave. Eventually Nichols was fired.

Perdue states that injured workers are given care: "In cases of injury, workers are given proper medical attention on site, if needed, by trained medical personnel, and then assisted in obtaining further medical treatment by their own physicians. They may return to work with their doctor's approval. We help employees file for Workers' Compensation, according to procedures and regulations set by the government. Perdue's absenteeism policy is published and explained to each employer prior to employment and repeatedly during employment."

Nichols' foot has now healed but her life and happiness have been disrupted. "My nerves are messed up," she said. "When I went through that, I got the feeling of slavery."

Perdue states that comments by former employees, like those in this article, are illegitimate: "From time to time, Perdue hears of complaints from disgruntled former employees. Such comments, particularly when made through the media, are generally self-serving and are viewed by the company as unfortunate, unfounded and having no merit," reads the statement.

Laura Allen is a reporter based in Durham, North Carolina. She originally wrote this article for New Directions for Women.
The Chicago Pledge of Resistance, like the national Pledge, formed in 1984 as a coalition of religious and community-based groups committed to resisting increased U.S. intervention in Central America. There are now about 1800 Pledge signers in the area. In the past few years the Chicago Pledge has addressed the regional nature of the conflict in Central America, through such activities as a campaign around National Guard deployments to Honduras, emergency demos concerning the war in El Salvador, and educational forums about Panama. Broadly, the Chicago Pledge works to halt U.S. invasions or major escalations in Central America; to end U.S. aid to the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; to withdraw U.S. troops from Central America, and for peaceful settlement of the conflicts there.

The Chicago Pledge believes that U.S. policy in Central America is not isolated from its policy in the rest of the world and at home. In the last year the group has held educational forums about the Persian Gulf war and the Palestinian struggle, and has supported the work of Palestinian, Southern African and Filipino activists. This fall the Chicago Pledge will endeavor to pull many of these issues together in a conference called "Exposing U.S. Global Strategy: Making Connections, Building Alliances."

Though RESIST generally does not make funding conferences a priority, the board shares the Chicago Pledge's concern that Central America activists deepen their understanding and analysis of global issues, so that people sensitive to the issues in Central America will also be willing to work around the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Southern Africa, U.S. racism, homelessness, prisons, and other issues. The conference, to be held in Chicago on November 19th, has an ambitious agenda, including such topics as "Low-Intensity Conflict: Its purposes, strategies and effects globally and at home," "Current Economic Issues: Third World Debt, the World Bank," "Popular Liberation Struggles," and "Institutions of Ideological Control; Media, prisons, schools, churches, and social welfare systems." We at RESIST join the Chicago Pledge in encouraging activists to attend the conference. We'd love to hear about its successes and limitations and the visions and strategies it engenders. Good Luck, Chicago!!

Boston Committee for Puerto Rican Civil Rights, P.O. Box 1222, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.
The Boston Committee for Puerto Rican Civil Rights (BCPRCR) was founded in September, 1985, in response to the wave of repression unleashed against the independence movement of Puerto Rico on August 30th of that year, when over 250 FBI agents raided the homes of independentistas in Puerto Rico, eventually arresting fifteen people and transporting them in military planes to jails in the continental U.S.

While organizing around the case of the Puerto Rico 15, the group has worked to bring the situation of Puerto Rico back to the agenda of the progressive movement in the U.S., linking U.S. colonization and militarization of the island (see RESIST #198, Aug./Sept., 1987) to the situation in Nicaragua, the Middle East, S. Africa and elsewhere. It has also attempted to clarify the connections between the Puerto Rican colonial economy and the economic devastation being faced by the poor, workers and people of color in the U.S.

For the short term, the BCPRCR continues to educate and mobilize Puerto Ricans and progressive North Americans around the growing repression in Puerto Rico, and to support the defendants in the case; to raise money to meet the costs of the trial; to strengthen links to the progressive and independentista movements in Puerto Rico; and to expose the purposes of the Preventive Detention Law of 1984, including its broadly repressive use by the Reagan administration against press freedom, individual freedom of speech and the right to dissent; and to combat the U.S. government's attempts to label independentistas as terrorists.

In the long term, the group will work to build alliances between Puerto Rican activists and others, and to link the racist attacks against Puerto Ricans to attacks against all racial and ethnic minority communities. The Committee has joined with El Comité de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas to establish a Puerto Rican Organizing Resource Center, which will focus on local issues of housing, just salaries, racism, violence against women and unfortunately, so much more...the hope being that this work will increase the organizing capabilities of Latinos in the Boston area.

As in the past two years, a major activity of the group is mobilizing for the demonstration in Hartford, CT, in commemoration of the arrests of the Puerto Rico 15. This year the march was held on Sept. 24th, so as not to conflict with the 25th Anniversary of the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington. In addition to the demand for liberty and justice for the 15, and independence for Puerto Rico, the platform called for the ouster of U.S. military bases and nuclear arms from the island, an end to police brutality in Puerto Rican communities, and this year also included a demand to end violence and discrimination against women, lesbians, gay men and all oppressed people.

RESIST's grant went to organize for the march, including subsidies for low income, elderly, and unemployed people.

ACT NOW-AIDS Coalition to Network, Organize and Win, P.O. Box 73275, Washington, D.C. 20056.
ACT NOW is a network of over fifty AIDS activists' groups in the United States and Canada committed to direct action focused on the AIDS crisis. Formed during the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, ACT NOW has grown into a vocal coalition of groups including people with AIDS, lesbian and gay rights groups, and organizations devoted solely to AIDS activism. Its goals are to reveal the gross inadequacies of both governmental and private sector response to the AIDS crisis, and to build a strong grassroots movement demanding change.

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ACT NOW works on a range of issues related to AIDS, including the need for a free, nationalized health care system; world-wide, culturally sensitive funding focused on ending the AIDS epidemic; and strong opposition to sodomy laws, increases in the military budget, and spending cuts in social service and health programs. The group intends to be inclusive of people of color, women, people with immune system disorders and disabled people, and is creating a steering committee for the organization that will be representative of these groups.

This year ACT NOW co-sponsored (along with the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force, The NAMES Project, and National Gay Rights Advocates) the four-day AIDS activist mobilization in Washington, D.C., October 8-11, dubbed "ACT NOW '88". The schedule included a National AIDS Activist Teach-in, with workshops, round-table discussions, and educational forums; an ACT NOW national conference, a rally at the Health and Human Services Department demanding a compassionate, comprehensive, and informed crisis response to the AIDS epidemic; and "Seize Control of the FDA," a civil disobedience action at the FDA, demanding the release of drug treatments that are currently tied up in red tape.

The broad agenda of these actions includes the demand that the Federal Government recognize universal access to health care as a human right and not a source for profit; that the Centers for Disease Control eliminate arbitrary and life threatening distinctions between AIDS, ARC and HIV infections, and must formulate its demographics based on populations rather than risk groups; that all agencies must include representatives from affected communities at all levels of decision making for HIV-related research, treatment, education and funding programs; and that the Federal government must end all discriminatory practices and policies against people with AIDS, people with ARC, HIV infected persons, their partners and their children.

RESIST's recent grant went towards publicising the cost of the four-day mobilization.

The Resist Pledge System
The most important source of Resist's income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledge!

Yes, I would like to pledge $____ monthly to the work of Resist.

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ______ State __ Zip ___________

"Campaign for Human Rights in Guatemala (fall 1986–spring 1987), which generated over 600 letters to the Guatemalan president calling on him to take action on behalf of human rights.

Each year on October 20th, NISGUA committees raise humanitarian aid for the Guatemalan people. This year, reflecting NISGUA's assessment of the significance of the popular movement, the organization is providing funding to two groups that play a special role in that movement: UNISTRAGUA (the Union of Guatemalan Workers' Unions) and CUC (the Committee for Peasant Unity).

UNISTRAGUA is a new labor federation that is attempting to reactivate and rebuild the independent, private sector unions which were all but destroyed in the late 1970s. The group has been instrumental in pulling together a new coalition of Guatemala's most important labor unions plus peasant groups and student organizations, the first cross-sectional unity grouping formed since the period of extreme governmental repression of the early 1980s. The CUC, an organization of mostly Indian agricultural workers and peasants, was formed in 1978. It was forced underground by fierce government repression in 1980, and only within the past year has it resumed semi-open work. It organizes in the countryside, among the displaced, and with the civilian "population in resistance." CUC is one of the only organizations that can reach directly into these isolated Indian communities.

RESIST's recent grant was used to produce materials promoting the October 20th Human Rights Campaign, and projecting the dynamism of the Guatemalan popular movement.