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Funding social change since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

July/August, 1994

The Boston Health Access Project: A Community Response to the Health Care Crisis in Boston

CATHERINE ANDERSON

For too long this injustice has been going on. It's time we fight back.

—Oscar Farmer
Massachusetts Senior Action
Boston Health Access Project

Oscar Farmer made this statement at one of the Boston Health Access Project's early meetings, and it sums up the feeling of many Boston residents who have witnessed the erosion of their neighborhoods through the big-power moves of Boston's non-profit teaching hospitals. Many of these hospitals, located in the city's poorest neighborhoods, are world famous for their high-cost technology and specialty care. For years, these so-called "non-profit" teaching hospitals have been acting like monolithic giants, accountable only to their boards of trustees, and indifferent to the health needs of their neighbors.

The Boston Health Access Project (BHAP), founded two years ago, attempts to change that dynamic by promoting the rights of people to live in a healthy neighborhood and to control the resources necessary to promote good health for all its members. We are



Members of the Boston Health Access Project and Chinatown residents protest the New England Medical Center's plans to build a garage on community land in November, 1993. The sign reads, "We want a healthy community—we don't want a huge garage."

a broad-based coalition of Boston residents from poor and minority communities who believe that constructive change will come about by addressing not only the medical causes of poor health, but also social and cultural factors such as unemployment, inadequate housing, and lack of access to educa-

tion. We also believe that by putting forward our own skills as parents, community leaders, youth workers, and health care workers, we can refocus the health care debate on community strength rather than deficit.

BHAP is a project of Health Care

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Free speech Movement — 30th Anniversary

Veterans of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley are organizing a social/political reunion to take place December 1-4, 1994. The organizers are urgently looking for fellow veterans — or contacts — and suggestions on how to to reach them, as well as writings, pictures, artwork, memories, music, money to do it with, ideas, etc.

If you can help, write FSM Renion Central, c/o St. Hieronymous Press, 1705 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94709, fax to (510) 549-1405, or e-mail felsenst@interval.com. Checks should be made out to M.C.L.I.—FSM.

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LOOKING FOR FUNDING?

RESIST has often been a resource for groups looking for funding. We recently published a small book entitled, *Finding Funding: A beginner's guide to foundation research*. The booklet gives people an idea of how to get started, and includes a bibliography of important foundation and fund-raising books, a list of Foundation Center Network Libraries, a sampling of large US foundations and what they fund, and a list of the Funding Exchange Network of foundations. We were surprised that no simple guide like this existed, and happy that we had the time, energy, and financial resources to put one together.

For a copy, send \$1 to
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Somerville, MA 02143



ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

Funding social change since 1967

For information and grant guidelines write to:
Resist, One Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143

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For All, a health care consumer advocacy group working for health care reform. Since 1986, Health Care For All has been organizing people and groups who have been disenfranchised from the health care system. Our work is based on the belief that every individual has a right to health care, and that the people who need and use health services are the ones who should be setting health policy.

Kane Report Sparks Community Anger

In May 1993, a study by Nancy Kane of the Harvard School of Public Health and published in the *Boston Globe* provided clear evidence of what many people already knew. The study revealed that in total, Boston's eleven non-profit teaching hospitals were taking in, and hiding from the public, over \$3.2 billion in profits and depreciation. At the same time, these hospitals were shutting down drug treatment programs, HIV testing services, and other needed community health programs. They were paying their top executives salaries of \$500,000 each; they were appealing to the philanthropy community for large donations; and they were telling community health centers that they couldn't afford to fund their projects. In a small back-page article, the *Boston Herald* reported that the New England Medical Center and Massachusetts General Hospital shared the distinction, along with 20 other hospitals across the country, of being audited by the federal government for charging unallowable expenses to Medicare. The New England Medical Center, for example, had purchased antique pillows for its director's office and charged them, along with country club membership dues and catering expenses, to Medicare.

We had the evidence. What we needed was a strategy that would light a fire under the powerful health care industry; keep this information in the public eye; and promote a true *community* health agenda. One of our first tasks was to respond publicly to the Kane report. We held a press conference

at the Mattapan Community Health Center (located in an inner city Boston neighborhood), which had recently lost New England Medical Center funding for a substance-abuse program.

In front of a trailer in the health center's parking lot that was being used for treatment rooms, welfare rights activist Dottie Stevens spoke movingly about being poor and trying to receive dental care. Florence Allen of Mattapan told those present about her son who was denied care at a Boston teaching hospital. Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative director Rogelio Whittington spoke about the health care struggles in city neighborhoods. The day was grey and rainy, and no press attended, but Boston Health Access Project participants counted the rally a success because it brought together diverse groups of Boston residents to work on the common goal of improving community health.

Mobilizing the Community

In organizing Boston residents, BHAP felt it was essential to mobilize community health care activists already engaged in health issues to speak out about the hospitals' greed. At the same time, we wanted to involve less visible communities such as immigrants' groups, homeless groups, and people with disabilities, who also had ideas for improving health care.

The first group of activists was composed of people like Oscar Farmer from Massachusetts Senior Action, a long-time witness to the neglect of Boston neighborhoods and a leader in the African American elder community. These leaders, prepared through years of work in the trenches, were ready to take on the institutions, but needed a unified group to back them up. Many community health center staff members were also interested in becoming involved and lent their spirit to the issue, but could not be as active because they had closer ties with the teaching hospitals and would jeopardize their centers' funding if they were too vocal.

Leaders from the less visible communities may have been new to the issue of hospital financing, but they

were very concerned with the health care problems affecting them, including lack of interpreters' services, high fees for prescription drugs, and lack of bicultural sensitivity on the part of health-care providers. Through joint meetings, workshops in communities, and forums on the Kane report, project participants began to take on an identity as a group. Florence Allen, a long time health care and education activist, and one of the early members of the project, defined the overall purpose of BHAP: "By uniting, we'll make our voices heard. Once we realize the power in our numbers, we can push for a real difference."

Lively Meetings and Real Language

In charting a direction for the project, we kept some general principles in mind. First, we talked about health care policy in real language, not techno-babble. By beginning locally, we reinforced people's common sense: that hospitals have chased wealth instead of improving our health. We tried to run lively meetings that pulled the group together and sparked new ideas. We also realized that we needed a collective place to put our energy. A coalition is a larger force in which people can make a difference. When we informed people that as Massachusetts tax-payers we subsidize these hospitals, which don't pay taxes, they realized that they had every right to demand more. We also involved other coalitions in the city who were working on a similar agenda.

We tried to keep our decision-making policies democratic so that every participant would have ownership of the project. As a group, members recommended that our health care dollars should go to the following: hospital free care (lab fees and doctors fees are not covered under Massachusetts free care); better bicultural and interpreters' services (over 20% of the urban population of Boston are foreign-born); and subsidies for prescription drugs. BHAP members also identified other health related areas that urgently need more effective action, including substance abuse treatment, violence prevention, and community control of development.

continued on next page

By the summer of 1993, BHAP members were meeting regularly to brainstorm about how we could work on specific campaigns. Relying on lessons learned from past community health and local control efforts, such as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's campaign against redlining by the local banks, the group decided to begin its campaign by targeting one local hospital with a particularly bad reputation for community service. We were aware of the problems Chinatown was having in trying to convince the New England Medical Center (NEMC) to withdraw its proposal to build a 455-car garage on land the city had promised for a Chinatown community center. Members of the Chinatown Coalition to Protect Parcel C had attended a few of our meetings and explained the history of Chinatown's struggles against NEMC's expansion plans. The hospital was also known for its long-term neglect of the language needs of Chinatown residents and its indifference to other vulnerable groups.

Members of the Boston American Indian Council saw a link between NEMC's land-grabbing and the history of Native American land rights struggles. Shelagh Flynn, an activist in Mission Hill, had fought similar land issues for many years in the Longwood Medical area of Boston. Harold Ford, who was formerly homeless, was ready to take on NEMC because of its poor services for homeless people in the neighborhood. "If you are sick and homeless," he said, "and staying at the St. Francis Shelter, or living on the streets around Downtown Crossing, you can't just hop on a bus and go down to Boston City Hospital [the city's municipal hospital]. You can't even afford the bus fare." Other participants in these meetings were outraged that a hospital would propose to build a hazardous and dangerous parking garage near a community school, elderly and residential housing, and churches. It was clear that health was not a NEMC priority.

Clarifying Our Agenda

When we decided to target NEMC by holding a demonstration, the China-

town Coalition to Protect Parcel C chose not to co-sponsor the demonstration, in part because it was not clear that this fit into its strategy to stop the parking garage. The group did attend the demonstration, however, and one member, a Chinatown resident, spoke very passionately about the damage the garage would do to the heavily congested neighborhood.

In choosing NEMC, our purpose was to create a momentum centered on community health care. We also wanted to create opportunities for people to gain leadership experience. BHAP participants organized for the rally — getting endorsements from their organizations, inviting others to attend, helping to plan it, and speaking at it. We wanted to ensure that people from all parts of the city — Haitians, the elderly, and disabled people, for example — would see a demonstration in Chinatown at NEMC as part of their own community's struggle as well. On the day of our demonstration in early November, over 200 people came out, including elderly Chinese residents and children who covered their mouths with white masks to make the point that dirt and pollution caused by increased traffic hurts Chinatown residents. Both major Boston newspapers covered the event, and it was featured on that evening's local news.

In our work with the Parcel C coalition, we had to make sure that our health care agenda was understood. We did not want to be the spokespeople for the Chinatown community's struggle

against the garage, or steal the thunder from Parcel C by taking credit for their victories. At the same time, as a city-wide coalition we had to say NO to NEMC's plan to spend valuable health care dollars on an unnecessary and unhealthy parking garage. We also wanted NEMC to hear that no one was willing to talk further about improving the quality of health care for Boston residents until NEMC backed off from the garage. When we were clear to Parcel C that our role would be to support their decisions, they agreed to cosponsor another demonstration targeting NEMC. This one coincided with a Massachusetts Public Health Association's conference on environmental racism. At noon on a bright day in May, we were again able to attract diverse groups and individuals from across the city who cared about the future of Chinatown, and who wanted NEMC to know it. Fewer people attended, but we gained new support from the environmental activist community.

Ongoing Work for an Alternative Health Care Agenda

We are continuing to work with the Chinatown Coalition to Protect Parcel C in strategizing ways to make a real health care agenda explicit to NEMC, and we are working closely with Chinatown health care advocates to assess the needs of the community.

Recent discussion on health care reform has cast a spotlight on the high cost of health care and the need for pre-



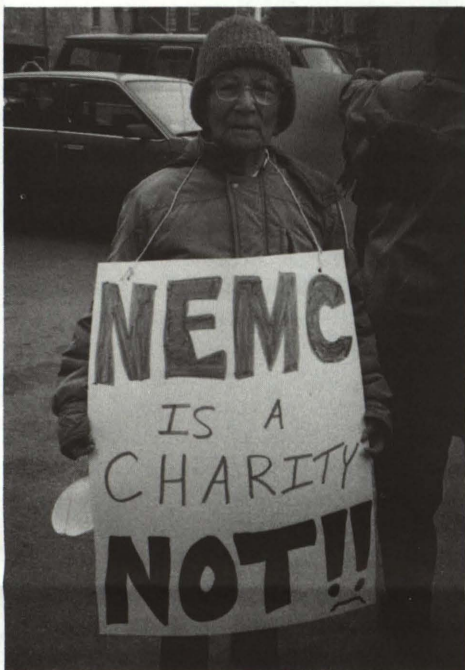
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A Chinatown resident demonstrates against plans by the New England Medical Center to build a parking garage on land promised to residents for a community center.

ventive care. For health care activists and Boston residents these are not new ideas. Everyone knows if you put all your money into lavish buildings and luxury technology, you will have nothing to spend on important things like immunizations, prenatal care, and cancer screening. The purpose of BHAP is to change the terms of the health care reform debate. Instead of looking at poor people as a "health problem," BHAP demands that hospitals listen to the health concerns of the neighborhoods where they are located, and give people the power to decide where *their* health care dollars should go. Instead of asking "How do we compete for patients?" hospitals need to answer the question "How do we improve the health of all people?" If hospitals were in concert with communities, they could contribute to finding a solution to the health care crisis.

BHAP has made strides in furthering community input at the policy level. Last summer, BHAP members from the Chinese, Haitian, and Latino communities, along with Health Care For All, called on the Massachusetts Attorney General to review how hospitals serve communities in order to justify their tax-exempt status. BHAP mem-

Taking Action/Making Change:

A Handbook on Health Care Reform

by Health Care for All

Reviewed by KATHY SIMMONDS,
Nurses for National Health Care

Available for \$5.00 from Health Care for All, 30 Winter St., Suite 1007, Boston, MA 02108. (617) 350-7279.

Health Care for All's (HCFA) new publication *Taking Action/Making Change: A Handbook on Health Care Reform* is a no-nonsense guide aimed at would-be health rights activists. Written in clear, accessible language, the booklet provides specific tools for action in order to mobilize those of us who feel overwhelmed and paralyzed by the jumble of information available on health care issues.

The handbook leads the reader through an analysis of the current health care crisis, explaining in simple terms why our current system is not working and why it is so expensive. Interspersed throughout this section are moving and motivating anecdotes of individuals personally affected by the contradictions and inadequacies of the health care system (or "disease-cure non-system" as it has been perhaps more aptly called by some health care advocates). The booklet goes on to discuss reform of the system, starting with an outline of the two major options currently being debated in Congress: single payer and managed competition. While the authors do not deny the advantages of managed competition over our present system, the booklet is clear in its support of a single payer plan for bringing about real health care reform.

Next comes a list of principles that HCFA deems essential for any plan in order to meet the needs of the population. These include equal access for all

regardless of ability to pay, increased focus on primary care, and cost containment through reduction of overcharging and waste, rather than by rationing needed services. While this section provides a useful summary of basic requirements for any plan, it fails to address a number of issues, such as how the needs of undocumented immigrants should be met under a reformed system.

Finally, the booklet prods the reader to action, offering a number of useful tools, such as the "Quick Check-up," a series of ten specific questions that can be applied to any health reform proposal to evaluate how well it will meet individual needs, and a sample letter which can be used as a model for writing to key members of Congress. The booklet's parting message is that we must act together in these efforts. There is a list of national organizations working for health care reform that readers moved to action can join.

While this handbook is not a sophisticated, in-depth analysis of the latest politically motivated proposals on the health reform scene, its strength lies in its promotion of solid organizing techniques. While its main focus is on the creation of a health rights movement, it has the potential to contribute, as well, to building a larger, stronger, national progressive movement. ♦

Kathy Simmonds is a nurse at Martha Eliot Health Center in Jamaica Plain, MA. She is a member of Nurses for National Health Care. For information about the organization, write Nurses for National Health Care, c/o Sonia Lipson, 22 Prospect Hill Ave., Somerville, MA 02143, or call (617) 625-3072.

bers testified about how poorly their communities are currently served by the non-profit hospitals, and made recommendations for how those relationships could be improved. In response, the

Attorney General formed a working committee of those who testified to come up with new guidelines for non-profit hospitals. The newly released

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guidelines include most of the committee's recommendations: hospitals should design a community benefits mission statement, define the community for whom the benefits are intended, and work with the community to define these benefits. This was a significant achievement for the committee, and an illustration of cross-cultural collaboration on a shared goal.

In the future, BHAP will include more non-English speaking and immigrant groups in its leadership. We are piloting a project with the Latina community center, Mujeres Unidas en Accion, focused on the health care concerns of immigrant Latina women in the Dorchester neighborhood, and we are working to incorporate the ideas of Haitian and Vietnamese organizations for making the health care system more responsive to their cultures. We plan to hold a big festival this year that will be an opportunity for people from diverse communities across the city to come together and share their beliefs and perspectives on health care. We also will provide training sessions on health care resources, using the Kane report as a starting point, and explaining how communities can use the Attorney General's guidelines as a tool for dialogue when negotiating with hospitals for better community care.

From these and other collaborative efforts at the local level, we believe we can plant the seeds for a community health care agenda that includes everyone. ♦

Catherine Anderson is Editor of Publications for Health Care For All and has worked on immigrants' rights issues in Boston for many years. For information on becoming involved with the Boston Health Access Project, or to learn more about its health care reform efforts in Boston's neighborhoods, contact Meizhu Lui, coordinator of the project, at Health Care For All, 30 Winter Street, Suite 1007, Boston, MA, 02108, or call 617-350-7279.

We Thought You Might be Interested...

In each issue of the newsletter, we try to let readers in on some of the many useful resources that come through our office. In most cases we try to review the item before we include it here, but occasionally we'll rely on the PR sent with it, so please call the groups listed below for more info before making a purchase. And if you've got a resource you think other RESIST readers should know about, please write and let us know.

Inside Belize

With *Inside Belize*, Tom Barry and the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center add yet another title to their growing and impressive paperback guides to social, economic and environmental conditions in Central America and Mexico. Well-documented, readable and current, the book is a comprehensive look at a multi-racial society coping with poverty, eco-tourism, war in neighboring nations, and the consequences of being a tax haven for some of America's super rich. For copies, which cost \$9.95, write the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, Box 4506 Albuquerque, N.M. 87196.

Giants of Garbage

Nowhere do economic power and environmental issues intersect as neatly as when the garbage truck stops to haul off the waste from our homes. Throughout North America, in small towns and large cities, trucks are labeled BFI, Laidlaw, or Waste Management Inc., not the long familiar municipal-owned truck. Hardly a day passes without some city manager selling off the social wealth we've created in public sanitation departments to one of these behemoths. Jobs go. Our wealth is transferred into private hands. In *Giants of Garbage: The Rise of the Global Waste Industry and the Politics of Pollution Control*, Harold Crooks explains what business we have, as citizens, to be interested in garbage.

In the name of privatization, BFI, or Laidlaw, or WMI buy the assets of our taxes, or bonds, built up over years and years. Our wealth is usually sold for a pittance. Then, using long-term contracts with local governments, these multinational corporations generate huge profits, set regional, even national, waste policy, and strip us

of democratic control of local government. Canadian Barbara Wallace of the Citizens' Clearinghouse on Waste Management sums up the situation neatly: the "...waste industry ... is beginning to operate as a shadow government to uneven contests between those fighting for money and those fighting for ... democratic determination..." James Lorimer & Co Ltd. of 35 Britain Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1R7, Canada, is the publisher. Price: \$16.95.

TRANET Lives

Would you believe? TRANET lives! *The Transnational Network for Appropriate Alternative Technologies* is a quarterly newsletter. Issue No. 89, July 1994, has just been issued, full of neatly categorized resources for anyone looking for the means to change their lives. Upcoming: a series of TRANET pamphlets detailing how the economics of cooperation are working in communities. If RESIST readers want to contribute, or have suggestions, contact TRANET, Box 567, Rangely, ME 04970. Telephone 207-864-2252.

The Essence of Social Change

Activist Fran Peavey has written her third book on social change, *By Life's Grace: Musings On The Essence Of Social Change*. While she lives in the San Francisco Bay area, she turns up in Bosnia, or in South Africa, or at a homeless shelter in the South Bronx. Peavey has an infectious wit, and a genius for causing people to think about themselves in new ways. As in her earlier books, wisdom grown from experience is the premise of this volume. Peavey's at her best when asking the sort of open-ended questions which get people to analyze problems and to look for collective solutions. As Rep. Ron Dellums says in the foreword: "The section on 'Strategic Questioning' alone makes this book a prize."

Order through your favorite bookstore, or directly from New Society Publishers, 4527 Springfield Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143. Paper: \$13. Cloth: \$39.95.

This issue's resource column compiled by Tatiana Schreiber and Frank Adams. If you would like to write brief reviews of books and organizational resources, please contact Tatiana at the office.

Cancer Activists Alert!

We recently received word from Lois Gibbs, Director of the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, concerning a new campaign to get pesticides out of our foods. The "Protect Our Children—Save Delaney Campaign" is centered on the current administration's plans to abolish the Delaney Clause, a food safety regulation that allows no tolerance for cancer-causing chemicals in processed foods. In fact, the Delaney Clause has been largely unenforced in the past. A court order in July, 1993, forced the EPA to finally enforce the law, and now EPA Director Carol Browner has determined that it is unworkable. Her alternative, according to Gibbs, is to use a cancer risk assessment to allow an additional one-in-a-million cancer deaths per chemical, per food product, per year. Given the large number of pesticides (three billion pounds per year) and other chemicals used in food production and processing, this could result in thousands of needless cancer deaths.

If Delaney is abolished, carcinogenic food colorings, preservatives, and other non-pesticide additives will also be allowed into the food supply. If the Clause is retained, and enforced, the EPA will have to ban about 50 cancer-causing pesticides currently being used. The Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste (CCHW), Greenpeace, and several other groups are organizing the campaign not only to save Delaney, but to extend its protection to fresh fruits and vegetables. The food processing industry (epitomized by Dole Foods) and the pesticide industry are pulling out all the stops in Washington to persuade Congress to kill the Delaney Clause.

Action in Congress is likely this fall. CCHW offers a campaign kit for activists. To get involved, call (703) 237-2249.

Chicago Arts Initiative Targets Violence

If you're in Chicago this summer, you might want to check out an innovative arts education program that is helping kids focus their imaginations and energies on peace instead of violence. The Peace Museum, at 350 W. Ontario St. in Chicago is committed to exploring creative, nonviolent solutions to social problems. Their summer exhibit "Drive-By Peace" features toys, games, and artworks created by children in the Cabrini-Green development as part of the Museum's Drive-By Peace educational program. The artwork depicts "incidents of peace" and

methods of non-violent conflict resolution to use when roadblocks to peace arise.

About 200 kids participated in the 20-week program and had a chance to express their dreams for peace through art. They wrote essays and poetry, practiced role-plays, took photographs, and even created a rap version of Hamlet in which they helped Hamlet find alternatives to revenging his father's death. When kids were asked to imagine a new world, and draw a picture of what was needed for a peaceful life, they filled their papers with images of churches, hospitals, parks, doctor's offices, stores and restaurants. There were almost no guns or police in this imaginary world.

Among the groups funding this project were incarcerated men at two Correctional Centers in Illinois. The prisoners organized fundraisers and contributed over \$500 in support of the program, mostly in \$1.00 donations. Their tribute to the children in the program is included in the exhibit. The exhibit is up through August 27th. For more info, call (312) 440-1860.

Women Prisoners with AIDS

Women Prisoners with AIDS and their supporters outside are fighting for better healthcare at the Central California Women's Facility at Chowchilla. Despite demonstrations and three recent deaths, the medical neglect and abuse of prisoners continues unabated, according to the Coalition to support Women Prisoners at Chowchilla.

The Coalition has called for an investigation into recent deaths and the quality of medical care. Sonja Stapels died on January 2, 1994, of AIDS-related pneumonia and other complications. She was diagnosed as HIV+ only two weeks before she died, although her cellmates had tried for over a month to bring her poor condition to the attention of medical staff. She never received any preventive care or treatment. Jackie Jenkins, a woman with AIDS, became very ill after working with pesticides at the prison farm for nine months. Again, her cellmates tried unsuccessfully to get her appropriate care, and later to get a compassionate release. She was finally taken to a hospital where she died of AIDS-related complications.

Molly Reyes suffered an internal organ rupture and was violently vomiting blood in her cell. She and her cellmates screamed for over an hour to get medical attention. She was finally taken to the infirmary where she died. Unfortunately, medical neglect is nothing new in the prison. None of the women,

including those with level 4 (cancerous) pap smears, have seen a gynecologist. There is no real HIV/AIDS education, except a peer education program begun by a group of women prisoners which the prison refused to officially sanction or support.

The Coalition urges everyone to join the campaign for justice and better medical care. For more information, contact the Coalition to Support Women Prisoners at Chowchilla, P.O. Box 14844, San Francisco, CA 94114. Call (510) 530-6214.

Anti-Sex Education Forces at Work in Upstate New York.

An alert RESISTer sent us a clipping from the *City Newspaper* of Rochester, NY. The writer, Jack Bradigan Spula, cited the September, 1993 issue of RESIST (Vol. 2, #7) in which the Coalition for Positive Sexuality of Chicago outlined its work producing a booklet that gives positive sex information to high school youth. Apparently in Rochester, a sex educator tried to do just that. As a result, the Monroe County Legislature voted to withhold \$200,000 from the Threshold Center for Alternative Youth Services, which sponsored the presentation.

The presenter from the Threshold Center provided a three-page handout to answer questions submitted by eighth-graders during an AIDS prevention program at a local Middle School. The handout was, in Spula's words, "detailed, informal, upbeat, and frank." Kids' questions were answered factually and completely, and included reminders that kids shouldn't feel they have to do anything they don't want to do, when it comes to pressure to have sex. Nonetheless, the School Superintendent labeled the handout "totally inappropriate."

Stula wrote, "The district's reaction to the handout, which of course mirrors 'community values' as expressed by many parents, is up to its eyeballs in the puritan mainstream. No wonder progressives often feel compelled to hit the streets, as have some young people in the Chicago area..." He went on to describe the work of the Coalition for Positive Sexuality in detail and decried the "nationwide attack on adolescent sexuality under the rubric of 'abstinence.'"

For a copy of the RESIST article, write or call the office, or Contact the Coalition for Positive Sexuality, 3712 North Broadway, #191, Chicago, IL 60613.

Please write! We're especially interested in publishing your successes!

In Memoriam

Peter Medoff, 1957-1994

Peter Medoff was 37 when he died of complications due to AIDS on Sunday, April 17th, of this year. I had seen him just a few days earlier, at a book-signing party for the release of *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood*, which Peter co-authored with Holly Sklar. The book is dedicated to the residents of the Dudley Street Neighborhood, where Peter spent the years from 1985-1989 as Director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative — a grassroots community group that took charge and revitalized this area of Boston.

Peter was born in Boston and raised in Newton, Massachusetts. He was a writer, a community organizer, an activist for housing rights, for union, gay, and AIDS issues, and a friend to many in the RESIST community. I met Peter while working on the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, shortly after he had moved back to town from Hartford, Connecticut. He was responsible, reliable, astute, funny, and a pleasure to work with. He was a mensch. I will always remember his warm, wonderful, deep smile.

Harneen Chernow, a member of the Gay and Lesbian Labor Activist Network, said about Peter: "He had the respect and friendship of so many different kinds of people — gay people, union people, city officials, Dudley Street residents. It is particularly unusual to have a white gay man that can build these kinds of bridges — to have

the sensitivity, the personality, and the politics to be able to do that. He had such good politics. He was in all these different worlds, he had friendships and fun and did good political work. He had a vision. He had joy. His death is a tremendous loss, a collective loss, to our community."

We all have our own memories of Peter. One of the strongest images for many of his friends was seeing him playful and proud at the 1993 March on Washington, with the Gays in the Millinery contingent, a campy counterpoint to what became a march focused on the rights of gays to be in the military. We have other collective memories of attending numerous protests with him, being at meetings with him, visiting the Living Center (a drop-in center for People With AIDS) with him, and finally seeing him at his book signing party — thin, frail, old before his time, but still with a strong clear voice and vision. He seemed happy that day, though we all knew we were about to lose him. He signed my book, "keep up the good fight" and I will surely try. But the more people like Peter we lose, the harder it gets.

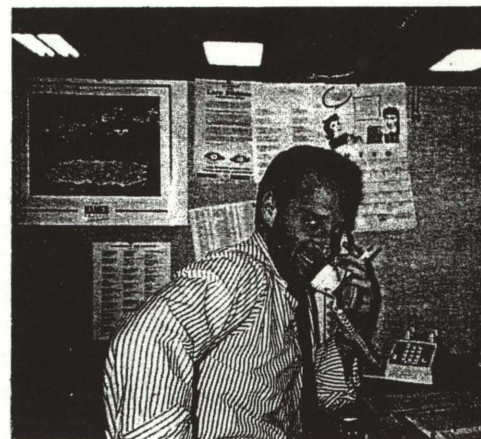
—Nancy Wechsler

Note: Jesse Jackson writes of *Streets of Hope*, "Whatever your political views or policy ideas, if you care about the future of the inner city and the country, read this powerful book."

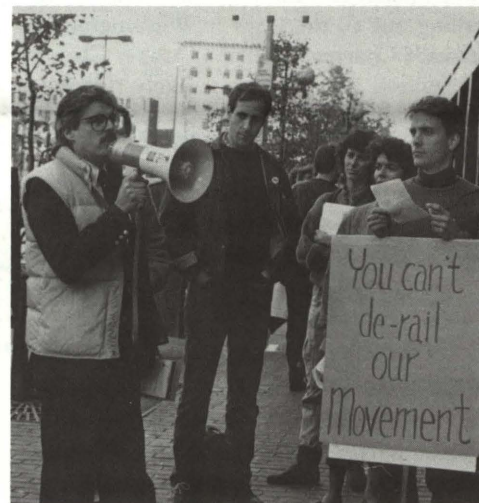
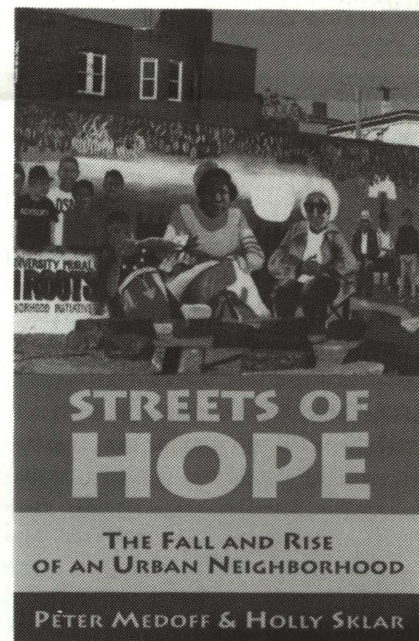
We will have a review of *Streets of Hope* in an upcoming issue of *RESIST*.



Peter Medoff marching in the "Gays in the Millinery" contingent at the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Peter's in the center with the pink hat.



Peter, working...



Peter, to the right of the speaker, at a demonstration protesting Amtrak's cancellation of the "gay train" to the 1987 March on Washington. Photo: Nancy Wechsler.

GRANTS

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The group is also planning a "Public Policy Project," organizing small groups to disseminate information about environmental bills, develop letter-writing campaigns, and teach community members how to talk to the media, hold public meetings, and invite speakers. PCR co-founded a coalition, "Citizens United to Reclaim the Environment," consisting of community groups throughout the southeast side area addressing environmental issues. [For more information on the projects of PCR, including its important work documenting health problems of community members, see "Environmental Racism: A Personal Point of View," by Cheryl Johnson in *RESIST*, Vol. 2, #10, December, 1993.]

RESIST's recent grant was used for the newsletter, including a special edition soliciting new members and writers, photographers, and artists. The edition focused on three federal environmental bills which PCR wanted voters to support.

Political Ecology Group

519 Castro Street, Box 111
San Francisco, CA 94114

The Political Ecology Group was formed in 1990 as a volunteer organization for environmental justice. The group wrote and distributed its first action paper, "War in the Gulf: An Environmental Perspective," in January, 1991, and was instrumental in forming the Bay Area Environmental Peace Action Network during the Gulf War. The group held eight public forums in 1991 highlighting environmental justice issues affecting communities of color. In 1992, the group organized a coalition with the American Indian Movement and others to protest events honoring Columbus, including a mass demonstration that prevented a re-enactment of Columbus' landing, the first time since 1871 that the event did not take place.

The Political Ecology Group is committed to linking ecology and social justice issues through action, education, and organizing in order to achieve peace, justice, and ecological stability. The group works closely with many other groups, particularly those led by people of color. Recently the group has played a key role in organizing the Push Back the Poison Campaign to stop the WMX waste management company from building a toxic incinerator in Kettleman City, California.

Kettleman City is a Mexican farm-working community half-way between Los Angeles and San Francisco. The proposed incinerator would burn hazardous waste for the entire western region of the U.S., turning California into a thoroughfare for toxic waste. WMX is the world's largest garbage company, with annual revenues of \$10 billion in over 22 countries. It encourages waste production by "managing" waste and profiting from it. It, and its subsidiary, Chem Waste, have a history of accidents and blatant violations of environmental and worker safety laws.

Hundreds of communities throughout the country are fighting WMX and similar giant corporations. The Political Ecology Group has produced the action paper, "Toxic Empire: A Political Ecology of Waste Management Technologies, Inc. (WMX)," which provides key information to activists and can be used to promote discussion and action among communities addressing the toxic waste crisis. The paper covers new and existing trends in hazardous waste disposal, the role of WMX, and new tactics in community resistance including international cooperation. RESIST's recent grant was used to pay for Spanish translation and camera work on a new printing of the paper for use in Spanish speaking communities in the U.S. and Latin America.

Eastern North American Native Forest Network

21 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

The Eastern North American Native Forest Network (ENA NFN) was formed following the First International Temperate Forest Conference in Tasmania, Australia, in November, 1992. Its goal is to bring together forest activists, non-governmental organizations, and indigenous people from eastern North America to preserve the last remaining native forests in this region. Communication and networking is essential in order to track the activities of multinational conglomerates which control timbering in these forests. In November, 1993, the group organized the first North American Temperate Forest Conference at the University of Vermont, attended by over 500 activists and indigenous peoples from six Nations. The group has organized and attended several rallies and demonstrated at the Australian Consulate in New York and in Idaho to protest destruction of the largest

roadless area in the lower 48 states.

The timber industry, which has decimated many of the forests of western North America, has begun moving operations east. In the northeast, logs are being exported whole to the Far East, while we import whole logs from Russia. For these reasons, the ENA NFN believes it is urgent that a forest movement be jumpstarted in the east to protect remaining forests and allow them to fully regenerate and become intact biological entities once again. If these forests are clear cut again, many ecologists predict, they will not be capable of regeneration and future forests will not support song birds, many mammals, amphibians, and insects. And, of course, forest loss will have a devastating effect on the global climate.

The purpose of the ENA NFN is to ensure the maintenance of biodiversity and ecological integrity; to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and forest dwellers; to ensure that cultural values within ecosystems are identified and protected; and to ensure the maintenance of ecological productivity to benefit all species. The group believes that environmental and social justice/human rights movements must become cohesive. Environmental and forest protection work must be linked to post-consumer and environmental racism issues such as toxins, incinerators, and landfills. ENA NFN is working closely with native peoples on a number of issues, and is part of an international native forest network.

Among the group's activities are an international day of Action against Hydro-Quebec to publicize the utilities international and provincial projects; coalition work with Vermont forest groups to create a state-wide strategy regarding increasing pressures on Vermont forests; and sponsoring the Northeast Regional Environmental Activist Gathering which was held this past spring.

Together with the Earthlands Institute of Petersham, MA, the ENA NFN recently organized an activist training week for forty participants. Workshops included sessions on indigenous forest knowledge; ecology of the forest; histories of various forest preservation struggles; civil disobedience training; non-violent direct action tactics; fundraising and other organizational skills; and media skills.

RESIST's grant was used to cover expenses for the activist training week.

GRANTS

In each issue of the newsletter we highlight a few recent grants made to groups around the country. In this issue we provide an expanded grant report section, focusing on groups addressing environmental and health issues. The information in these reports is provided to us by the groups themselves. For more details, please write to them at the addresses included here.

Missisquoi River Project, Wobanaki, Inc.

P.O. Box 276

Missisquoi (Swanton, VT) 05488.

The Missisquoi River Project was organized in 1993 by the Abenaki Nation as a way to protect the Missisquoi River while the Nation fights in court for its right to title of the river watershed area. This is one of the most important rivers in the heart of western Abenaki territory (in what is now Vermont). Tagua Hunga, the village on the lower Missisquoi where present day Swanton is, was a major Abenaki village and one of the strongholds of the Abenaki resistance to English colonial expansion. In 1765, a settler negotiated a lease with local Abenaki families allowing them to use the area for 91 years, but without surrendering Abenaki title to the land nor the right to subsistence from the river.

The Missisquoi remains a center of Abenaki life, providing fishing, trapping, hunting, gathering, and a spiritual center for the community. Though war, disease, and occupation have destroyed many Abenaki communities along the river, people have always returned, and today the tribal office of the Abenaki Nation is

located in Swanton. During the past twenty years, the Abenaki People have been organizing to have their fishing rights respected, and have held several "fish-ins" to protest state regulation of their traditional way of life. A Vermont District Court decision found that the Abenaki do retain the right to fish and hunt, and also hold title to most of the Missisquoi watershed. However, this decision was overturned in the Vermont Supreme Court. Now Abenaki people must buy state licenses to fish or hunt and certain traditional practices have been made illegal.

The pollution and misuse of the river have only made the Abenaki more determined to get the land back. The fish are showing clear indication of contamination as a result of pollution from many sources. Wetlands close to Lake Champlain contain oil slicks, and the Abenaki community along the river has a very high cancer rate, as well as other illnesses. During the spring and summer of 1993 there were large scale fish kills on the river and in Lake Champlain, close to the mouth of the river. Despite this and declining numbers of fish over the last several years, state and federal officials insist the problems are "natural." The Abenaki know the river well enough to know this cannot be the case, and they know that unless public pressure forces them to, officials will not move to save the area, and bring it back to health.

The Project, coordinated by the Abenaki Nation, involves both Native and non-Native people living in the area. Its purpose is to identify each pollution source and work to clean up the river. The severity of the problems calls for a coordinated effort that currently includes students from Dartmouth Medical School, the University

of Vermont, Vermont Law School, and a number of other schools and colleges; environmental groups such as the Vermont River Watch network, and some state and local officials. Efforts are underway to monitor and test for toxins in the water, fish, and other wildlife. In addition, the Project is targeting certain "management practices" on the part of the Department of Fish and Game, such as the electrocution of fish in the spring, and the taking of eggs from these fish.

A long term goal of the Project is to teach the environmentalist community and local non-Native people respect for the Abenaki relationship to the river, and to help them overcome fears about what will happen when the Nation eventually gains federal recognition and some of the land is returned. Another component of the Project is to teach young Abenaki people subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering skills and share traditions and history they are in danger of losing. RESIST's recent \$1000 grant to the project will help with office supplies, telephone, fax, and other office expenses.

People for Community Recovery

13116 S. Ellis Avenue
Chicago, IL 60627

People for Community Recovery (PCR) is a community based environmental group located in a public housing development on the southeast side of Chicago. The group was started to push for needed repair work in the development, Altgeld Gardens, but soon turned its attention to environmental pollution when it was discovered that the area had the highest incidence of cancer of any area in the city of Chicago.

One of the goals of PCR is to bring African Americans into the environmental movement. The group's newsletter, *F.A.T.E.*, is a vehicle used to educate and gain membership from across the country. The newsletter focuses on issues of concern to people of color. Currently PCR is developing a "Community Outreach Project" to identify small groups of people who will participate in environmental education workshops. Participants learn about landfills, incinerators, and chemical pollution as well as energy efficiency, recycling, and energy saving products and practices.

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Join the Resist Pledge Program

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge. Pledges account for over 25% of our income. By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder, along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded, and the other work being done at Resist. So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

☐ **Yes! I would like to become a Resist Pledge. I'd like to pledge \$ _____ / _____ (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, 2x a year, yearly).**

☐ **Enclosed is my pledge contribution of \$ _____.**

☐ **I can't join the pledge program just now, but here's a contribution to support your work. \$ _____**

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Resist

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