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Funding social change since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

May 1996

Rolling Through History *Project HIP-HOP Teaches Lessons of Activism*

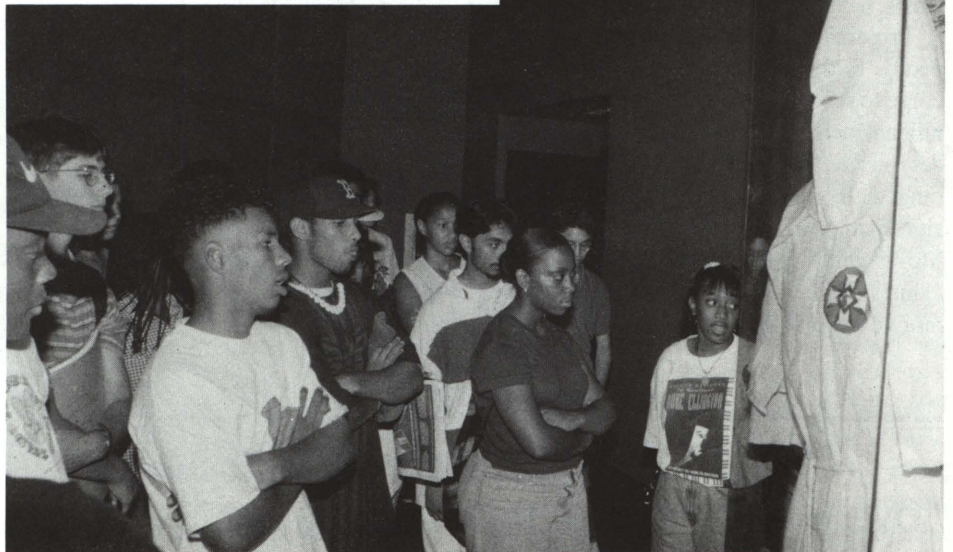
NANCY MURRAY

In mid June nine Boston-area teenagers will journey to South Africa. They will arrive in Johannesburg in time for the 20th anniversary of the Soweto uprising. For three weeks they will travel around the country with young South Africans who have taken part in liberation struggles. "We see this," says 16 year-old Mariama White-Hammond of Roxbury, Massachusetts, "as an incredible opportunity to learn directly from young people involved in the freedom movement, and to develop together strategies for fighting racism in both our societies."

For these young people, the idea of traveling to other areas to meet with leaders of civil rights struggles is not new. In fact, during the past three summers high school students from Massachusetts have participated in Project HIP-HOP (Highways into the Past: History Organizing Project), learning from activists, and communicating their experiences to their peers.

A rolling classroom South

The young people will be traveling to South Africa with former SNCC activist and freedom singer Hollis Watkins, whom they first met in Jackson, Mississippi when they took part in Project HIP-HOP's rolling classroom. Organized by the ACLU of Massachusetts' Bill of Rights Education Project,



Students from Project HIP-HOP view 19th Century Ku Klux Klan regalia at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. *Photo by Hubert Murray*

Project HIP-HOP has for the past three summers taken a diverse group of students—more than 40 in all—on a 5,000 mile "civil rights tour" of the U.S. South, seeing the sites where history was made and meeting Movement veterans and young people who are today activists in the fight for social justice.

When they visited Hollis Watkins at his organization Southern Echo, where he continues to work for voter registration and democratic accountability, he told them that he had joined the Movement at the "relatively old age of nineteen."

Watkins underscored a message which Project HIP-HOP participants were to hear repeatedly from Movement veterans during their Southern journey, but which was absent from their classrooms: that the Movement of the 50s and 60s was not made by this or that leader; that young people, even children, were in the forefront, and in their thousands had risked their lives and filled the jails; that the torch must now be passed to a new generation of activists determined to take up the Movement's "unfinished business."

continued on page two

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Learning the lessons of activism

Project HIP-HOP is about making connections. It connects young people to a history of social transformation made in large part by youth like themselves. It connects them to their nation's history of racism, and helps them grasp why Dr. King told his staff at a retreat in November 1966 that the "changes" made by the Movement "were at best surface changes; they were not really substantive changes. . . . The roots of racism are very deep in America; our society is still structured on the basis of racism" (quoted in David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, p. 537).

Project HIP-HOP also connects young people to the world around them, as they come to recognize the persistence of institutional racism in power relationships which determine, and justify, how society is arranged. It provides a lens to analyze the significance of the rollback of some of the Movement's gains, signaled by Supreme Court decisions in redistricting and affirmative action cases.

young people, like those at the Kujichagulia Center in the poorest part of New Orleans, who have used the techniques of mass protest and civil disobedience, in one instance to defeat funding cuts imposed by City Hall.

workers murdered during the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer, and accompanied Rosa Parks in a recreation of the 1968 "I Am a Man" march in Memphis, Tennessee, Project HIP-HOP participants had come

The torch must now be passed to a new generation of activists determined to take up the Movement's "unfinished business."

A multicultural society in microcosm

And it connects them with each other. Each Project HIP-HOP group has been diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, class (the majority have been low-income), educational background and life experience. Some have been outstanding students; others had dropped out of school before taking part in Project HIP-HOP. Some were already activists in their schools and communities; others were totally immersed in the life of the streets.

The long van rides are an important part of the Project HIP-HOP experience. As they learn about the role which racism has played in our history and continues to play today, the young people keep up both directed

to regard themselves as "torch-bearers" for the spirit of the Movement and a microcosm of the kind of society which can be built in America.

"Through HIP-HOP," wrote Philipines-born Marco Garrido, "I have felt the spirit that fueled the movement. Our HIP-HOP model community has given me the hope that such an environment can exist. One without the oppressive weight of injustice. . . . HIP-HOP has stirred me to social consciousness. Yes, I saw the good the Movement had done, the untiring vigor of its activists, but I have also seen and heard and felt the injustice the Movement sought to end. This injustice, which be-

to regard themselves as "torch-bearers" for the spirit of the Movement and a microcosm of the kind of society which can be built in America.

"This injustice, which before had overwhelmed me, now angers me. I accept my responsibility to continue what the Movement began."

It also brings them in touch with a grassroots progressive movement, embodied by such organizations as the Highlander Center in eastern Tennessee, the Piedmont Peace Project in Kannapolis, North Carolina, the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond in New Orleans, and the Open Door Community in Atlanta. Meeting face-to-face with activists and hearing their stories have provided inspiration for Project HIP-HOP youth. It connects them with

and informal conversations with each other about their own encounters with injustice, and their own prejudices and stereotypes. In the words of a journalist who accompanied the group, Project HIP-HOP "is a journey not only into the past, but also through their own lives."

By the end of a journey during which they strained together to raise the toppled tombstone on the vandalized grave of James Chaney, one of the three civil rights



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fore had overwhelmed me, now angers me. Stronger, I accept my responsibility to continue what the Movement began, to finish the unfinished business.”

Spreading the word

Over the past three years, Marco Garrido and other Project HIP-HOP participants have made presentations in more than 120 schools and community centers around Massachusetts, to some 10,000 of their peers. They have shown slides and talked about the history of the Movement, their meetings with Movement veterans and the reversal of Movement gains now underway. Project HIP-HOP youth ask their peers what they think overcoming racism is—is it simply about getting along with people who may be different from you? About changing feelings and attitudes? What then did Dr. King mean when he said that the heart of the matter was that “something is wrong with the economic system of our nation”? They explain that the resegregation of housing and schools, and growing economic inequalities, are the result of deliberate policy decisions, and not simply part of the “natural order of things.”

The students also talk about the need for youth to be involved in the creation of a society which at last lives up to its democratic ideals. In the words of a Latina student, “Today, there is a common feeling of apathy that needs to be overcome. How many times have you felt like you as an individual have no strength to make changes? We have to learn not to give in to that sense of helplessness. . . . My personal journey of discovery has just begun” (Bill of Rights Network, Autumn 1995).

Their presentations have made a powerful impact, nowhere more so than in those suburban schools where many students have internalized notions of society as already “color blind,” the playing field as already level, and affirmative action as “reverse discrimination.” The fact that presenters are African-American, Asian-



Youth activists from Project HIP-HOP visit the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. Photo by Hubert Murray

American, Latino and white makes it difficult for their message to be dismissed out of hand as something for a particular group: for “them” but not for “us.”

It is the future for “all of us” that concerns these young people. What lessons can be drawn from the Movement for the 1990s, when there is no single target as compelling as Jim Crow segregation? And when the politics of scapegoating are supported by an economic system that thrives on difference? Bringing young people together across differences enables them to identify the need and vision to organize.

New directions and horizons

The nine veterans of Southern tours will soon be exploring patterns of racism and histories of resistance with their South African peers. They will bring an important international dimension to their work as Project HIP-HOP’s Youth Advisory Board. They will learn about colonialism, and connections forged in the world-wide battle against white supremacy and imperialism. They will also discover why non-violent direct action was an effective strategy for people fighting to make real constitutional rights which they already possessed on paper, but a costly strategy in a police state where apartheid was the law of the land. And they will examine post-apartheid approaches to an issue of pressing concern in their own society: what happens after the “whites only” signs have been taken down? What will it take to make sure “the doors to a better society open wider for us all”?

On their return to the U.S., the students will be involved in making a film about Project HIP-HOP South Africa aimed at high school audiences, in creating an interactive World Wide Web site, and in compiling a “resistance” curriculum with young people from a Roxbury housing project. They will also organize a retreat for representatives from other Massachusetts-

based youth groups that work for social change, as a step toward developing a common agenda of youth activism transcending racial and ethnic divisions.

Nancy Murray is the director of the Bill of Rights Education Project of the American Civil Liberties Union. For more information about Project HIP-HOP, contact the Bill of Rights Education Project, ACLU of Massachusetts, 99 Chauncy Street, Suite 310, Boston, MA 02111. Project HIP-HOP received a Resist grant in 1996.

Being Young is not a Crime:

Youth Organizing in San Francisco

LISA PAGAN

Last spring, ¡PODER!, a multi-issue, multi-cultural, inter-generational community organization in San Francisco, decided to begin working on diminishing crime in our community from a prevention perspective. Most organizations, even church- or community-based groups in our area, work on crime from the perspective that we need to fight to get more police in our district, or we need to pressure the city to put more video monitors on buses to record crimes on public transportation.

Former mayor Frank Jordan attempted to convince San Franciscans that a curfew on the city's young people would reduce crime. The mayor placed Proposition L on the November 1995 ballot, a proposal which would have made it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be out past 11:00 P.M. on week nights and Sundays, or past midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Under the ordinance, a community center would have been converted into a detention center for youth detained after curfew.

Youth renounce curfew proposition

¡PODER!—which in Spanish means power, or to be able to—decided to wage a campaign to convince the city to reject the curfew proposal. Instead, we asked the city to use the money to support programs and activities for young people at night. We realized that the best way to prevent crime would be to encourage people to never enter into negative activities from the start. The only way to do this is to make sure there are meaningful opportunities available to all members, especially the youth, of our community. Meaningful opportunities include: work, education, social and recreational activities, and emotional support and counseling.

¡PODER! decided to join forces with other organizations in order to form a city-wide coalition dedicated to grassroots advocacy for youth rights. The Youth Uprising Coalition (YUC), which ¡PODER! co-founded in the Fall of 1995, presented the first opportunity for many in the coalition to work with both youth and young adults



Members of ¡PODER! and the Youth Uprising Coalition demonstrate for youth rights.

Photo by Kim Calhoun

from different ethnic backgrounds on a common campaign. During the Fall of 1995, YUC members sought to defeat a youth curfew proposal known as Proposition L.

As 15-year-old ¡PODER! and YUC member Raquel Moreno explains, "This curfew is just more of Frank Jordan's scapegoating to get votes and re-election. It will disproportionately affect members of the Mission and other low-income neighborhoods. It will scapegoat youth of color for social problems they didn't create. It will be enforced selectively: Black, Latino and Native American youth stopped and harassed. When I think of the curfew, I think of a war going on between the police department and the community."

Youth galvanized in opposition to Proposition L, culminating in a youth march of more than 200 people days before the election. Proposition L was defeated in the November ballot, as was Jordan, who lost his re-election bid to Mayor Willie Brown. YUC successfully communicated the real issues behind Proposition L to the voters of San Francisco and won the curfew campaign and organizing momentum.

On-going youth activism

As a community organization, ¡PODER! works on issues that are of great concern to our members. Crime and gang violence are issues of great importance to our community. In our neighborhood there are no youth centers, dances or other activities available to people under 21-years-of-age after 8:00 P.M. It's no surprise that young people hang out on the streets.

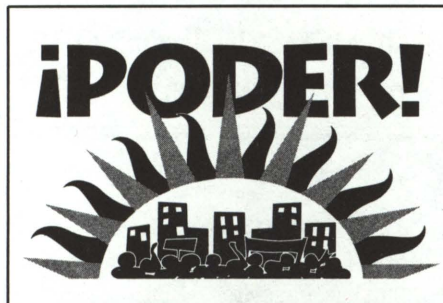
Instead of punishing youth through proposals like curfews, we suggest that San Francisco invest in programs which will positively impact young people. We want the city to redistribute the resources that would have been spent on the curfew to programs that provide day and night recreation activities, educational programs, job training, conflict mediation, substance abuse and behavior rehabilitation programs. In 1996, YUC is continuing to fight to stop policies that criminalize youth, and to re-direct city resources for educational, occupational and recreational programs for young people.

Recently YUC held a demonstration outside the Youth Guidance Center, a youth detention facility, in response to an inci-

dent involving forced strip-search of a 16-year-old girl, in which a male supervisor participated against both procedural guidelines and the victim's will. ¡PODER!'s Eric Quezada commented that "This particular incident is standard operating procedure for many officers at YGC when it comes to their treatment of young people. We're here to say that YGC and all elements of the criminal justice system must treat young people with respect." The demonstration took place on February 29th. Speakers from Student Empowerment Project, Street Survival Project, Justice Education Action Project, Youth Making a Change, and ¡PODER! stressed the need for the prosecution of the individuals involved in the incident.

They also spoke for alternatives to the incarceration of youth, and pointed out that parents should not call the police if their children are out at night past their

curfew. The forced strip search of the teen-aged girl occurred after her mother called police requesting that they pick her up. The mother regrets this move in her statement, "I asked the Probation Department to have my daughter picked up after she ran away. I thought she'd be safer up at the Youth Guidance Center than on the street." This incident is only one of the many terrible things that could happen to any parent's child if the Board of Supervisors' youth curfew ordinance is enforced this year. This



ordinance is separate from Proposition L.

YUC has also lobbied the mayor to appoint its members to the Youth Commission. The Youth Commission was voted into effect last fall and will advise the Board of Supervisors about any legislation that impacts youth.

¡PODER! continues to organize campaigns about the roots of poverty and injustice, to develop youth leadership and organizing skills among its members, and to hold the city and government officials and others in positions of power accountable to the needs and problems of working class communities.

Lisa Pagan is a community organizer with ¡PODER! in San Francisco, CA. ¡PODER! received a Resist grant in 1996. For more information, contact ¡PODER! 474 Valencia, Suite 155, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Organizing on College Campuses:

Interview with the Center for Campus Organizing

TAVIS BARR AND
CAROL SCHACHET

The Center for Campus Organizing (CCO) is a national clearinghouse supporting progressive activism and investigative journalism on college campuses. It evolved out of the University Conversion Project, an organization fighting the right wing and military on campus, which received Resist grant. Below is an interview with CCO founder Richard Cowan which originally appeared in Independent Politics (September/October 1995) and is supplemented here by conversations between Cowan and Resist.

How did the CCO get started, and what was the motivation for it?

In the past, there have been some pretty active organizations that work with the more stable campus institutions such as environmental groups, Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), and student governments. But there hasn't been a clearinghouse that acts as a resource for the various independent student groups functioning outside the student government. So we're trying to fill that gap.

The first time we demonstrated the potential of the CCO was [the spring of 1995] with our day of actions against the Contract on America. Students were encouraged to collectively generate and share ideas about how to combat the Republican agenda. What developed was a fairly consistent student response nationally.

We sent out the idea on February 3. It took about a week to get 200 people interested in signing onto a mailing list to discuss planning a day of action, and then another two weeks before a final draft of a call to action was approved and circulated on a national basis.

By paying very careful attention to the process of drafting the call—having face-to-face meetings and involving many organizations and using their input—we came up with a really good document that was distributed to tens of thousands of people. About 20 schools participated in a national day of action on March 23, mostly campuses of the City University of New York, and also a number of schools in Boston.

On March 29th, 85-90 schools held

protests. We estimate there were about 8,000 students demonstrating that day, even on campuses that don't have a demonstration culture—campuses like Connecticut College, the University of Illinois, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. This was very unusual.

The reason we're expanding, and the reason I think our work is necessary, is that while the right has been systematically orchestrating and engineering a political movement, groups on the left have not been well-funded or well organized and tend to reach a very small group of people.

For example, there's an organization called the Leadership Institute, started by former Reagan chief of staff Morton C. Blackwell. They started out training about 200 activists a year, and now they're training close to 2,500. They emphasize student publishing, campus organizing, election campaigns, fund raising, all the nuts-and-bolts you need to develop an effective political machine.

Now, progressive politics have always been much more popular. If we had the

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same amount of money that they have, we could engage far more students. But they're putting \$15 or \$20 million a year into these organizations.

With Newt Gingrich leading Congress, we have been able to recruit from a wide spectrum of people—anybody who is concerned about saving any government

of members.] They assembled several well-known right-wing critics and civil libertarians and had a press conference that attracted the *Washington Post* and the *Boston Globe*.

Since this event was only three blocks from our office, we decided to hold a counter press conference at which we unveiled our new booklet uncovering the

action in December of 1995. The call was circulated to several hundred activists and there were actions on March 14, 1996 focusing on affirmative action, immigrant rights, and access to education. In addition to the day of action, there were a lot of educational actions and forums that were put together by our networks. For example, a graduate student at University of Tennessee who is an immigrant himself organized an Immigrants Rights' Action Network with more than 200 immigrants from around the country.

A huge number of coalitions of campus groups formed in 1995. Many have expanded. One of our main goals at the CCO was to assist those coalitions in doing projects like monthly meetings, putting out a newsletter, opening a shared office. In 1995 we produced a "13-myths flyer" on the Contract on America. This year we produced two 13-myth flyers: one on affirmative action, and a second on immigration. The CCO also developed a lengthy guide to right-wing activities on college campuses and the funding of the offending college groups who are responsible.

Immigration is a major issue because that is getting furthest in Congress. Many anti-immigration bills will be

We need to create several thousand new activists, and college campuses will be one of the best places to find them.

programs that have redeeming value. I mean the only government programs not on the chopping block are pretty worthless. People recognize that it's going to take a lot more than e-mail messages and voting every four years to turn things around. What we need to do is create several thousand new activists, and college campuses will be one of the best places to find them.

What do you consider your biggest success?

Related to countering the right, our biggest success has been in the media. We've demonstrated that some of the organizations out there who are preaching that they are grassroots student movements are in reality right-wing front groups, and the media has picked up on some of our reports.

We've been able to arrest the growth of some of these movements on campus by denying them the positive exposure that they would have received otherwise.

For example, the First Amendment Coalition is a right-wing organization that grew in response to progressive organizing in Gainesville, Florida. They received substantial financial backing from the Center for the Study of Popular Culture and the National Association of Scholars to lead a national media event at Harvard University announcing a "Port Huron Statement" for the campus right. [The Port Huron Statement was the founding manifesto of Students for a Democratic Society, a progressive student group of the 1960s that grew to involve thousands

right on campus. We explained how the charge of political correctness was lending legitimacy to all kinds of right-wing activity, from neo-Nazi organizations to groups that simply wanted to turn to clock back 30 years. And our main success was exposing their funding sources.

Our second achievement is that we've alerted progressive organizations about the source of many of the political battles they now face. The analysis of what's happening is much more grounded and

The progressives are winning hands down on college campus already.

accurate now than it was a year and one-half ago, and there's more of a common understanding. Now there are hundreds of organizations and tens of thousands of activists who know exactly who the campus right is.

How did CCO build on the momentum from the "Contract on America" actions?

Whereas there was a clear target in the spring of 1995, the organizing in the spring of '96 was a little more difficult. It's easier to respond to the right than to organize for longer term progressive change.

We were not sure how to best build on the momentum. We spoke with other organizations and developed a call to

signed into law by President Clinton. In the fall, there will be an attempt to raise the question of federal priorities by CCO, Peace Action, and other social justice organizations. Our hope is that when liberals see progressives raising the issues and having success, they may finally speak out. Without a push from progressives, they will see no benefit to speaking out in the elections. The right is vulnerable here, but liberals have been hesitant to raise questions of federal priorities for fear of losing votes. With the plans to balance the budget, it needs to be addressed or the cuts in social services will be devastating.

What role do you see for campus groups

Students are seen as a wild card that could disrupt strategies of the religious right to win popular support in the fall of 1996.

in progressive politics as a whole, particularly in 1996 electoral politics?

One thing that's very exciting is that groups in our network are sharing information on four upcoming events: Union Summer campaign (sponsored by the AFL-CIO); the California Freedom Summer (sponsored by the Feminist Majority); the Democracy Summer (sponsored by the New Party); and the Youth College for Campaign Training (sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign Fund). We've been able to get student groups to send people to all of these efforts with hopes of making a lot of the footwork and campaign work possible. The sheer numbers of students involved in political activism will lead to a stronger student movement, because the skills that students gain will be brought back to their campuses.

These events are the best things we have as an alternative to right-wing training institutes. There still needs to be a left version, emphasizing skills that left-organizers can develop in kind of an *a la*

carte fashion, so that activists can gain the specific skills needed quickly.

Do you have a forecast for the battle between progressive versus right-wing campus activism?

The progressives are winning hands down already. The deciding blow was the support by young Republicans for cuts in student aid. That occurred at the end of 1995. We knew at that time that campus conservatives would no longer be a major force for the next couple of years.

The danger is not that campuses will be controlled by the right, but that churches will be influenced and cultivated by the right. If we can use the student energy to go back to communities and build local campaigns outside the university, we can arrest the growth of radical right movements, such as the Christian Coalition. It won't stop the radical right from doing what they're doing, but it will help a different set of folks become prepared to take a progres-

sive position on issues target by the Christian right.

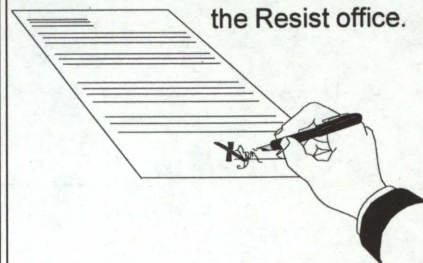
Students are seen as a wild card that could disrupt strategies of the religious right to win popular support and take over all branches of the government in the fall of 1996. So Congress is hell bent on shutting down any progressive student activity, and this is something that we should be aware of and mobilize against.

For more information, contact the Center for Campus Organizing, PO Box 748, Cambridge, MA 02142.

Planned Giving and Bequests

If you are writing a will, consider designating a gift to groups that are important to you, such as Resist. Wills can be a significant way of making sure the work that you support today will be around for decades to come. Writing a will gives you an opportunity to help sustain the kinds of groups you believe in. With a will, you decide how your assets will be distributed. Without a will, the government decides for you.

Planned giving can also help lower or eliminate estate taxes. Resist, Inc. is a nonprofit, tax exempt corporation. When including Resist in your will, please identify us as follows: "Resist, Inc., a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation whose principal place of business is located in Somerville, Massachusetts." If you have any questions about including Resist in your will, or if you need a copy of our tax-exempt IRS letter, please write the Resist office.



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