Resist Newsletter, Dec. 2002

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East Los Angeles Youth Take Power

MARI A BRE NES

More than 30 years ago, thousands of high school students in East Los Angeles gained the attention of the nation by walking out of their schools in protest of poor quality education, under-resourced school conditions and racist curricula. In 1968, the student organizers built a student movement that shut down the Los Angeles Unified School District and led to some concrete improvements, such as the implementation of Chicano Studies and bilingual education. The students challenged the notion that young people could not impact policy and take an active role in changing education. But above the school reform gains, the 1968 'blowouts' activated a legacy of struggle that continues today.

In the spirit of the 1968 student movement, Youth Organizing Communities (YOC) continues the work of organizing high school students to build student power with the aim of radically transforming the quality of public education in East Los Angeles and in California. YOC operates on the belief that those most impacted by society's neglect of public institutions must be at the forefront of changing under-resourced conditions. To that end, YOC exposes the contradictions of the educational system by revealing the current inequities existing in inner-city high schools in East Los Angeles.

A RESIST grantee since 2000, YOC combines local organizing efforts in East Los Angeles with a state-wide youth-led network to demand educational justice. This two-fold approach aims to build a state-wide youth movement of well-trained and well-organized youth leaders, peer leadership, and demand a public education system that invests in the healthy development of young people in California.

Building Local Youth Power

At the local level, YOC coordinates campus-based groups at Garfield and Roosevelt high schools. These groups, named United Students, mobilize the student bodies around school change campaigns. Students in East Los Angeles face an under-resourced educational experience. Classes are over-crowded and school policies do not provide all students with opportunities to be eligible to enter the Cal State University or University of California University systems after graduation.

The combined student population at Roosevelt and Garfield High Schools adds up to approximately 11,000. Los Angeles public high schools are so extremely over-crowded that classes at many high schools are conducted all year long with 'tracks' of students attending at different times. Understaffing of student support services, particularly the low ratio between guidance counselors and students, exacerbates the poor quality of education. Counselors determine students' class schedules and whether they are taking courses needed for college eligibility.

"They need to give us the knowledge to go to college, not to track us into low-
wage labor or prison,” states Nancy Meza, a sophomore member of United Students at Garfield. Nancy and other student activists at Garfield and Roosevelt aim to improve education by redefining student achievement based on graduation rates and University of California and Cal State University eligibility rates. This method challenges the existing reliance on test scores alone to measure achievement. United Students is holding the educational system accountable to ensure that all students graduate and attend college, based on the belief that access to quality public education is a human right.

Current statistics on student attrition at Garfield and Roosevelt are alarming. For example, at Roosevelt the 2001 graduating class (589 students) represented only one-third of the original freshman class. This means that in a span of four years, 67% of the freshman class “disappeared!” Between 1997 and 2001 Roosevelt High had an average disappearance rate of 68%.

What happens to the disappeared students every academic school year? One answer is found in California’s shifting priorities from investing in education to funding the growing prison industry. Among all states, California is currently ranked 41st in education spending and 1st in prison spending. The majority of young people disappearing from Roosevelt are entering low wage labor, joining the military, or becoming part of the increasing incarcerated population. Roosevelt and Garfield High Schools are tragic examples of a trend in California public education where young people of color are systematically tracked into the lowest level of society’s socioeconomic hierarchy.

Education Not Incarceration

To combat this increasing trend, YOC’s United Students at Roosevelt High School is currently engaged in a school-change campaign to promote college preparation for all students, challenge punitive disciplinary policies, and raise awareness of a need for culturally relevant curricula. Salvador Sepulveda, a senior at Roosevelt and member of United Students states that, “the current education at Roosevelt does not help students. Compared to suburban schools, inner city schools don’t care about the students.” Salvador’s statement reflects a sentiment from students of color that they are being short-changed by society.

United Students has articulated their specific demands for changing Roosevelt under the ‘United Students Plan for Roosevelt High School’ which calls for the elimination of the tardy room, implementation of Ethnic Studies courses, ensuring that all students are college-eligible by their senior year, and increasing the number of guidance counselors. The tardy room is a school-wide policy that holds students for an entire class period or school day if they are late (even less than one minute) to class. United Students conducted a survey of 800 Roosevelt students and found that over 80% of students say that the tardy room does not encourage them to be more on time; in fact, over 50% of students indicated that they would ditch school to avoid the tardy room. This policy is failing to address the root cause of the problem, and instead is contributing to pushing students out of school.

To combat current policies that punish students instead of supporting their achievements, United Students is building a youth-led movement to challenge the idea that students are to blame for failing academically. The student-led mobilization is working to pressure educators and policymakers to implement policies that provide well-resourced opportunities for students to be eligible to enter the California public university systems.

As part of their campaign, United Students has organized meetings between school officials and Roosevelt students, including a student forum that provided an opportunity for students to present their concerns and solutions. By building up student power, United Students recently won significant parts of the student demands: the implementation of two Mexican American Studies classes, the addition of two more guidance counselors, and the elimination of the tardy room.

Erika Uribe, a junior and member of United Students at Roosevelt, describes her view of the wins: “When I got involved I thought that United Students could do something to change our school and it did.” When asked what the next steps should be, Erika responded, “more students need to become aware and involved, and I plan to help in that. Education is so unfair here but United Students can fight to better the lives of young people in our community.”

United Students’ work also entails combining organizing and media advocacy to win the school-change campaigns. The Media Activism Component (MAC) trains YOC youth on the theory and practice of shaping public opinion through television, radio, Internet, and Guerrilla Theater. Activists learn to track influential news outlets, gauge who’s covering them, and cultivate media contacts. MAC also provides youth with the knowledge and skills to become media activists in the fields of radio, video, web design, graphic design, and print jour...
continued from page two

nalism. With these skills, youth can create an oppositional and independent media, a critical tool in promoting YOC’s vision of educational justice. Through the work of MAC, YOC members have established a relationship with the L.A. Times that resulted in the printing of an article on October 5, 2002 critiquing the tardy room and interviewing members of United Students.

Building Statewide Youth Power

Another project of YOC, the Schools Not Jails Network is leading a statewide fight for educational justice by demanding the implementation of Ethnic Studies and more resources for under-resourced high schools. In July of 2002, YOC organized a statewide Schools Not Jails Conference in Los Angeles that brought together over 300 youth to launch a struggle for Ethnic Studies in public high schools. YOC has coordinated the youth-led effort to demand that California invest in schools not jails, including youth-led campaigns to demand implementation of Ethnic Studies in school districts in San Diego, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

YOC recognizes Ethnic Studies as critical to transforming education in California public high schools. Ethnic Studies documents the historical and current experience of struggle and resistance of all oppressed people of color in the United States, and it empowers young people of color to see themselves as agents of change that struggle for justice in their communities. Ethnic Studies also empowers students of color to strive to enter and succeed in higher education.

Lester Garcia, site organizer for Roosevelt High School, describes his view of the type of organization United Students is working to become: “a voice for all students and the community to demand change from the educational system, where they can have their voice heard and be leaders in making our vision of educational justice a reality.” Lester articulates a vision that honors the rights of students forced to attend schools that track them into low-wage labor, the military, or the prison system. United Students plans to continue to be the vehicle of change at Roosevelt and Garfield and to expand to other East Los Angeles high schools, so that communities make public education accountable to future generations.

Maria Brenes is the Director for Youth Organizing Communities in Los Angeles. YOC has received funding from RESIST since 2000. For more information, contact them at YOC, 2811 Whittier Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90023; 323-780-7874 www.schoolsnottjails.com.

Wisconsin Badgers vs. Army Badgers

CSWAB Wages Fight Against Toxic US Military Polluters

SARAH SCHINDLER-WILLIAMS

People are hesitant to question the Department of Defense. This is one of the many challenges facing Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger (CSWAB) as described by its Executive Director, Laura Olah. CSWAB was organized in 1990 when the community learned that private drinking water wells near Wisconsin’s Badger Army Ammunition Plant were polluted with high levels of cancer-causing chemicals. Toxins resulting from 50 years of weapons manufacturing had moved undetected through the groundwater, poisoning drinking water wells more than a mile away. The founders believed community involvement could have prevented this tragedy and consequently organized CSWAB both to empower and to protect nearby residents and plant workers from further harm.

For more than 10 years, CSWAB has encouraged the community members around Wisconsin’s Badger Army Ammunition Plant in Sauk County, Wisconsin to question the function and safety of the chemicals used at the plant. CSWAB, which began as a small “kitchen table” organization, has successfully called attention to the largest environmentally unregulated chemical industry in Wisconsin and the United States: the US military. Working with members of the Ho-Chunk Nation, CSWAB works to force the military to clean up its toxic waste and restore the prairie for grasses and wild life.

While CSWAB began as a small grassroots effort, its remedial goals were comprehensive and far-reaching, as evidenced in one of its position papers:

CSWAB believes the public must hold all chemical industry, including the US military, accountable for the environmental damage they have caused. Demanding a complete and comprehensive cleanup ensures future generations will not be burdened with the legacy of pollution from Badger. This goal may indeed be expensive in the short term, but will provide a strong incentive to change the disposal, manufacturing, and training activities of the US Department of Defense and reduce pollution at the source—the only long term solution to our national military toxics problems.

One of CSWAB’s most daunting long-term goals was the demand for the closure of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant as a military installation. In a heroic David vs. Goliath struggle, rural residents took on the US Army, international chemical companies, and county, state and federal governments. They said the base shouldn’t be allowed to operate because it was unable to do business without polluting the water and air. Multi-ton chemical spills continued to plague the facility even though active production had ceased decades ear-

continued on page four
Community members decided cleaning up the plant was not enough. The best solution would be to close the facility altogether and convert it to peaceful purposes. "Restore the prairie, not the ammo plant" became their slogan and their goal.

Throughout the ’90s, CSWAB held public hearings, conducted research, mounted publicity campaigns, and mobilized citizens throughout the state. Along the way, the group blocked dozens of initiatives that threatened public health and the environment including hazardous waste incineration and a federal program to reindustrialize idle ammunition plants.

On November 6, 1997 the hard-won news finally came: Badger Army Ammunition Plant, along with four other inactive plants nationwide, was recommended for closure by the US Army Industrial Operations Command (IOC) based in Rock Island, Illinois. The Army is preparing preliminary reports about the plant for submission to the Secretary of Defense of the Army, taking the Badger plant one step closer to actual closure.

Each Victory A Step Closer

Some highlights of CSWAB’s other sweeping accomplishments since it began to receive funding from RESIST six years ago include:

• In a shared campaign with Midwest Environmental Advocates, CSWAB exposed 133 violations of Badger Army Ammunition Plant’s sanitary wastewater permit limitations. As a result the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) took enforcement action against the US Army.

• CSWAB’s diligence revealed the US Army and environmental regulators failed to warn nearby rural families when extremely high levels of the explosive dinitrotoluene (DNT) had been detected months earlier in wells at the plant boundary. In response, CSWAB issued press releases, organized a public meeting, went door-to-door to nearby homes, involved local township government, pulled in the Wisconsin Division of Health, and gained testing for nearby private water wells in October 2001.

• CSWAB’s search through public WDNR files uncovered a four-year “plan of action” to convince the public to accept a less-than-complete cleanup at a major hazardous waste disposal site.

CSWAB members continue to educate residents about environmental and health hazards while supporting prairie restoration. Photo courtesy of CSWAB

• CSWAB, together with dozens of other organizations across the US, helped organize and kick-off the Healthy Communities Campaign—a nation-wide grassroots initiative demanding that the military be subjected to the same local, state and federal environmental, worker, and public safety laws that govern other industrial and commercial operations. For the first time anywhere in Wisconsin, groundwater testing for perchlorate—a toxic contaminant found in rockets, missiles, and military pyrotechnics—will be conducted at a WDNR-regulated site. The Department’s precedent-setting decision to conduct testing at the Badger plant is the result of CSWAB’s May 2002 report and call for action, “The Potential for Perchlorate Contamination.” CSWAB is now campaigning for testing at other bases and in other communities.

• CSWAB achieved the Army’s withdrawal of a proposal to incinerate 1,000,000 pounds of waste munitions and blocked a proposal to open burn 2,500 pounds per day of hazardous waste.

• Public pressure, led by CSWAB, has resulted in a Congressional hold on all reindustrialization activities and proposals at Badger despite aggressive corporate marketing schemes.

The Long Haul

CSWAB continues to work hard to ensure that community and tribal members are true participants in the decision-making process. The Ho-Chunk Nation has made a formal request to the General Services Administration that approximately 3,050 acres of property at the Badger plant be transferred in trust for the benefit of the Nation. Confronting intolerance and racism at the state legislative level, CSWAB supports the efforts of the Ho-Chunk nation in its vision for a more equitable division of the Badger lands.

Another of CSWAB’s recent campaigns is an effort to stop open burning at the Badger plant. The Badger plant is hoping to use open burning as a means to decontaminate buildings where nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose are present. As many as 100 buildings are being considered for open burning. This approach presents many different health and environmental hazards. As the complete cleanup of the Badger plant presents a potential $250 million cost to the US government, CSWAB remains a persistent and tenacious watchdog of the military Goliath.

Sarah Schindler-Williams recently graduated from Brown University and is a volunteer at Resist. This article was compiled from CSWAB materials. RESIST awarded CSWAB a number of grants for its work beginning in 1996, and most recently with a multi-year grant in 1999. For more information, contact CSWAB, 12629 Weigand’s Bay South, Merrimac, WI 53561; www.cswab.com.
Activists put WAMM on War in Iraq

AMANDA STEWART

A short sample of the e-mail that Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) has received in the last year shows the power (and necessity) of our work:

"What you and others are doing gives a glint of hope—even here—that things can change if we are willing to be involved."

"I recently read the article on [WAMM] in the Star Tribune. I have two sons of military service age. I am very opposed to President Bush's plan to invade Iraq and feel that it is time to stand up for my convictions. . . . How can I join you?"

"I went to the rally; it was wonderful to see that I wasn't the only one feeling that this war against Iraq would be a terrible mistake. I am planning on sending in my WAMM membership stuff tomorrow. Thanks for being there."

The above comprise only a few of the e-mails, messages and phone calls Women Against Military Madness has received. Dedicated to facilitating the work of both new and seasoned activists, WAMM this year celebrated its 20th anniversary and even stronger role in the growing peace movement.

A History of Peace Activism

Twenty years ago, a small group of women in Minnesota looked at the arsenal of nuclear weapons their country was amassing and decided that they could not sit by idly. They began to meet regularly (with the motto, "Never a meeting without an action.")., collecting small donations to sustain their work, and named themselves Women Against Military Madness. Today this small band of activists has risen in number to 1,600—including a 25-percent membership boost since the events of September 11. Membership continues to surge as a result of the threat of war against Iraq and fear over the consequences of the November 2002 election.

Today WAMM describes itself as a "nonviolent, feminist organization that works in solidarity with others to create a system of social equality, self-determination, and justice through education and empowerment of women," whose expressed purpose is "to dismantle systems of militarism and global oppression." Recent political events have moved WAMM to crystallize and solidify its goals, to create a peaceful and just world by empowering people to act through protests, lobbying, education and media work.

Since the recent death of progressive senator Paul Wellstone and the election of both a Republican senator and governor in Minnesota—as well as the Bush Administration's threatened war against Iraq—WAMM has found itself deluged with calls from concerned citizens looking for a home for their activism. Many feel, as the above quotes suggest, that their voices are being drowned out by the maelstrom of violence and saber-rattling. They turn to WAMM to focus their energies, and the organization has worked to provide events and education to meet those needs.

On October 26, a peace rally in Saint Paul gathered more than 10,000 protestors. Others demonstrations occurred on October 7 and November 9. One of WAMM's many active committees (the St. Joan of Arc/WAMM Peacemakers) sponsors a weekly peace vigil during rush hour on a busy city bridge. The vigil at the bridge began almost four years ago when President Clinton ordered missile strikes against Serbia. Missiles were aimed at bridges to reduce the Serbian military's mobility, and civilians were often killed in these attacks. Almost four years later the weekly vigil continues, altering sometimes its focus (from Serbia to Afghanistan to the Middle East to Iraq) but never its mission: an end to war and violence.

A Sign of the Times

Perhaps one of the most successful and surprising programs WAMM has undertaken has been the St. Joan of Arc/WAMM Peacemakers "Say No to War on Iraq" lawn sign project. In early October, the committee began printing two-foot by four-foot lawn signs featuring the anti-war message. The first order was for only 100 signs. However, the response has been overwhelming and, to date, WAMM has sold over 1,700 signs. A thousand more are on order. Buyers of the signs frequently enter the WAMM office in concern and fear. They leave new members of (and often volunteers for) WAMM, as well as part of a visible and growing peace movement.

Media attention of WAMM's activities has also increased, indicating a renewed interest in the peace community. In recognition of its 20th Anniversary, WAMM was featured in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. WAMM has also been featured in stories on a local alternative radio station, KFAI Fresh Air Radio, and at least four television news stations.

In an effort to find new and creative ways of reaching concerned citizens, WAMM continues to cooperate with other peace and justice organizations, student groups and church groups, developing political strategies with the help of coalition members. WAMM's newsletter includes news about area events and demonstrations. On Saturday, December 7, WAMM will be co-sponsoring a town hall meeting on the potential war against Iraq. Nationally known experts Phyllis Bennis, fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, and Reverend Lucius Walker, executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations will be speaking.

Amanda Stewart is an activist at Women Against Military Madness. WAMM has received numerous grants from RESIST. For more information, contact WAMM, 310 E 38th St #225, Minneapolis, MN 55409; www.worldwidewamm.org.
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YEC Pools Resources
BECCA HOWES-MISCHEL

As RESIST looks to help build a movement for social change, we encourage our grantees to work in collaboration with other progressive organizations. For this reason, we applaud the work of three San Francisco Bay Area grantees who came together to form the Youth Empowerment Center (YEC). Through YEC, the young people most directly affected by poverty, racism, an unjust justice system, and an inadequate education system, collaborate in their strategies of resistance.

Two years ago, RESIST grantees SOUL, C-Beyond, and Youth Force Coalition pooled their resources with Underground Railroad to strengthen the youth movement for power both locally and nationally. The Youth Empowerment Center provides each of these organizations (and increasingly new ones) physical space and administrative support. But, more than physical support, YEC offers a way of connecting organizations that are working on different aspects of youth organizing.

SOUL serves as a training center to develop a new multi-racial generation of young organizers who will have the skills and the vision they need to struggle for the liberation of all oppressed people. Youth Force Coalition fights for juvenile justice primarily through challenges to the Prison Industrial Complex. They use their campaigns to draw together diverse communities to demand equitable economic, environmental, health and educational conditions. C-Beyond develops the leadership and organizing skills of young people through their commitment to popular education and “youth leading youth.” They challenge their high school peers to go beyond stereotypes to build an inclusive movement for social change.

Although each of these grantees focus on building their own specific niche within the youth movement, they also recognize the power they collectively build. The YEC stands as a model for stabilizing, strengthening and building the power of youth voices for social change.

For more information on the Youth Empowerment Center and its members, contact: YEC, 1357 5th Street, Oakland, CA 94607; www.youthec.org/yec.

GRANTS

Resist awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in activism for economic and social justice. Below are short updates on several RESIST grantees who have been featured in recent Newsletter articles. For more information, contact them the addresses below. Note: These articles were compiled by Jean Smith from materials sent by the grantees and from their web sites.

Alliance for Workers’ Rights
1101 Riverside Drive
Reno, NV 89503

A group of 15 union, civil rights, and women’s activists formed the Alliance for Workers’ Rights in 1997 to protect Nevada workers, particularly in the dominant casino industry. The majority of its membership are low-income workers in casinos, the region’s dominant industry.

In 2000, RESIST funded The Alliance for its “Kiss My Foot Campaign,” which challenged the prevailing sexual exploitation and discrimination in the workplace. The campaign originally focused on the cumulative physical side effects of high heeled shoes on women workers in the Las Vegas gaming industry. Women cocktail servers and other female employees were required to wear the shoes, which caused foot, leg and back injuries. The campaign has now extended statewide, and recently the Alliance was contacted by the International Federation of Employees and Professionals of Gaming, Entertainment, Recreation, Leisure, and Allied Activities (IFGE) of Argentina, which has had success working against high heels.

A multi-issue group, the Alliance focuses on sex discrimination, immigrants’ safety in the workplace, unfair tax burdens, and unemployment policies. RESIST awarded the Alliance another grant this April to continue the Kiss my Foot Campaign and expand its advocacy for workers.

Recently, the Alliance has been working on a project focusing on the rights of the growing number of Latino immigrant workers in Nevada. This project began after a September 2001 explosion in an aerosol propellant recycling plant in southwest Nevada killed one worker and seriously burned four others—all Latino immigrants who spoke little English, who did not receive training on the hazardous materials they were handling, and whose workplace had not been inspected for hazardous materials protections because the products being used were considered household waste. The Alliance, working with the League of United Latin American Citizens and other groups, initiated a public education campaign and picketed a meeting of the Nevada Division of Industrial Relations to prevent a lowering of the fines the Division imposed on the plant’s owners. The Alliance also worked with state Senator Randolph Townsend to establish an investigative committee comprised of state senators, assemblymen, and members of the Governor’s staff, who will look into the lack of training, supervision, and inspection both at the first plant and at a second in Las Vegas where a similar explosion occurred. This committee is only the first step in a series of legislative-based efforts that the Alliance is initiating.

Flint Hills Living Wage Coalition
PO Box 1561
Manhattan, KS 66505; www.mapj.org

A RESIST grantee since 1998, the Flint Hills Living Wage Coalition (FHLWC) now includes a network of seven unions and other progressive groups. Manhattan, Kansas has one of the highest rates of poverty in the state, and its minimum wage is only $2.65/hour. Based on research that the Coalition conducted, FHLWC has been working since its inception for an $8.80/hour living wage in the City of Manhattan, Riley County, and the school district, especially by the businesses that receive large contracts, subsidies and tax breaks from the city. The Coalition has worked to educate the community—including elected officials and community leaders—about the city’s high level of poverty and simultaneous low level of unemployment.

Two years ago, the Coalition helped to block a proposed ban on living wage ordi-

continued on page eight
nances by the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce. Since then, it has been actively fighting the business community, members of which threatened to withdraw support for local service organizations that sponsored a Manhattan “Dialogue on Poverty” focusing on low wages.

In recent years, the Coalition has acted as a support system for other state living wage campaigns in Lawrence and Wichita. The Coalition also collaborates with the Kansas Action Coalition, a new citizen-labor group working to raise the state minimum wage to the federal level. The Coalition is currently in the beginning stages of a new project working with low-wage Mercy Hospital employees, who are paid in part by a city grant, for better pay.

Recently, the Coalition celebrated an important victory, when a proposal making wage campaigns in Lawrence and Wichita.

SOA Watch/ Northeast
6367 Overbrook Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19151

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their co-worker and her teenage daughter were massacred in El Salvador. A US Congressional Task Force reported that those responsible were trained at the US army School of the Americas (SOA) at Ft. Benning, Georgia. In response, activists formed SOA Watch to close the military training school and change US policy in Latin America.

SOA Watch’s research into the army school (renamed Western Hemisphere for Security Cooperation in 2001) has revealed that hundreds of SOA graduates tortured, raped, massacred and “disappeared” hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans—often targeting student leaders, indigenous peoples, union organizers, educators, religious workers, and those who speak out on behalf of the poor. The school trains 1,000 Latin American soldiers yearly, at a cost of millions of dollars in US tax-payer money; the school has trained over 60,000 Latin American military leaders over its lifetime.

SOA Watch seeks not only to educate people on this little-known program, but also to make connections between the military power SOA provides to the US, the US’s corporate-driven foreign policy in Latin America, and the paralyzing poverty in which much of Latin America exists. Its ultimate goal is to close the school.

School of the Americas Watch/Northeast formed in 1996 as a chapter of SOA Watch. Within six months of its inception, SOA Watch/NE’s speaking tours, lobbying, and collaborative work had helped to double the number of New Jersey congressional representatives who supported ending funding for the school. The following year, eleven representatives voted to cut funding. SOA Watch/NE coordinated outreach to (then-silent) Catholic bishops, leading to 300 bishops in the US and Latin America calling for the SOA’s closure. SOA Watch/NE worked with New Jersey state assembly members to draft and pass the first state resolution to close the SOA. Soon after, Philadelphia became the first major city to pass a resolution to close the SOA.

With help from RESIST grants, SOA Watch/NE has recently been focusing on campus-based organizing, working with the growing anti-globalization and anti-war movements among students. SOA Watch/NE provides leadership development, non-violence training, and other organizing skills to youth regionally and nationally while making connections between the SOA, labor practices, and the injurious policies of the World Bank, IMF, and NAFTA. SOA Watch/NE has also been examining the current military retaliation as a means for conflict resolution and the past effectiveness of nonviolent resolution. This fall SOA Watch/NE was involved in a sit-in by University of Pennsylvania students at Senator Santorum’s office.

Hundreds of SOA Watch/NE members demonstrated at the annual November protests at Fort Benning outside of the SOA, where the group coordinated teach-ins on Colombia and the “war on terrorism.” The group co-sponsored the Philadelphia Area Anti-War rally against a war in Iraq and participated in October’s anti-war demonstrations in Washington, DC.