

BCR REPORTS

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SEASONS OF CHANGE

By Michel Coconis

Funny thing about “change” – SWAA activists are engaged in work that results in change and, for some, when change happens close to home, it feels odd or uncomfortable. Many social justice activists I know bristle when there is a change within the organizations or entities of which they are a part. And yet we fight to have others, especially those resistant to it, change and be responsive while “doing the right thing”.

For us in SWAA, we are in a time of transition sparked by two primary events: the temporary hiatus of Fred Newdom, SWAA’s chair for the past 10 years and, of course, the ever-escalating war chanting by the chicken hawks in charge. Issues of peace, dialogue, retribution, justice, revenge, tolerance, racism, sexism, and classism are all part of the war mongering rhetoric in the mainstream, liberal, and conservative media. In SWAA, we are seeking our place to move the dialogue in directions that promote social justice for people here and abroad, within the social work/human service professions as well as with our allied organizations.

To do this, the national steering committee began a thoughtful, reflective process of our “mission” and a re-examination of what we stand for. The dialogue occurring within the NSC has just begun, but important issues have been raised. For example, the role and ways to discuss religious

fundamentalism and its relationship to maintaining oppression was debated. This issue, among others, is giving us all a lot to think about in how we work and what we wish to promote in terms of product and process.

In an effort to promote organization building and to continue the important dialogue on welfare reform, poverty, and its relationship to other forms of oppression, we are also discussing organizing a *National Teach-In on Economic Justice* that will be held in as many locations and schools as possible during a designated period. This will be in lieu of a national SWAA conference for this year. As we plan for this teach-in, work will continue to sponsor a national gathering for 2004. Between now and February 2003, materials would be developed for interested persons to have for their events. The idea being discussed is that a synergy of discussion on Economic Justice in schools, communities and such that is sponsored and called by SWAA establishes a niche for us, helps us recruit members, and further educates people about issues of economic justice. Inside read more about some of the very successful events held in 2002 for inspiration and for contacts as you consider the event in your area!

While I have been acting chair for about three months, we are also seeking a co-chair to share the

responsibilities and to provide an opportunity to develop leadership in SWAA. We are adding books to the book fund, making changes to the Steering Committee membership to reflect changes in local leadership, getting the newsletter out, strengthening our membership and renewal process, improving the process for getting packets and the packets themselves for starting a SWAA chapter. **Fred Newdom** and I will represent SWAA at the 2nd *Social Work Summit* to be held in D.C. in December.

The website, www.swaaaction.org, will be overhauled over the December break and information about the teach-ins will be posted there. Of course, if you would like to be part of the many discussions held in SWAA between newsletters, contact me to sign up for the *bertha-swaa* listserv on yahoogroups at michel4justice@yahoo.com.

So, for the long-time readers and members of SWAA, the times they are a changin’ and for the new readers of *BCR Reports* and new members of SWAA, they are changing and, with everyone’s help, we can help mold and shape social work practice and education within the profession and with our allies! Thanks for being a part of an exciting and socially relevant organization! ■

In Memoriam Jerry Sachs (1941-2002)

Jerry Sachs, a long-time member of the SWAA National Steering Committee, died on July 2, after a two-year battle with cancer.

Jerry was an Associate Professor at the Smith College School for Social Work, an activist, a clinician, and a consistently thoughtful and passionate voice for political and economic justice. It is hard to do justice to the many contributions Jerry made and to the deep effect he had on the lives of people he touched. One measure of this, however, can be found in the things said at a celebration of his life held ten days before he died.

At that event, held at Smith, a standing-room-only crowd joined Jerry as friends and colleagues talked about his life and work. The laughter and the tears that greeted the stories about Jerry captured his complexity and the strong sense of loyalty to friends and causes that Jerry inspired and gave.

Jerry was an accomplished poet and several of his poems were shared at the celebration – an event that Jerry called “one of the best days of my life.” Below, is one poem of his, from a collection that was privately published by a friend of his at the end of Jerry’s life.

– Fred Newdom

Living and Dying

Living is good.
Death sucks.
But dying is still alive
with much to learn and teach.
To give and be given,
however,
always a bit inadequate.

With so little time
in a universe so old
with quarks and trees,
big bangs and small whimpers.

So,
This is how death arrives.
With bangs and whimpers,
With sadness and kindness,
With compassion and joy,
With listening carefully to hurts and hopes,
With past and future,
With knowing when to embrace
and when to kick ass.

Yes!
Until death,
Strength,
For all these things,
Together,
One more time.

Jerry's Rules From 1 to infinity

One role that Jerry played at Smith College was as supervisor of the College’s Community service program – a service learning experience for undergraduates. As part of that work, he conducted a weekly group supervision meeting with the students. At the end of one year’s program, his students presented him with an attractively printed listing of the principles they had gleaned from his work with them.

They were read at a candlelight service held on the night Jerry died.

1. Show up.
2. Trust the process.
3. There needs to be a beginning, a middle and an end.
4. There is only one rule: No Violence.
5. As much as necessary, as little as possible.
6. Everything has to do with termination.
7. Be open and curious.
8. Don’t tell your client what you had for breakfast.
9. You need to sit with the silence.
10. Wait for the client to start.
11. There is meaning in everything.
12. The client always gives you another chance.
13. Stick to the facts.
14. Engage metaphors and fantasies.
15. Ask “How come?” not “Why?”
16. Ask “Can you give words to that...?”
17. Ask “What do you imagine...?”
18. Ask “What do you want to do about that?”
19. Ask “Can you say more about that?”
20. Anyone is fair game except for your client or children.

Intertwined Organizations: A Brief History of the Relationship Between JPHS and SWAA

There has been some historic confusion about the relationship between the *Journal of Progressive Human Services* (formerly *Catalyst: A Socialist Journal of the Social Services*) and the Social Welfare Action Alliance (formerly the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society). *JPHS* has frequently been viewed as the SWAA journal, which it is not. However, there has been an overlap between the people involved in these two groups and ideals they are committed to.

Briefly, *Catalyst* was founded in 1976 by a group of social workers and social work students. The members of the *Catalyst* collective saw the *Journal* as a vehicle for promulgating a left perspective in social work. We advocated for the rights of recipients of social services and the rights of human service workers and put forward a critical understanding of the obstacles to achieving these. More 25 years later, *Catalyst/JPHS* is the longest consecutively published radical social work journal in the US.

BCRS was founded in 1985, by a group of social workers and social work faculty, who wished to commemorate the life and work of the late Bertha Reynolds: one time member of the Communist Party, U.S.A., Assistant Director of Smith College School of Social Work, and social worker for the maritime union. Like the *Catalyst* collective, BCRS was committed to strengthening progressive human service work.

Many members of the *Catalyst* collective became involved in BCRS. The interconnection between these two vehicles of radical social work praxis and analysis was particularly strong in the late 1980s and early 1990s, under the leadership of Marti Bombyck and Mimi Abramovitz, simultaneously editors of the *Journal* and coordinators of BCRS. Many of the

members of the *Journal's* Board of Consulting Editors were drawn from the ranks of BCRS, and vice versa.

The ties between the two organizations persisted, even after 1993 when Marti and Mimi turned the journal's editorial reigns over to Cheryl Hyde, who had become active in BCRS. In 1996, the present collective from the University of New England School of Social Work assumed responsibility for editing the journal. We have maintained connections between BCRS/SWAA through continued involvement of BCRS members on our board of consulting editors, high visibility at BCRS conferences, shared membership/subscription forms, and the 1999 creation of a JPHS seat on the SWAA National Steering Committee.

These two entities share overlapping membership, commitments and goals while remaining separate organizations. I believe that our combined voices on the left in social work in the US are potentially quite powerful. ■

By Marcia B. Cohen (a long term member of the Catalyst and JPHS Collectives and of SWAA).

BREAKING THE MEDIA BLACK OUT

Philadelphia – The weekend of October 4-6 was history making in this city where the US was “born”. Media, poor people, activists, social workers, educators, and others met to discuss what contributes to this “black out” of issues of the poor and working people in America, ways to bring these issues and people to the “light”, and what are the issues that need attention via all forms of media – especially news media. SWAA was represented by several members. Media concentration, media literacy, media education, media advocacy, and media activism should be an important part of any human service worker's consciousness and this conference was an important step in naming the problem. Media democracy and poor people's movements were allied in this conference. More information can be found at www.kwru.org. You can search for media activism on your favorite search engine for more info to use in your meetings, your activism, and your classes. We MUST pay attention to the amount, methods, and results of mass media for our own work and as an issue unto itself. We cannot have the democracy we want without a free, open, accessible, public media! ■

Please forward all contributions for the next *BCR Reports* to:

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Letters to the editor, essays, news items, BCRS Chapter activities, cartoons, etc., are all welcome!

Please note: The deadline for materials submitted for inclusion in the next *BCR Reports* is **March 15, 2003.** ■

CHAPTER UPDATES:

Ann Arbor, Michigan: From September 1st through October 4th, our chapter started a letter writing campaign to stop the war machine. Our efforts were very successful; we sent approximately 200 letters out opposing the war! This year we will be focusing on living wage in Ann Arbor; some social service agencies are trying to apply for exemption from paying a living wage. Habitat for Humanity in Ann Arbor is in trouble because property taxes are too high. We are also working on issues surrounding welfare reform.

Atlantic City/South Jersey: The South Jersey SWAA Chapter is continuing to develop. We are currently working with KWRU and member groups of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign to coordinate the December 4, 2002 NJ stop of the New Freedom Bus Tour. The bus tour runs November 10th through December 10th. If you are interested in getting involved with our chapter call Laura Rodgers at (609) 822-1108 or lrogers@csionline.net

Greater Philadelphia SWAA Chapter/Underground Railroad Temple Depot: We are excited about our growth in membership over the past few months. Over the summer, Carrie Young facilitated weekly meetings that gave old and new chapter members a forum for education, discussion, and support in our work as social workers. In addition, several of our members led workshops at SWAA teach-in's organized by the SWAA Chapters in Portland, OR; Rochester, NY; and at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. In July 2002, Mary Bricker-Jenkins (Professor at Temple University School of Social Administration) and Willie Baptist (Education Director of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union) met with Cuban representatives and were invited to present a paper regarding the movement to end poverty in the United States at an international conference being held in Cuba in January 2003.

As reported in the last newsletter, we have united with the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and the NASW-PA Chapter to pursue Economic Human Rights in Pennsylvania (the "Curry Initiative"). When Representative Curry introduced a resolution calling for a study of ways to integrate economic human rights principles into the laws and policies of the commonwealth, we were able to use this legislative device to organize trainings and hearings around the state on economic human rights and lay the foundation for "economic human rights committees" in several communities. In all, we conducted 10 training sessions (including one at the NASW state conference), 4 legislative hearings, and mobilized 400 social workers to lobby for the Curry resolution and a companion Senate bill. We were stunned when the resolution passed, and are now preparing for the hearings to be held by the Legislative Commission called for in the resolution.

We were not stunned, but were thrilled, when two of our members – Carolyn Long and Danielle Rosenzweig – won the national Influencing State Policy award in the

MSW student category. Carolyn and Danielle, in connection with their field placement at the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and Representative Curry's office, researched, wrote, and obtained co sponsorship for the resolution; they also helped design and implement the training sessions around the state.

Currently, our weekly SWAA Chapter meetings include educationals regarding the root causes of poverty and economic human rights violations in the United States and ways that we can continue to work with member organizations of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign to unite the poor to build a movement to end poverty. Once a month we conduct peer supervision for social workers focusing on the class dimensions of practice situations.

SWAA cosponsored the "Break the Media Blackout" Conference being held at Temple University, October 4th - October 6th. This multi-media conference, spearheaded by the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, brought together people from around the country to discuss media democracy and the struggle to end poverty. In addition, we are working with members of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union to plan for the upcoming Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign's **New Freedom Bus Tour: Economic Human Rights for All** which will travel around the country from November 10 – December 10, 2002 to document economic human rights violations (go to www.kwru.org for details). One of our essential tasks in preparation for the bus tour is recruiting social workers around the country to organize and plan for the over 30 stops around the United States. If you, your agency, your organization, or your school would like to become an official supporter of the New Freedom Bus Tour, please contact the Kensington Welfare Rights Union at kwru@kwru.org.

Portland (OR): Our chapter had a very active 2002. With the leadership and support of the national steering committee, Portland held their "The Politics of Welfare" teach-in on May 4th. Without any significant support from the Graduate School of Social Work at Portland State University, SWAA members were left to their own devices to build a truly community based event. The teach-in was held at the First United Methodist Church in Downtown Portland. Over 170 people were in attendance. Our first speaker was noted author and activist Frances Fox Piven. She set the tone for the event with her provocative remarks about the state of welfare reform in the United States. She was both informative and thought provoking. Following her were two hours of breakout sessions on topics ranging from the criminalization of poverty to hunger in Oregon, Legislative initiatives to welfare racism. Each session was well received, as they were hosted by some of the most respected grassroots organizations in the state. Between sessions we chatted about the issues and enjoyed lunch provided by many local donors. The remainder of the food was happily received by Dignity Village, Portland's self-governed tent city.

Our final speaker was Cheri Honkala, director of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union in Philadelphia. She shared how her first hand experience with poverty and

homelessness led to her activism, and she was both passionate and inspiring. At the conclusion of her remarks, about 40 participants descended upon the Saturday Market area for a creative protest to President Bush's proposed "Welfare Marriage" policy. With wedding gowns on and a minister present, we shared our vows and wedding cake with all around to raise the awareness of this misguided venture into social control. We even made the evening news.

The major sponsor of the Portland Teach-In was the Oregon NASW. Other sponsors and participants included the Oregon Food Bank, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, Oregon Center for Public Policy, Poverty Action Team, Oregon Human Rights Coalition, Multnomah County Poverty Advisory Committee, Community Action Directors of Oregon, McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, Sisters of the Road Café, Alpenrose Dairy, Catholic Charities, the University of Portland, and the University of Oregon. Because of the hard work of local SWAActivists and the generosity of our donors and speakers, we were able to cover all costs, and support national SWAA and KWRU.

Continuing Work

Building of the success of the Portland Teach-In, SWAA is invigorated to continue its work through 2003. Oregon NASW is very excited to continue working with SWAA and has asked us to be an active participant in their statewide conference in May 2003. We are seeking to build strong alliances with the different welfare rights organizations in Portland.

One example of this is the "Dispelling the Myths" campaign of the Multnomah County Poverty Advisory Committee. In partnership with PAC, students from Portland State in a service-learning course created an action-oriented ad campaign geared to change common misconceptions about poverty and people who experience poverty. PAC has invited our local SWAA chapter to get involved in this developing project and to be the agent of delivery for these materials to legislators and other community groups. The media campaign is still a work in progress, with the hopes of additional ad creation and community collaboration. The next goal is to place ads both in and outside of local public transportation. Please visit www.ourcommission.org/povertymyths to view and download the current ads.

Another project being considered in Portland is a collaboration with the Portland Alliance, a local alternative news monthly, to provide a regular forum about the politics of poverty, including the voices of those directly experiencing poverty. Other projects include exploring an action with the Oregon Bus Project.

Rochester: The Rochester SWAA chapter held a very successful Teach-In in May, titled "Building Alliances: A vision for Ending Poverty." The event was over four months in the making, and we were very pleased to have co-sponsorship from: the SUNY Brockport Department of Social Work; Greater Rochester Collaborative-MSW Program; the Rochester Chapter of the National Organization for Women; SUNY Brockport Women's Center; Downtown United Presbyterian Church; House of Mercy; Rochester Poor Peoples Coalition; EMPOWER

Welfare Rights; Federation of Social Workers; Human Service Workers United; and the University of Rochester, Departments of: Counseling and Human Development, Warner Graduate School of Education; Political Science; History; Community and Preventive Medicine. We also received a grant from the SUNY Brockport Better Community Coalition.

Francis Fox Piven was the keynote speaker. In addition to speaking at the Teach-In, she spoke at SUNY Brockport and at the University of Rochester. We are grateful for her immense contribution. We also had the pleasure of having Diane Dujon, Fred Newdom, Willie Baptist, Jennifer Jones and Laura Rodgers come and facilitate workshops, along with activists from local grassroots organizations, representatives of Human Service Workers United, the Public Interest Law Office and other community leaders. The workshops ranged in topic from "Clinical Work and Social Action," "Children and Poverty," "Uniting the Poor," and "Human Services in Traumatic Times." The day was enhanced with a lunch panel on Globalization.

The Teach-In was attended by 220 people from the Rochester area ranging from students, social workers and low-income community members. The event served as a wonderful day of education and a great opportunity to work with several community organizations, agencies and Universities.

This past summer SWAA supported the Rochester Poor People's Coalition in hosting monthly summer picnics. We set up food and music on empty City lots and used the event to educate people about welfare rights issue in Rochester and The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign.

This fall, SWAA Rochester sponsored a Reality Tour in late October to highlight the struggles of people in our community and the realities of government policy making. This is our fourth Reality Tour since November of 2001. We are also working in solidarity with many community organizations such as Human Service Workers United, around the recent devastating County budget cuts, that have resulted in job lay-offs and the elimination of services at the Department of Social Services, as well as drastic reductions in programming by many human service agencies.

Smith College School for Social Work: Our SWAA Chapter had a busy summer. In July, we held an Economic Human Rights Teach-In featuring Willie Baptist, KWRU Education Director, as the keynote speaker. There were two breakout groups, one with KWRU members and social workers Jennifer Jones and Laura Rodgers in addition to Willie Baptist, and the other showing the documentary "Live Nude Girls Unite!" and a discussion with its creator, Julia Query. The teach-in was opened with remarks from SCSSW acting Dean Carolyn Jacobs and adjunct faculty member Fred Newdom. Additionally, we co-sponsored two movie and discussion nights on the coming war in Iraq, and women in Nicaragua. We used several of our weekly meetings as educationals around issues of economic human rights and our role as social workers and activists. ■

A NEW AND UNSETTLING FORCE

– By Cheri Honkala, National Spokesperson,
Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign;
Director, Kensington Welfare Rights Union and
Willie Baptist, Education Director,
Kensington Welfare Rights Union
Co-Coordinator, University of the Poor;
the education arm of the PPEHRC

"...There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life..."

The Trumpet of Conscience, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1967

It is no accident that the last years of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life are the least discussed and least understood. In the final period of his life, King determined that what had been a movement for *civil* rights must become a movement for *human* rights targeting global poverty including its 'downsizing' and devastating impact on the lives of huge population sectors of the world's richest country, the United States of America. As many of King's former allies abandoned him, and as repression against King and the movement increased, King set about a building a "non-violent army of the poor" to set up an encampment in Washington DC during the spring of 1968. This effort would lead to his assassination. During a little publicized trial in December 1999, his assassination was determined not to be the work of a 'fanatical racist' but the coordinated effort by officials at many levels of the government, involving local intelligence and police, the FBI, CIA, and Military Intelligence. (see the Official Transcripts from MLK, Jr. Assassination Trial at www.universityofthepoor.org – Library section)

The Poor People's Campaign, which was the major priority of King's final years, was about organizing and uniting the poor across racial lines in the United States, and ultimately internationally. King understood that the deep moral and political crises of his time – racism, war, social inequality – were, and still are, ultimately rooted in an economic system which deprives millions of the right to a decent life. After the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 he realized that, "We have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights, an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society... this means a revolution of values among other things. We see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others..." – Talk at a May, 1967 SCLC Staff Meeting

"A multi-racial nonviolent army, or freedom church of the

poor" would be constituted as "a new and unsettling force" capable of awakening the thinking and conscience of the American people from all walks of life who would then "lift the load of poverty" with the more than sufficient productive means already at hand. More than thirty years later, King's words are still prophetic: "There is a fire raging now for the...poor of this society. Disinherited people all over the world are bleeding to death from deep social and economic wounds. They need brigades of ambulance drivers who will have to ignore the red lights of the present system until the emergency is solved." – The Triumph of Conscience

King spoke of the need and possibility of the United States "living out the true meaning of its creed" that all of God's children are created equal and are endowed with the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is the soul of America the redemption of which he committed himself. Freedom and happiness mean nothing without the economic human rights to decent housing, adequate healthcare and food, a job at a living wage, and quality education. The tremendous productive capacity and abundance of the United States today make the absent of these things for increasing millions immoral and unjust. In building a movement for economic human rights led by the poor as a united and organized force, we are building the means necessary to reclaim the best of our country's most basic values and morals.

The Kensington Welfare Rights Union, a multiracial organization of poor and homeless families, took up the banner of economic human rights five years ago and began documenting economic human rights violations across the United States. We have found that our own stories as poor, homeless, and underemployed families in Philadelphia are repeated every day across this country. We have found that there truly is a fire raging in our country today, a fire whose intensity has been stoked by three decades of massive downsizing, welfare reform and other cutbacks in social programs, by automation, globalization, and an economy which has created a new class of people of all races who increasingly are permanently denied a right to the most basic necessities of life.

We have felt and witnessed this fire raging – from Kensington, North Philadelphia, where homeless, unemployed families sleep inside abandoned factories and where thousands of jobs are gone and are not coming back; to Kansas, where farmers are being thrown off of their land because they cannot compete against large agri-business; to Flint, Michigan, where automation of the automobile industry followed by the loss of jobs to the NAFTA left hundreds of thousands of people with no jobs and crumbling housing; to Florida, where farm workers can barely afford to eat the food they pick; and to Idaho, where families who have been laid off live in tents along the river in one of the coldest places in the United States.

As we have traveled the United States to build the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, we have seen the desperate need for "brigades of ambulance drivers" to

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IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANY OF US

It can happen to any of us. Last October 2001, I was visited by an FBI agent. He rang the bell at my home at 9:30 PM on Yom Kippur. I told him he had come on a holy day and I did not wish to speak with him. He stated that he works with National Security, not the Criminal Division, and wanted to ask me questions about Infomed US/Cuba, a project that sends used computers to the Cuban Ministry of Health. (I had been a volunteer but no longer worked with the group.) He said that he had been assigned to speak with me prior to 9-11 but he had been so busy since then... He assured me that he was a "good guy" and just wanted to ask me about the computers; where had they been sent, etc. (The Infomed project actually has a license to send humanitarian aid to Cuba. The computers are linking hospitals and clinics across the island enabling health providers to exchange scientific and medical information.)

When I declined to respond, he gave me his telephone number asking me to call him to arrange an interview. The only call I made was to the National Lawyers Guild who referred me to an attorney. She assured me that we are not obligated to give any information. Indeed it is best to say nothing – despite the urge to explain. So on this Yom Kippur I am grateful for reliable counsel and one less degree of separation.

In unity for peace, *Rita Barouch*
Family Maternal and Child Health Programs
Martinez, Ca. 94553

(Below are notes which Rita took at workshops she attended at the Concordia Seminars: Forum for Human Service

unite to put out this fire which is killing our children, our brothers and sisters, our fathers and mothers, and which threatens to spread and envelop our whole society if we do not act now. We need to get serious about building leaders among the poor and uniting the people of this country behind a banner of economic human rights for all. We see, as Dr King saw, that our country and our world need to be "born again." And so we have taken up the legacy of Dr. King and adapted it to our current political and economic situation.

Like King, we see that the fire raging today demands that we ignore the red lights of the present system – such as unjust laws that force us to sleep in the streets in front of empty houses, as well as the red lights which tell us we can't march on public streets when we know that our voice is the only thing that will save us; the red lights that tell us to be patient and wait; the red lights that tell us that we are unrealistic and that poverty can't be ended, even when we have more than enough to go around. We are following in the footsteps of Dr. King by using non-violent civil disobedience, including housing takeovers, marches of thousands of people, and a recent tent city on Market Street in Center City Philadelphia, in which 12 homeless

Providers Working in the Latino Community – August 23, 2002)

"Changes to Immigration Enforcement Policies Since 9/11 are Impacting Latino Clients," Presentation by HEBA NIMR, INS Watch at La Raza Centro Legal (Ph: 415-575-3500)

1) Recently there has been more harassment of day laborers. The INS database is connected with local police 25-30 people have been picked up in raids – most undocumented

A few immigrants wrote "no criminal convictions" on application but did have some. **90-95%** of the folks picked up are innocent, without criminal convictions. Close to 1,000 people have been picked up across United States. Some charged with using false documentation – authorities are not only deporting, but also criminally charging for this.

2) If you receive a "no match letter, I 9" – From IRS, this is not immigration enforcement. It means discrepancies found by IRS re: social security numbers

Call La Raza at 415-575-3500 if a person receives "no match letters"

3) Alien Registration form "AR11" – Currently there is a new use of the rule that when you change your address, you must inform the INS within 10 days (legal residents only). Before advising people to report, La Raza Legal is asking INS to agree not to prosecute anyone who moved in the past and did not report it. There is concern that if the person informs INS

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people, including 6 children, were arrested for fighting for affordable housing.

The Poor People's Campaign of 1968 went to the places no one wanted to go and organized thousands of poor people, uniting the poor of all races from both rural and urban areas – and politically educating them to build a "non-violent multiracial army of the poor." King knew that the future of our society is bound up with the fight of the poor for their freedom from want and misery. The essence of King's life and legacy is a deep conviction that a new society is possible, and that this new society is only possible through a massive movement involving people from all walks of life, a movement founded on the unity and organization of the poor of all colors. The Kensington Welfare Rights Union and the Poor People Economic Human Rights Campaign are determined to concentrate all of our energies and resources to continue this most urgent and morally necessary struggle to which the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dedicated and gave his life. We call on all to do the same. ■

(A Version of this Article is Pending Publication in "The Other Side" Magazine)

ORGANIZING TO END POVERTY – A STORY OF STRATEGY AND TACTICS*

Mary Bricker-Jenkins

There is in this country a growing movement to end poverty – a movement rooted in the aspirations and organized activism of people living in poverty. Over fifty groups, including the Social Welfare Action Alliance, have come together in a network called the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC). The groups support each other's local work and conduct national coordinated campaigns while focusing on a variety of issues and using a range of tactics. In common they have a vision of a country committed to protecting and promoting people's economic human rights. In this column I will tell you about one campaign in Pennsylvania involving an unusual alliance pursuing an unusual – but eminently replicable – organizing approach. While alliance members have had to work through both ideological and organizational conundrums, the success of the campaign challenges conventional assumptions about alliances with professional membership organizations (in this case, NASW) and about the use of reformist approaches in efforts to effect fundamental social change.

The Elements of the Alliance

The Economic Human Rights in Pennsylvania (EHR-PA) campaign is built on an alliance among an organization led by people living in poverty (KWRU), a professional social work organization (NASW-PA), and a member of the state house of representatives. The alliance is expanding to

include other legislators, unions, and faith-based organizations, but I will focus on the who and why of the campaign's beginnings.

In the late summer of 1996, forty plus families living in the KWRU tent city in north Philadelphia knew they had to move – but where? Having considered the options, they decided to take their demands for housing to the state capitol, over 100 miles to the west. They “put out the word”, and after a rally and a press conference, they started walking. Marching in support of this first March for Our Lives were students, youth activists, representatives from a few progressive organizations and faith communities, and a tall, gray-haired man in a conservatively cut suit. “Go find out who he is,” Cheri Honkala told me. I approached him like a small-town politician at a church picnic and introduced myself. “I’m a former academic myself,” he said. “History.” I asked what his current career was. He handed me his card. Lawrence Curry, Pennsylvania House of Representatives. He was a Democrat, but from one of the most densely Republican districts in the Philadelphia suburbs. I asked how he came to the choice to spend the day marching with a small band of homeless folk. “History,” he said.

Over the next several years, we in KWRU stayed in touch with “Twenty Mile Curry” but did not pursue an alliance. We were and are today a social movement organization. While we might tactically use the legislative process, it is not at the core of our strategy. We are working to fulfill an often-ignored dream of Martin Luther King – that the poor of America would unite across racial and ethnic lines to become an “unsettling force” that would challenge and change a system that would not feed and clothe and house its people.

For this to happen, KWRU and other organizations in the campaign would not only have to organize numbers of people to press their demands, but would have to challenge and change people's thinking about how and why people become poor, and about what can and should be done about poverty. In other words, we would need to put forward a new vision and analysis to change the hearts and minds of people about poverty – their own and others'.

As any organizer knows, this requires not only leadership, organization, and education, but also a new consciousness of the world and one's relationship to it. To facilitate this, KWRU and other PPEHRC organizations use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a tool for organizing. The UDHR, adopted unanimously by the United Nations in 1948, is the basis for two implementing covenants, or treaties – one on civil and political rights which the United States has ratified, and one on economic, social, and cultural rights which we have not. Notwithstanding the US refusal to ratify the treaty, it is considered “usual and customary” international law, and all

IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANY OF US

Continued from page 7

today about a change of address and says that they moved 3 years ago, the INS could use that information to deport the person.

4) If a person is put in detention;

• **Demand the right to call attorney.** (Immigrants are advised to contact an attorney ahead of time and ask if that attorney will agree to take their call in case they are detained in the future. Carry that attorney's telephone number with you.)

• Person can call their country's consulate — the consulates respond differently — could help if the person is afraid of abusive treatment

5) Some attorneys are filing papers that can create problems for client, i.e., a false asylum claim — so verify that the attorney is reputable — call California Bar Association, ask if there are any outstanding complaints or disciplinary actions concerning that attorney.

Free Thursday night legal clinic is available at La Raza Legal. Request a list of attorneys that they recommend.

6) Implications for pregnant women – Limited/ emergency Medi-Cal does not affect immigration – No change in Public Charge per National Immigration Legal Center, [ww.NILC.org](http://www.NILC.org)

Itika – If female's sponsor dies, person can now find another sponsor – good law. ■

Continued ▶

nations are expected to strive continuously to actualize its principles. So into an environment in which the very concept of "rights" is being eroded and economic rights in particular are utterly disregarded, KWRU affirms these rights. Against the backdrop of low and no wage work, vanishing affordable housing, schools that do not educate, disappearing or unaffordable health care, the question is posed "If I, as a human being, have a right to these things, why do I not have them in this, the richest country in the world? And if I do not have these rights, why not?" An organizer will recognize these as questions that have the potential for shifting consciousness and motivating action. They are core questions in KWRU's organizing and educational approach among the poor, and they also constitute a foundation for making common cause with others who want to end poverty.

This simple notion – that the inherent dignity of the person calls for the collective provision of the means of survival – is so central to social workers' professional education and identity that many find economic human rights concepts very compelling. Moreover, whatever one's field of practice or modality, it is likely that poverty and the consequences of poverty shape the experiences and opportunities of the people with whom one is working. Poverty is our common context, and needs to be our common cause. Finally, our unity of interests with people living in poverty and affirming economic human rights is becoming increasingly clear and compelling. As the character of the economy has changed, the very character of poverty has changed. Not only is the so-called middle class vanishing as the gulf between rich and poor widens, but more and more millions are "economically vulnerable" because of the changing nature of their relationship to the economy.

Ask most Americans if they are poor, and they will say "no." But ask if they are economically vulnerable, and the answer is "absolutely." Social workers are no exception. Thus, when the Policy Committee of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers chose the goal that would guide its program for the next two years, "ending poverty" made perfect sense. Moreover, the under-lying analysis existed for us to move, not merely as advocates for others, but as allies in a struggle for a program that would protect and promote the rights of all.

The elements of the alliance were in place: a legislator who understood the historical necessity of social movements to create the conditions for a new politics; an organization led by people living in poverty who had developed an organizing agenda and approach based in economic human rights; a professional organization whose leadership understood the new character of poverty and was willing to adopt the program of the poor.

The Program:

Legislative Action to Build a Social Movement

Into this mix came two MSW students who were willing and able to do the day-to-day work to implement the alliance's agreements and agenda. The students,

motivated by their understanding of their own economic vulnerability, asked to do their field placements at KWRU; their work on the campaign became their primary assignment for the second semester. They researched and drafted the "Curry Resolution," which calls for a study of ways to integrate economic human rights principles in the laws and policies of the state; working out of Rep. Curry's office and in collaboration with the NASW-PA lobbyists, they got co-sponsorship of the resolution; with KWRU and NASW leaders they traveled the state to train other social workers on economic human rights principles, the PPEHRC, and the Curry Resolution; they helped organize the annual NASW lobbying day at which over 400 social workers supported the "Curry Resolution." Shortly after their graduation, the Curry Resolution passed, and the legislature must now hold hearings on economic human rights in Pennsylvania.

But that is not the victory. The victory we sought – and have now achieved – is an organizing opportunity to build the movement to end poverty. At Rep. Curry's request, the House Democratic Caucus held four hearings on economic human rights around the state during the summer of 2002. These were organized by NASW divisions in collaboration with KWRU/PPEHRC. To prepare for the hearings, teams of KRWU members, including social workers, conducted training on "Economic Human Rights and Social Work Practice" in each of the divisions. The teams also trained in five social work education programs and at the annual NASW-sponsored lobbying day, which focused on the Curry Resolution. We are now training and organizing others in preparation for the hearings that will be held in the state capitol to implement the resolution.

By the time we finish this phase of the campaign, scores of social workers, people living in poverty, and others will have come together as allies to make poverty and economic vulnerability visible in the state. They will have new conceptual tools as they explore "why" poverty exists and, we expect, the collective strength to ask "Why not?" when told that economic human rights cannot be assured in America. Concretely, in three of the four communities on which we focused our organizing efforts, we have new leadership emerging and the nucleus of "Economic Human Rights Committees" that will continue the work on the local level. ■

For more information about the campaign, see www.nasw-pa.org, www.kwru.org, www.cesr.org, or contact the author at mbricker@temple.edu. We are eager to consult with others who want to do similar work in their areas.

** Much of this article appeared originally in the ACOSA newsletter, ACOSA Update, Summer 2002.*

A THRESHOLD INQUIRY: CONSEQUENCES OF CONTEMPLATING TERRORISM IN 2002

By Ann Withorn

Last spring I wrote in *Sojourner: A Women's Forum* about a time 30 years ago when I had contemplated terrorism. My worry then was that people wouldn't understand why I wrote the piece, that they would dismiss me as just another nostalgic '60s radical.

Today I am no longer worried for me. I am afraid for all of us.

In June, State Trooper Riley and his partner came unannounced to my door asking to speak with me. He spoke with my 15-year-old daughter and asked for me to call him, leaving both a cell phone and an office number. Away for a month, I figured it was about my dilapidated car, or maybe a friend who is on probation.

Trooper Riley and I finally spoke on August 7 to arrange a meeting. I asked why he wanted to see me. He wouldn't say, except that "a complaint had been filed against you and we need to meet. You aren't in any trouble," he insisted, but he did want to speak with me; it was "in regard to a publication."

Curious, I told him to come by my house at nine the next morning.

Troopers Riley and Favale arrived at 9 a.m. on the dot. We sat on my front porch on a lovely cool morning. I was nervous but had decided not to ask to tape the meeting, because I wanted to keep them talking.

Immediately I asked under what authority they were visiting me.

They reported that after 9/11 the state of Massachusetts had established a hotline for anyone to make anonymous complaints about suspicious activity. Follow-up on those complaints were to be carried out by the State Police Department's Division of Investigative Services. The troopers' job now, he told me, was to "conduct a threshold inquiry to determine if there was anything to the complaint."

Someone had contacted the hotline about my *Sojourner* article. It was not what I wrote in the article that

concerned the troopers, ("You can write anything you want," they said). They were checking up on the caller's fear that I might "currently be involved in potentially dangerous activity."

When asked, Trooper Riley assured me that, "You have the right not to talk with us. Nothing will happen. You are not in any trouble." He said they were just mandated to follow up on any complaint. They said they had two questions for me, which I was "under no obligation to answer." If I didn't give permission, they would leave. Again, curiosity got to me and I agreed to hear their questions

The first was, "Why did you write the article?" I said it was self evident from the piece. I wanted to get people to think complexly. I am a writer and a teacher and this is always my goal.

The second question: "Was the group still active?" At first I thought they meant *Sojourner*. But they said, "No, we meant the Red Coven." That was the group of four women friends I had written about. All of us smiled at the name.

I said that if they read the article they would see that the Red Coven was never "active." "But it is not in existence now?" Trooper Riley probed. "No, it no longer exists," I assured him.

That was all. "A report will be filed as to the complaint being unsubstantiated," the troopers said. I could write to request a copy of their report, which "will be on record," they added.

In the end I told my inquirers that an anonymous complaint about a published article by a writer who makes no attempt to conceal her identity should not generate a home visit – the first time unannounced. To conduct such a face-to-face inquiry was inappropriate, chilling, and threatening to free speech and freedom of the press.

Trooper Riley said he understood,

but their job all day, every day, was "to follow up on every call where a person could be identified." They gave two examples: a report that a Middle Eastern-appearing man came to buy a used car and then didn't do so. (Trooper Favale volunteered, "he might not have liked the car.") Two Middle Eastern-appearing men were seen driving a Ryder truck on the expressway ("They could have been Italian." I said "or just Middle Eastern").

In saying good-bye, my guests acknowledged that many people were "understandably" very upset, but personal visits were "necessary given the situation and the problems resulting from lack of follow-up. If, heaven forbid, something were ever to happen, we want to show we checked every lead."

As soon as the troopers left I wrote a brief report on the visit. I called and e-mailed the ACLU, *Sojourner*, and my lawyer friend who, the night before, had advised me to say as little as possible but find out everything about what the troopers thought they are doing.

I didn't cower under the bed.

First I wondered who was monitoring *Sojourner* and then lodging "anonymous complaints." Should we just ask them to subscribe, at an appropriately high rate for informers? I joked about reviving the Red Coven, with my daughters and cats as founding members. And I laughed about filing complaints against naive liberals, just to get them to see what it is like *not* to be "above suspicion."

Yet as the day wore on, I realized that I was more intimidated by the friendly threshold visit than I wanted to admit. It was not a joke; it was deeply frightening.

How many people are being visited, based on what reasons? What does it mean that there is a record of the result of each visit, no matter how innocent the person being investigated? Who can access the records and for what purposes? I was very glad that I had changed the first names of my long-unseen friends. I wondered what might have seemed "suspicious" if I

Continued ▶

had let them into my house. Would my "No War but the Class War" poster, or the dust bunnies beside the refrigerator have been enough to keep my case open?

I found out that the ACLU is getting lots of calls from people who have been visited, but it is usually unable to do more than keep its own records. I thought more about the seemingly discredited George W. Bush proposal to implement a "Terrorism Information and Prevention System" (TIPS) plan that would recruit 4 per cent of Americans, including postal workers and delivery people, to report "suspicious activity."

And most importantly I remembered the deep fears that had been an integral, destabilizing part of '60s movements. By the end of that decade we knew that our government lied in order to wage an aggressive, immoral war; that it paid people to spy on all protesters, and that it killed Black Panthers and others. Indeed, it perpetrated the very profound violations of rights that drove some of us to contemplate politically self-destructive acts of "terrorism."

My visit from the state troopers brought back far more nightmares than my own article could ever generate. It should make us all afraid . . . and challenge us all to find ways to stand up for our rights to write and say unpopular things, to try to stop a war on terrorism that itself terrorizes people abroad and in the "homeland."

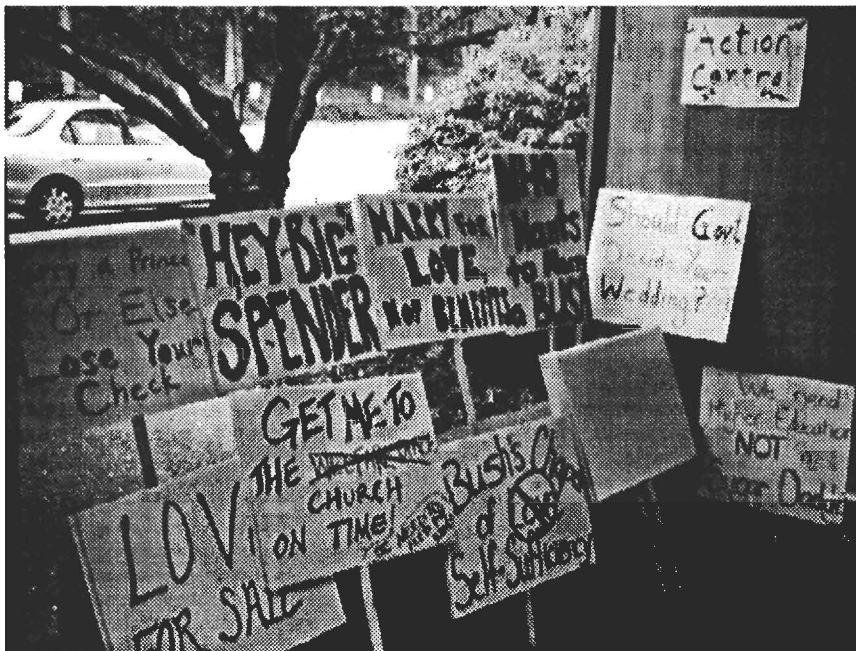
When not defending herself to law enforcement officials, Ann Withorn teaches and writes at U Mass Boston. Last time the names of her fellow Covenant members were changed "to protect them from John Ashcroft and Tom Ridge, in case there is no statute of limitations for contemplating crimes against Homeland Security." Since that strategy clearly failed, this time she has changed no names: troopers Riley and Favale are real. If someone calls the Massachusetts State Police Terrorism Tip Line 1 800 USA 5458 to make a report in regard to "any suspected terrorist threat or suspicious activity," they might visit YOU. ■

MORE THAN 350 ATTENDED NYC TEACH-IN: THE POLITICS OF WELFARE: TEACH IN AND CALL TO ACTION

New York City social work faculty, students and community activists did not stand by on the sidelines last spring as Congress prepared to enter into debate over the reauthorization of TANF (the 1996 welfare reform law). To educate New Yorkers about TANF and to link activists for the poor, SWAA held a public forum focusing on TANF reauthorization that featured leading academics and poor people's advocates.

More than 350 people attended the New York City Teach-In held at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, one of the oldest settlement houses in the City. Event co-sponsors included the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and all of the local graduates schools of social work: Adelphi University, Columbia University, Fordham University, Hunter College, New York University, State University of New York at Stonybrook, and Yeshiva University.

Dr. Mimi Abramovitz of Hunter College School of Social Work opened the evening with a discussion about TANF and some of its negative effects on poverty, providing an overall context for the evening. A lively panel followed consisting of members from New York's leading welfare-rights organizations including ACORN, Community Voices Heard, and Welfare Rights Initiative. Dr. Frances Fox Piven of The Graduate Center at the City University of New York closed the evening with a rousing "call to action." ■



Signs prepared for "The Politics of Welfare" teach-in on May 4th at the First United Methodist Church in Downtown Portland, OR. It was held with the leadership and support of the national steering committee with over 170 people in attendance.

JPHS

The Journal of Progressive Human Services (JPHS) is available to members of SWAA at a substantial discount. It can be ordered through SWAA using the application in this issue of the *BCR Reports*. Neither the JPHS collective nor SWAA are involved in subscription fulfillment, that is the responsibility of our publisher, Haworth Press. If you are a subscriber and have not received an issue, contact Kathy Rutz at 1-800-HAWORTH. To submit an article to JPHS, send four copies of your manuscript, including a short abstract to: David Prichard, JPHS Collective, University of New England, School of Social Work, 716 Stevens Avenue, Portland, ME 04103. It is important that your name and any other identifying information not appear on three of these copies. We also encourage submissions of poetry and short (500-1000 word) opinion pieces for our Soapbox column and letters to the editors.

The Table of Contents of the current hot off the press issue (13/1) and the forthcoming issue (13/2) appear below. We have just completed 14(1) and it is now in press. The table of contents of that issue will appear in the next BCR Reports. See the accompanying brief history of the relationship between JPHS and SWAA for further information
– Marcia B. Cohen

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"How to Organize a SWAA Chapter" organizing packets are available by contacting Mel at Communication Services at (518) 438-2826, 50 Colvin Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of SWAA organizers from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much more! Allow 4 weeks for delivery. ■

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